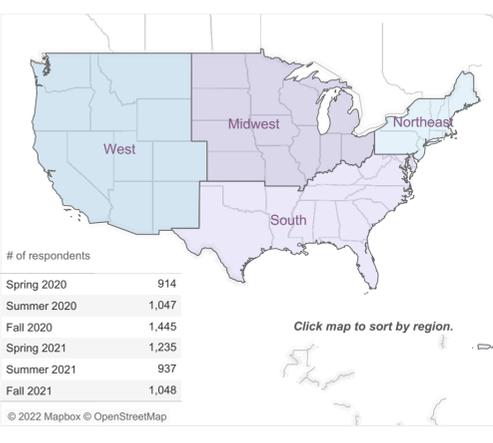


AFTERSCHOOL RISING TO CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY THE PANDEMIC

In December 2019, the first news broke of a virus outbreak infecting dozens of people in a province in China. Since then, the world has been on a turbulent rollercoaster ride responding to the coronavirus and its far-reaching effects on families' health, economic stability, and daily routines. The afterschool field's experience through the pandemic has likewise been one in flux and with challenges of its own. Programs have managed to remain a vital service for children and families in the midst of a wide range of circumstances, including opening their doors to children of essential workers at the peak of state-issued stay-at-home orders, and navigating changing health and safety regulations and guidelines; expanding hours of operation for in-person services when schools were operating virtually, while contending with space and staffing issues; and providing meals to children and families struggling with food insecurity, while worrying about programs' long-term sustainability through the pandemic.

Beginning in late spring 2020 and through late 2021, the six waves of Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19* online survey, conducted by Edge Research, document the operating status, services, and challenges that afterschool and summer programs experienced throughout COVID-19. The series demonstrates that through the ups and downs of the pandemic, what has remained constant is the ability of the afterschool field to rise to moment and meet the needs of the children an..



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

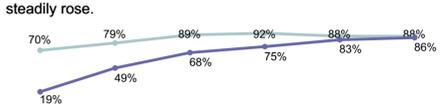
The pandemic has been a disruptive force at the individual, family, community, and systems levels, but throughout the extraordinary circumstances, the afterschool field met the crisis head on by meeting the most pressing needs, such as providing care for children of essential workers and helping address food insecurity, to addressing services and focusing on students' well-being.

PROVIDING VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL SPACES FOR CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC

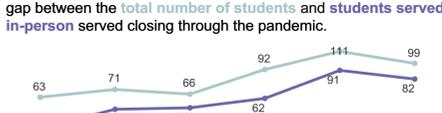
From transitioning to virtual programming in the spring of 2020 to nearly 9 in 10 program providers physically open in fall 2021, afterschool and summer programs have found ways to sustain themselves through the pandemic and increasingly provide in-person services to students.



While most programs were open in some capacity from the start of the pandemic, the percentage of programs open in-person steadily rose.



Similarly, the number of students served trended upwards, with the gap between the total number of students and students served in-person served closing through the pandemic.

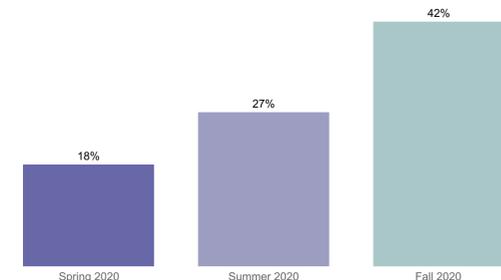


SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL WORKERS

In the early days of the pandemic, afterschool and summer programs worked to provide in-person care for children of essential workers.



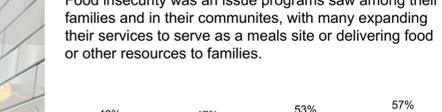
At the very beginning of the shutdowns, in Nashville, the YMCA of Middle Tennessee kept its doors open for children of essential workers so that they could do their vital work without worrying that their children were unsupervised during the day. Between March and August 2020, the program served more than 2,000 children across six different counties.



PROVIDING MEALS AND FOOD



Food insecurity was an issue programs saw among their families and in their communities, with many expanding their services to serve as a meals site or delivering food or other resources to families.



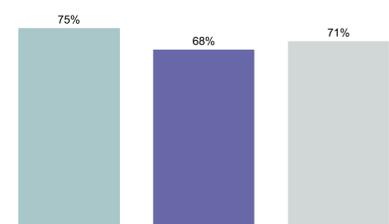
As more programs began to serve students in person, many provided onsite snacks and/or meals.



