



## Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk

For a minority of families across America, afterschool programs provide a critical support that helps children do better in school and reassures parents that their children are safe and well cared for after the school day ends. Some 6.5 million children participate in afterschool programs, but an additional 15 million would participate if a program were available. Unfortunately, funding for afterschool has not nearly kept pace with demand. What has been the effect of recent 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: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk*, offers answers.

Program leaders report that they are serving a high-need population, serving more children than expected, and struggling to maintain their 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.

In early September the Afterschool Alliance released a preliminary summary of findings from *Uncertain Times* from the first 1,600 respondents. Today the Alliance is releasing updated results from a total of 2,111 afterschool program leaders. They represent 9,813 program sites and serve more than 1.5 million children. 42% percent of respondents are located in urban communities, 34% are in rural communities, and 24% are in suburban communities. The survey finds that during the 2005/2006 school year:

- Ø 75% of afterschool programs operated at or above maximum capacity.
- Ø 87% of respondents say that there are children in their community who need afterschool programs and don't have access to them.
- Ø Afterschool programs are serving a high-need population. At more than half (55%) the programs surveyed, more than three in five students qualify for free or reduced price lunches.
- Ø Nearly half of programs responding to the survey (48%) say that funding is down a little (23%) or a lot (25%) in the last two years. Another 30% say it is unchanged. Just 17% say it is up a little, and just 5% say it is up a lot.
- Ø When programs are forced to make changes due to budget cuts or stagnation, the most common response is to increase the fees parents must pay.
- Ø If programs are able to see an increase in funding, they are most likely to increase the number of students they serve.
- Ø Parent fees are the most accessible funding resource in the nation. 42% percent of respondents rate parent fees as accessible or very accessible. Only 39% of respondents rate 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal funding stream solely devoted to afterschool programs, as accessible or very accessible.
- Ø Fewer than half (47%) of respondents feel fully secure about their funding for the next 1-2 years. Only 20% feel fully secure about their funding for the next 3-5 years.

∅ Program operators consider the top three barriers to participat