



NEWS RELEASE
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New Survey: Recession Hurting Georgia's Afterschool and Summer Programs and the Children & Families They Serve

More Struggling Students & Fewer Resources Available for Programs

Just as children in Georgia'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 Georgia respondents to a survey of afterschool programs (98 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-three percent of respondents say children in their communities need afterschool care and are unable to access it.

"Afterschool programs in Georgia have been deeply affected by the economic downturn, as have the children and families they serve," said Ernestine Ramsey, an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance and General Director of the A.J. McClung YMCA in Columbus. "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."

Georgia'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 Georgia, 147 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," about seven in ten Georgia programs reported a loss in funding due to the recession, and almost all respondents (92 percent) expect the recession to impact their budget for the coming school year. Twenty-two percent of 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 89 percent of respondents and 45 percent expect enrollment to be higher this summer, adding more strain to program budgets. In fact, more than half the respondents in the state (62 percent) say their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of students and families. Forty-five percent of programs say they would need to at least double capacity to serve all the kids in their community who need afterschool.

“Unfortunately, the negative impact of the recession will have harmful consequences for Georgia’s kids and our state long after the economy turns around,” said Jill Riemer, Executive Director of the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council. “Afterschool programs provide a safe place for kids and opportunities for academic support, enrichment, and physical activity. When programs must charge or raise fees or reduce hours, more of Georgia’s children will be unsupervised and at risk once the school day ends. Given that more than three quarters (76 percent) of students who attend these programs in Georgia qualify for free or reduced price lunches, the situation in Georgia is especially dire.”

A “Roadmap to Afterschool for All” released by the Afterschool Alliance in April found that across the country 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. Yet, public funding for afterschool is stagnant. The chief federal funding stream for afterschool programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), 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. Unlike other states, Georgia has not used state dollars to fill this funding gap. Most afterschool programs in Georgia depend on a mix of private and local foundation donations and parent fees to support their program and supplement any federal grants. As evidenced by this survey, dependence on these less stable funding sources is negatively impacting programs and the kids they serve.

“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 Georgia, 147 programs responded to the survey. Forty-one percent are in urban communities, 36 percent are in rural communities, and 35 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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Direct Link to Report:

<http://www.afterschoolga.org/Repository/Files/Uncertain%20Times%202009%20Findings.pdf>

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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.

The Georgia Afterschool Investment Council is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all of Georgia’s youth have access to high-quality, affordable afterschool and summer learning programs. www.afterschoolga.org