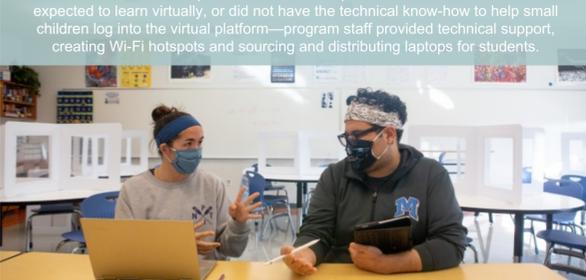
In New York State, the Family YMCA of the Glens Falls Area reached far beyond their own student base, running a food drive that brought in 319 pounds of food, the bulk from their own students as part of a contest. The program then partnered with a local food pantry to distribute the food to families in need.

REMOTE LEARNING AND INTERNET ACCESS

Remote learning increased the need for access to technology for students and families. In addition to providing enriching learning opportunities, time for students to interact with their peers and be active and outdoors, programs helped connect them to technology, including computers and broadband access.



At Promise South Salt Lake in Salt Lake City, Utah, where about half of the children in local schools were not logging into class—sometimes because their families lacked Wi-Fi, had no home computers or too few computers for the number of children expected to learn virtually, or did not have the technical know-how to help small children log into the virtual platform—program staff provided technical support, creating Wi-Fi hotspots and sourcing and distributing laptops for students.

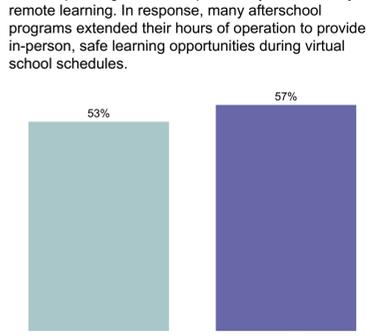


PROVIDING A SAFE AND SUPERVISED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DURING VIRTUAL SCHOOL DAYS

During the fall of 2020, staff members at the Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket helped manage students' schedules, kept kids on task, and provided brain breaks when needed. For several students at Identity, a program focused on serving Latinx youth in Montgomery County, Maryland, program staff helped students navigate their class schedules, communicated with teachers, and provided translation and clarification on assignments a..

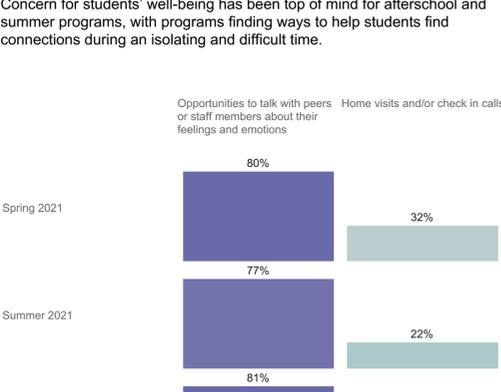


With the 2020-21 school year came a patchwork of school operating models: in-person, hybrid, and fully remote learning. In response, many afterschool programs extended their hours of operation to provide in-person, safe learning opportunities during virtual school schedules.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS' WELL-BEING

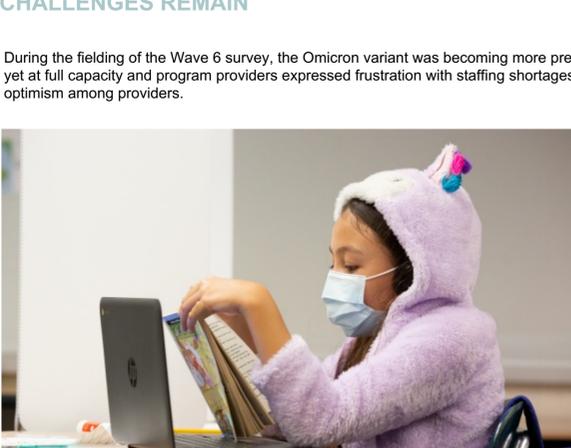
Concern for students' well-being has been top of mind for afterschool and summer programs, with programs finding ways to help students find connections during an isolating and difficult time.



