

# How to Host a Successful Legislative Site Visit



Inviting your legislators to tour your afterschool or summer learning program gives them a firsthand experience of the impact afterschool has on students, families, and communities. Follow these simple steps and you will be well on your way to hosting a successful site visit with your legislator!

## THE INVITATION

- 1. Plan ahead!** Policymakers have very busy schedules, so it is important to ask early! Your program is represented by 2 senators and a representative at the federal level and one state senator and representative in the Georgia General Assembly.
  - a. It is best to invite members of Congress during “recess” periods – during most federal holidays and often the entire month of August. In election years, Congress tends to adjourn in October, leaving the rest of the fall open for visits.
  - b. The Georgia General Assembly is considered a part time legislature – meaning that they are only in session for about three to four months at the beginning of the year.
- 2. Identify Your Policy Makers.** Keep in mind that your personal legislators may be different than the legislators that represent your program - although they still likely represent a lot of the kids that attend your program! To find out who your member of Congress is, visit [Find Your Representative](#) and to find out who your state legislators are, visit [Open States](#).
- 3. Make the ask!** When inviting your lawmakers to visit your program, it is best to send an email AND call their office. Your invitation letter should be sent several weeks in advance of your preferred date for their visit. Visit [senate.gov](#) and [house.gov](#) to find contact information for members of Congress. To find your state legislators’ contact information, go to [www.legis.ga.gov](#).

*You can access our sample invitation language for [Summer Learning Week](#) or [Lights On Afterschool!](#)*
- 4. Stay local!** Given their busy schedules, lawmakers are most concerned about what is happening in their district. Make sure that your program is in their district and emphasize that you are local when communicating with the policymaker or their staff.
- 5. Be persistent!** Policymakers receive many emails and therefore it is important to not be discouraged if you do not get a response or the response you wanted right away. If you do not get a response in a couple weeks, it is appropriate to politely reach back out reminding them of your invitation and asking if they have any questions.
- 6. Be flexible!** Do NOT send the policymaker one date and time for them to visit your program. Keep in mind that they have very busy schedules, so be flexible when scheduling the visit!

## THE PREPARATION

1. **Celebrate!** If you have scheduled a site visit with your member of Congress or state legislator, that is cause for celebration! Share the exciting news with your program's staff, parents, and partners.

2. **Plan the visit.** Be sure that you have a plan for the visit and discuss it with staff and senior leadership.

A few questions to ask yourself: 1. **What is the objective of the event?** 2. **What do you want the policymaker to remember about your work?** 3. **What is your ask?** 4. **What is the message you want to relay and who will be the best messenger?**

Here are a few ideas for activities:

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| a. Give a tour of your program<br>(consider having youth lead it) | d. Host a student performance                                |
| b. Share a personal story   | e. Showcase the variety of activities your<br>program offers |
| c. Engage youth voice   | f. Invite parents, partners, and funders                     |

**Touch base the day before.** Check in with the policymaker and/or their staff the day before the visit to make sure you are all set to go. Offer to provide directions or confirm the address.

3. **Gather materials.** Put together a packet of materials to hand the legislator that summarize the impact of your program and the broader landscape of afterschool in Georgia. [GSAN's fact sheets](#) are a great place to start! Be sure to have at least two packets in case they have someone with them.

4. **Invite press.** Draft a press release and send to local media a week before the visit. Follow-up two days before the event to politely ask if they received your press release and are planning to attend the visit.

*You can access our sample press release language for [Summer Learning Week](#) or [Lights On Afterschool!](#)*

## THE VISIT

1. **Be ready!** Print out extra copies of the run of show and press release to have on hand.

*Get some expert advice: [Top Ten Tips for Talking to Your Legislator](#)*

2. **Take lots of pictures!** Assign an adult or older teen to take pictures of the visit. Site visits are great photo opportunities for the legislator and can help promote afterschool to a larger audience!

*You can access our [sample photo release form](#) as well.*

3. **Get social!** Be active on social media before, during, and after the visit. Mention or tag the legislator in your posts and photos. Tag GSAN at @afterschoolga as well!

## THE FOLLOW-UP

1. **Send a thank you!** If a policymaker does visit your program, make sure to follow up and thank them and any of their staff who you interacted with for their time. Include electronic copies of any materials you gave the attendees and photos from the visit.

2. **Let us know!** If a policymaker is scheduled to visit your program, please email [info@afterschoolga.org](mailto:info@afterschoolga.org) to let us know and share pictures with us. We would love to promote their visit and assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Practical Guidance: What Nonprofits Need to Know About Lobbying in Georgia Levels of Government](#)

## SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

- For every \$1.00 invested in afterschool in Georgia, the return on investment is equal to \$2.64.

### Afterschool and summer learning programs:

- Provide safe, challenging, and engaging learning experiences that help children develop social, emotional, physical, and academic skills.
- Provide opportunities to connect with caring adults and peers.
- Support working families by ensuring their children are safe and productive during the summer and receive nutritious summer meals.
- Build stronger communities by involving students, parents, business leaders and adult volunteers in the lives of young people, thereby promoting positive relationships among youth, families, and adults.
- Engage families, schools, and community partners in advancing not only children's welfare, but also that of the community itself.

### Afterschool:

- 94% of Georgia parents are satisfied with their child's afterschool program.
- 18% of Georgia's school-aged children participated in afterschool programs, while 42% more children would enroll if a program were available in their community.
- For every child in an afterschool program in Georgia, 2 more are waiting to get in.
- 238,265 of Georgia's children are alone and unsupervised between the hours of 3 pm to 6 pm.
- 86% of Georgia parents support public funding for afterschool programs.

### Summer:

- 93% of Georgia parents are satisfied with their child's structured summer program.
- 46% of Georgia families report that their child participated in a summer program, while 53% more children would enroll if a program were available in their community.
- 88% of Georgia parents support public funding for summer learning programs.

### During the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Programs have risen to the moment to support youth and are critical supports to help youth recover from this challenging time and address their academic, social, and emotional needs.
- Programs have innovated to provide remote learning support, virtual programming, care for children of essential workers, meal support, wellness check-ins, and more.
- Programs have partnered with school officials and other community leaders and retooled their services to provide childcare for essential workers, offer healthy meals/snacks, and extend programming hours to cover the full day.
- 53% of programs adapted to support students for full day virtual learning.