



News Release
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Majority of Afterschool Programs Unable to Serve All the Students Who Try to Enroll

Staffing Shortages, Rising Costs Among the Challenges Preventing Nation's Afterschool Programs from Fully Rebounding from Pandemic, New Survey Finds

Washington, DC – Nearly one in four afterschool programs that are open (23%) are not yet able to operate at pre-pandemic capacity, and 53% of the country's programs that are open have a waitlist of students they cannot serve. Those are among the findings from a [survey](#) of 1,016 afterschool program providers representing 7,400 centers, conducted from October 24 to November 30, 2022 by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance. The survey finds that 94% of programs are now physically open, with 59% operating at pre-pandemic capacity – up from 55% in the spring of 2022. But 85% of providers are concerned about their ability to hire and/or retain staff, and more than half report that their weekly cost-per-student for in-person services has increased.

While most programs that are operating at reduced capacity cite factors such as staff shortages or rising costs as the reason for their lower enrollment, 24% say it is, in part, due to inability to fill student slots.

Afterschool programs continue to provide critical services and supports. Ninety percent or more are providing academic enrichment and time for students to interact with peers and build social skills, and 83% or more are offering opportunities for physical activity, homework or academic help, outdoor activities, opportunities to develop life skills, and opportunities to talk with peers or staff members.

“At this time when the need for afterschool programs is so great, it is deeply disappointing that our survey found just 19% of programs have been able to access COVID-relief funds,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “COVID relief dollars, through the American Rescue Plan, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, Governor’s Emergency Education Relief, and other funding streams, should be making it possible for afterschool and summer learning programs to support more students and families. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, give working parents peace of mind, and help students recover from the isolation and trauma the pandemic caused. Ensuring that all students can attend should be a priority for lawmakers and educators, because these programs are essential to students’ recovery and to their success in school and in life.”

Among other findings from the new survey:

- **Costs are rising significantly.** Fifty-two percent of afterschool program providers say that their weekly cost-per-child for in-person services has increased, with 46% of them reporting it has increased 10% or less, and 46% of them reporting it has increased by 11% or more.

- **Increases in the cost of staff are driving the higher overall costs.** Eighty-three percent of respondents report that staff expenses contribute to their program’s overall cost increases; 67% cite inflation as a contributor to their program’s rising costs; 58% cite the cost of supplies; 46% the cost of food; and 32% the cost of transportation. Nearly one in four programs that are serving fewer children now than before the pandemic (23%) cite rising costs as a reason.
- **Recruiting and retaining staff is a major challenge for afterschool programs.** Eighty-one percent of programs have done something to increase staffing, with 70% increasing wages or salaries, 40% providing additional professional opportunities, 21% providing free child care for staff members, and 19% providing sign-on bonuses. All those numbers are higher than they were in the previous surveys.
- **Staffing challenges are a factor in reduced enrollment.** Eighty-one percent of programs that are serving fewer children now than before the pandemic cite staffing challenges as a contributing factor. Eight in ten programs with COVID-relief funds (79%) have used those funds to increase staff salaries or wages.
- **Program providers are looking for diverse supports.** The supports most afterschool program providers say would be most helpful are advice on staff burnout and keeping teams engaged (48%); advice on funding streams (38%); and communications tools to help families learn more about the supports and benefits of afterschool and summer programs (28%).

Complete findings from the new survey are available here:

<http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-Programs-Open-But-Still-Recovering-Wave-8.pdf>.

This online survey of afterschool providers is the eighth wave of *Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19 survey*. Previous waves of the ongoing survey, also conducted for the Afterschool Alliance by Edge Research, were conducted beginning in the spring of 2020.

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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.