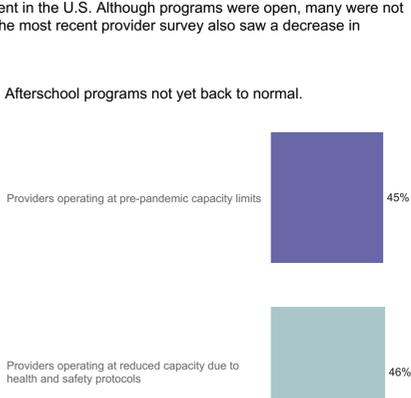
At the start of the pandemic, in Waterville, Kansas, Valley Heights Community Education program kept regular tabs on students, conducting socially distanced "front porch" visits with students and keeping a social worker on call. The program also did frequent check-ins with staff, recognizing the strain they were under as well. Currently, the program continues to have a counselor on hand for students.

CHALLENGES REMAIN

During the fielding of the Wave 6 survey, the Omicron variant was becoming more prevalent in the U.S. Although programs were open, many were not yet at full capacity and program providers expressed frustration with staffing shortages. The most recent provider survey also saw a decrease in optimism among providers.



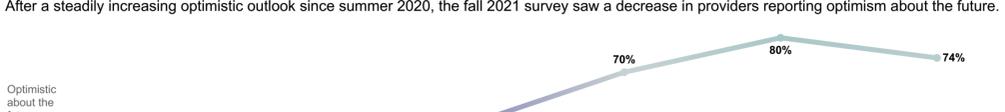
Afterschool programs not yet back to normal.



Concerns about staffing issues grow among providers. Read the issue brief, "Where Did All the Afterschool Staff Go?" to learn more about staffing challenges and steps being taken to address them.



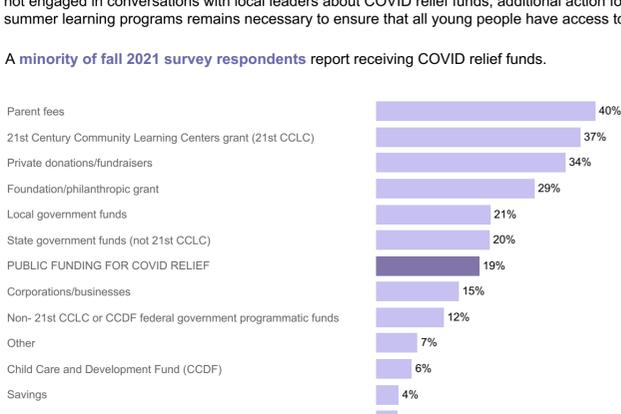
After a steadily increasing optimistic outlook since summer 2020, the fall 2021 survey saw a decrease in providers reporting optimism about the future.



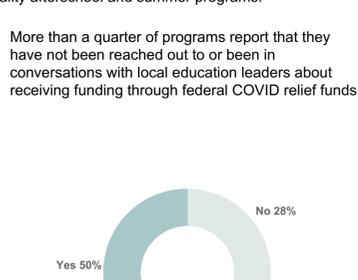
LOOKING FORWARD

From making it possible for program providers to keep their doors open to allowing providers to grow the number of students served and programming offered, COVID relief dollars are helping afterschool and summer learning programs meet the needs of the children and families. However, with roughly 1 in 5 fall 2021 survey respondents reporting that their program received public funding for COVID relief and more than 1 in 4 reporting that they have not engaged in conversations with local leaders about COVID relief funds, additional action for sustained increased investments in afterschool and summer learning programs remains necessary to ensure that all young people have access to quality afterschool and summer programs.

A minority of fall 2021 survey respondents report receiving COVID relief funds.



More than a quarter of providers report that they have not been reached out to or been in conversations with local education leaders about receiving funding through federal COVID relief funds.



Learn More

Visit the Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19 to find all program provider and parent surveys in this series, as well as related issue briefs and dashboards documenting the changing afterschool and summer landscape through the pandemic.

Wave 1 of the survey was conducted May 28-Jun. 30, 2020 of 914 program providers; Wave 2 was conducted Jul. 20-Aug. 31, 2020 of 1,047 program providers; Wave 3 was conducted Sep. 28-Oct. 27, 2020 of 1,445 program providers; Wave 4 was conducted Feb. 19-Mar. 15, 2021 of 1,235 program providers; Wave 5 was conducted Jun. 2-28, 2021, of 937 program providers; and Wave 6 was conducted Nov. 1-Dec. 13, 2021, of 1,048 program providers.