



NEWS RELEASE
June 18, 2009

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New Survey: Recession Hurting Florida's Afterschool Programs And the Children & Families They Serve

More Struggling Students & Fewer Resources for Programs to Use to Help

Just as children in Florida's communities need more help, afterschool program leaders across the state say they are being forced to increase fees and reduce staffing, activities and hours to cope with budget cuts and rising costs. Nearly all Florida respondents to a survey of afterschool programs (97 percent) say the recession is affecting their communities, and report that they are seeing higher food prices and more families struggling to provide for children. Yet afterschool programs are unable to offer as much help as children need because their budgets are down. Ninety percent of respondents say children in their communities need afterschool care and are unable to access it.

"Afterschool programs in Florida have been deeply affected by the economic downturn, as have the children and families they serve," said Bobbi Davis, an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance and Resource Development Manager for the Children's Board of Hillsborough County. "Many programs are struggling to keep their doors open for children and families in their communities, and doing so with considerably less funding than in the past. Without adequate resources, they can't provide the benefits and supports students need."

Florida's findings are consistent with those in the national survey, which included 1,447 respondents representing 8,587 afterschool sites serving 1.2 million children. In Florida, 86 afterschool leaders responded to the web-based survey, conducted by the Afterschool Alliance in April and May. According to "Uncertain Times 2009: Recession Imperiling Afterschool Programs and the Children They Serve," nearly eight in ten Florida programs report a loss in funding due to the recession, and 88 percent expect the recession to impact their budget for the coming school year. Two in ten programs reported a significant loss of funds that will cause cutbacks or force one or more of their sites to close. In response to funding woes, they are being forced to add or increase fees, providing significant barriers to participation, afterschool program leaders said.

Summer programs are offered by 87 percent of respondents and 33 percent expect enrollment to be higher this summer, adding more strain to program budgets. Thirty-one percent of programs say they would need to at least double capacity to serve all the kids in their community who need afterschool.

“This new survey documents a world of hurt all across the country,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We’re not protecting our kids from the economic pain, or even maintaining the safety nets they count on. Afterschool programs serve a high need population; 65 percent of students who attend these programs in Florida qualify for free or reduced price lunches. When programs must charge or raise fees or reduce hours, more children will be unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends. It is alarming that nearly half the respondents in the state (46 percent) say their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of students and families. We have to do better by our kids.”

A “Roadmap to Afterschool for All” released by the Afterschool Alliance in April found that there are afterschool programs for children whose parents and guardians can afford to pay tuition and fees, but our afterschool system is leaving behind millions of low-income children whose parents cannot pay. This assessment found that the federal government covers only eleven percent of the cost of afterschool, even though 29 percent of children in programs qualify for federal assistance. It concludes that a federal investment of less than \$18 billion would give 5.6 million low-income youth access to the academic support, supervision, mentoring and fitness opportunities, snacks, and other benefits.

Yet federal funds are lacking. Funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool programs, is stalled at \$1.13 billion even though the *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion. President Obama’s FY2010 budget proposal would flat fund 21st CCLCs.

“Quality afterschool programs do incredible work keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and helping working families,” Grant added. “These programs also provide students with healthy snacks, sometimes dinner and breakfast, and a range of social services that students and families urgently need. But afterschool programs cannot serve all the children who need them when they are badly underfunded. Even in these tough economic times when there’s tremendous pressure for resources, we have to find a way to do better. Investing in afterschool programs pays off over time in healthier, more successful students and youth.”

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 April 2009. In Florida, 86 programs responded to the survey. Fifty percent are in urban communities, 14 percent are in rural communities, and 42 percent are in suburban communities. 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 national responses were reviewed. 387 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicates. 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.)

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