



Uncertain Times 2009: Recession Imperiling Afterschool Programs and the Children They Serve

What has been the effect of a faltering economy, state and local budget cuts and stagnant funding on afterschool programs and the youth and families that they serve? The Afterschool Alliance's new national survey of afterschool providers, *Uncertain Times 2009*, offers answers.

From April 9, 2009 to May 7, 2009 the Afterschool Alliance surveyed afterschool programs on how the economy is affecting their programs and communities. 1,447 programs responded to the survey, representing 8,587 afterschool sites serving more than 1.2 million children. 43 percent of respondents are located in urban communities, 34 percent are in rural communities, and 30 percent are in suburban communities.

Overall, program leaders report that they are serving a high need population, struggling to maintain their funding and are worried about how the recession will affect future funding. Nearly all respondents to this web-based survey say that more children in their communities could benefit from afterschool programs, if programs were available.

Key Findings:

- Afterschool programs are serving a high need population. On average, 67 percent of kids qualify for free/reduced price lunch, 14 percent are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and 11 percent have special needs/disabilities.
- 95 percent of program leaders report the recession is affecting their community, and 6 in 10 report it is "very much" affecting their community.
- Unemployment, failing/shrinking businesses, high food prices and more kids going hungry/families struggling are the top ways in which communities are affected by the recession.
- About 6 in 10 programs report a loss in funding due to the recession, with 1 in 10 reporting a significant loss that will cause cutbacks to the program or cause one or more sites to close.
- Nearly one-half of program leaders (47.4 percent) report their budget is inadequate to meet the needs of students and families.
- 62 percent report that funding is down from 2 years ago; only 1 in 10 report funding is up.
- 9 in 10 programs (89 percent) expect the recession to impact their programs in the 2009-2010 school year. More than one-third expect the recession to "very much" affect their program.



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- 69 percent report that funding is less than secure for the next 1 to 2 years and 83 percent report funding is not secure for next 3 to 5 years.
- 86 percent say more kids need afterschool in their community.
- 42 percent expect enrollment to be higher in summer 2009.
- Nearly one-third of programs say they would need to at least double capacity to serve all the kids in their community who need afterschool.
- Programs report that the top significant barriers to participation are transportation and fees.

In sum, *Uncertain Times 2009* finds that many afterschool programs, and therefore many kids and families, are feeling the effects of the recession and expect that to worsen next year.

Methodology: Uncertain Times 2009 used web-based survey software. The Afterschool Alliance emailed a link to the survey to more than 10,000 contacts in its database in April 2009. Recipients were encouraged to forward the survey to afterschool program staff, and programs were asked to be certain that only one person per program completed the survey and to provide responses from a site-level coordinator when possible. 1,834 responses were reviewed. 387 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicate responses. Therefore, the final sample was 1,447 responses which represent approximately 8,587 afterschool sites serving more than 1.2 million children. (Many respondents are responsible for multiple sites.)