



NEWS RELEASE
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Mississippi Losing Ground in Making Afterschool Programs Available; Fewer Kids in Afterschool; Unmet Demand Growing

*Afterschool Alliance Survey of Mississippi Households, Sponsored by the
JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Finds No Progress Since 2004,
Vast Unmet Demand & More Children Unsupervised*

Washington, DC – A new survey finds no progress in participation in afterschool programs by Mississippi youth over the last five years, even as the nation made progress and demand for afterschool programs in Mississippi increased. The rate of participation in afterschool dropped to just 11 percent in 2009, trailing the national average of 15 percent – and a significant percentage of the state’s children are still unsupervised each afternoon after the school day ends. The data come from the landmark *America After 3PM* study, conducted for the Afterschool Alliance and sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. It is being released this month in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide rally for afterschool set for October 22.

“This new study is sobering for Mississippi, which is losing ground in making afterschool programs available to children,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The data tell us that the great majority of Mississippi parents who want their kids in afterschool programs aren’t able to find them, usually because programs aren’t available, they can’t afford the fees, or transportation issues make it impossible. But this is a solvable problem. These are all barriers we can and should overcome. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Every Mississippi family that needs an afterschool program should have access to one.”

According to the new study, fully 25 percent of the state’s schoolchildren are on their own in the afternoons, and another 11 percent are in the care of their brothers or sisters. By comparison, 11 percent of Mississippi schoolchildren are enrolled in afterschool programs, down from 13 percent in 2004. In addition, the parents of 57 percent of children not already in afterschool say they would enroll their kids in a program if one were available.

Ninety-two percent of Mississippi parents say they are satisfied with the afterschool program their child attends.

The Mississippi results can be compared to the new *America After 3PM* national findings:

- The number and percentage of children participating in afterschool programs in the nation has increased significantly in the last five years, with 8.4 million children (15 percent) now participating. That compares with 6.5 million children in 2004 (11 percent).
- But the number of children left alone after the school day ends also has risen, to 15.1 million children (26 percent of school-age children) in 2009. That is an increase of 800,000 children since 2004. Thirty percent of middle schoolers (3.7 million kids) are on their own, as are four percent of elementary school children (1.1 million children).
- The parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) not currently participating in an afterschool program would enroll their children in a program if one were available to them, a significant increase from the 15.3 million (30 percent) seen in 2004.
- The vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and overall public support for afterschool programs is similarly strong. Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend. Eight in 10 parents support public funding for afterschool programs.

In conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool* events across the nation, the JCPenney Afterschool Round-Up program will kick off in JCPenney stores throughout the U.S. From Oct. 16 to Oct. 25, customers will have the opportunity to “round-up” their JCPenney purchases to the nearest whole dollar and donate the difference to afterschool programs in their local communities that provide life-enriching programs for children in need. Last year, through “Round Up” and other initiatives, JCPenney contributed nearly \$60,000 in Mississippi to support local afterschool initiatives.

“With more than \$80 million contributed to afterschool programs over the past 10 years, JCPenney stands out among the nation’s corporations for helping to frame and solve the afterschool issue and increasing access to afterschool programs that provide meaningful activities for children in need,” Grant added.

The *America After 3PM* report and accompanying data are available online at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Findings from *America After 3PM* are based on 29,754 parent/guardian responses to survey questions about after school child care arrangements during the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. The entire survey was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. RTi also conducted the 2004 *America After 3PM* household survey.

That is why, on October 22, at more than 7,500 sites across the nation, Americans will rally in support of afterschool programs, as part of the Afterschool Alliance’s tenth annual celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*. For more information or to find a local event, visit www.AfterschoolAlliance.org, or contact the Afterschool Alliance media office at 202/371-1999.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a charitable organization committed to providing children in need with access to life-enriching afterschool programs that inspire children to be smart, strong and socially responsible. To date, JCPenney and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund have contributed more than \$80 million to local afterschool programs in every JCPenney community through partnerships with the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National 4-H and FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). For more information, visit www.jcpennyafterschool.org.