

AFTERSCHOOL SUPPORTS HEALTHY LIFESTYLES



Afterschool and summer learning programs support youth by providing healthy food, physical activity, and lifelong healthy habits.

THE STATE OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN GEORGIA

Georgia ranked **21ST in the nation** for childhood obesity in 2023. [1](#)

Among children aged 6-17 years old: [2](#) [3](#)

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 17% are overweight | 17% are obese | 16% of males were obese | 16% of females were obese |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

FACTORS THAT IMPACT CHILD WELL-BEING

Food Insecurity

 **496,110** of Georgia's children were food insecure - lacking reliable and regular access to food in 2023 [4](#)

Hungry children are more likely to experience: [5, 6](#)

- Poor health, developmental delays and decreased school readiness
- Absenteeism, tardiness, and poor educational outcomes
- Behavioral, mental health, and social-emotional challenges

Lack of Physical Activity Opportunities:

 **20%** of children ages 6-17 are physically active for at least 60 minutes daily [7](#)

Inactive children are more likely to experience:

- Obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and weakened bones and muscles [8](#)
- Reduced cognitive function (attention, memory, and problem-solving) [9](#)
- Depression, anxiety, and stress [10](#)

HOW AFTERSCHOOL HELPS FUEL HEALTHY FUTURES

What Georgia parents are saying (in 2019): [11](#)



83% reported their child's afterschool program offered healthy meals and/or snacks



86% reported their child's afterschool program offered opportunities for physical activity



Federal Programs that Support Child Nutrition:

- **130,174** youth served daily (FY24) by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) [12](#)
- **112,495** youth served daily by the summer nutrition programs (Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option) [13](#)



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IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

Youth who actively participate in high-quality afterschool programs show less prevalence of obesity when compared to their non-participating peers.¹⁴

Afterschool provides opportunities for: ¹⁵

- Snacks and meals
- Nutrition education
- Additional time for physical activity
- Safe space and materials
- Structured activities
- Adult support
- Team sports lead to;
 - Conflict resolution skills
 - Decreased stress
 - Improved communication

Regular physical activity and healthy eating leads to: ¹⁶

- Strong bones and muscles
- Improved cardiorespiratory fitness
- Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Decreased likelihood of serious health conditions as an adult (heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer)
- Higher academic achievement
- Improved classroom behavior
- Improvement in indicators of cognitive skills (concentration, memory, and verbal skills)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Afterschool and summer learning programs are a key part of the solution in improving the health and well-being of Georgia's youth, particularly among underserved populations. GSAN recommends the following to support the healthy lifestyles of Georgia's young people:



Increase investment in afterschool and summer learning programs that support healthy and active lifestyles as a way to reduce Georgia's high prevalence of child obesity.



Increase access to CACFP and Summer Nutrition Programs across Georgia, particularly in rural areas.



Strengthen partnerships at the local, regional, and state level between school districts and community-based organizations, such as food banks and afterschool programs, to support healthy nutrition and physical activity beyond the school day.



Increase access to professional development opportunities that help afterschool and youth development providers support the physical well-being of the youth they serve.

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