



Afterschool: A Solution to The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime in Illinois

High-quality afterschool programs help lower crime, improve behavior, and increase academic success

The 350 law enforcement leaders throughout Illinois who are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids have long known that the hours immediately after school lets out are the prime time for juvenile crime.¹ In communities ranging from Rockford to Cairo, and everywhere in between, the hours between 2 and 6 p.m. are a time when youth are more likely to commit a crime or become a crime victim, and present a critical opportunity to keep them safe while also developing their social and academic skills.

Since 2000, juvenile arrest rates have decreased by 70 percent nationwide, partially due to increased access to high-quality afterschool programming, as evaluations of a number of programs have shown. Yet, juvenile crime continues to peak in the after school hours.² Law enforcement leaders statewide rely on high-quality afterschool programs to provide supportive, stable, and enriching environments with caring adults that

keep children and youth out of trouble and safe while supporting their academic success and socio-emotional development.

“It’s time to get serious about juvenile crime. That means supporting the kind of afterschool programs that I have seen working in my community.”



Chief Dan O’Shea
City of Rockford

Increased Access to Afterschool Programs Will Keep More Kids Safe

Across the state of Illinois, over 400,000 students are currently enrolled in afterschool programs. Quality afterschool programs in Illinois are publicly funded through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the Illinois Department of Human Services' Teen REACH program, the Illinois State Board of Education's Afterschool Programs, and the Child Care Assistance Program.³ However, the unmet need for afterschool programming leaves over 740,000 students waiting to enroll in afterschool and over 430,000 alone and unsupervised in the afterschool hours. In other words, for every student who gets to reap the benefits of afterschool programs, two more would participate if one were available.⁴

Quality Afterschool Programs Benefit Children and Communities

The most effective afterschool programs incorporate sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) activities that complement the student's grade-level instruction.⁵ These programs use a connected and coordinated set of activities, have active forms of learning, target specific personal and social skills, and have at least one component devoted to developing these skills. Not only do high-quality programs provide youth with a safe and stable environment that can help keep them from engaging in dangerous behavior or becoming the victim of a crime, these programs also contribute to positive outcomes such as improved attendance, improved classroom behavior, better academic outcomes, and increased graduation rates. The positive impact that high-quality afterschool programs have on high school graduation rates is particularly



BUILD, Chicago

BUILD has been working with at-risk youth in Chicago for over fifty years, and simultaneously offers prevention services in- and out-of-school, intervention services with justice-involved youth, and helps build future pathways to college and career. Many students in this program have had disciplinary issues at school, have been truant, or have had touch points with law enforcement agencies. BUILD works closely with schools, police departments, and judges, and places a strong emphasis on “pro-social” activities for students. Students work on positive decision-making, set goals for themselves, and learn the value of the community and relationships they can form within it. Program evaluations found that 98 percent of BUILD students were promoted to the next grade, and more than 8 in 10 youth saw a decrease in risky behaviors (87 percent) and improved their conflict resolution skills (85 percent). 72 percent of youth in the restorative justice initiative avoided returning to detention.⁷

important to law enforcement leaders because they know that six in 10 inmates nationwide do not have a high school diploma.⁶

The Benefits of High-Quality Afterschool Programs Are Numerous

Afterschool programs both help keep kids safe and build their academic, social, and emotional skills in a number of critical ways. Critically, high-quality afterschool programming has been demonstrated to reduce crime among youth. For instance, Chicago's Becoming a Man program led to a 35 percent reduction in total arrests, a 50 percent decline in violent-crime arrests, and a 21 percent decline in recidivism among participants.⁸ Another example is Los Angeles's BEST program, which provides afterschool programming throughout the city focused on intellectual, physical, and social and emotional development for youth in grades K-6. A longitudinal evaluation of the program found youth who consistently attended the program were 30 to 50 percent less likely to commit a juvenile crime.⁹

Afterschool programs also help boost student performance. A meta-analysis of 68 afterschool programs across the country found that participants did better on state reading and math achievement tests, had higher GPAs, and had higher school-day attendance.¹⁰ A 2018 evaluation of Illinois' 21st CCLC programs found that over 70% of regular attendees improved their academic performance.¹¹

Other benefits of high-quality afterschool programming include improved behavior and healthier habits. For instance, youth who attend afterschool programming on a consistent basis have been found less likely to use marijuana and drink alcohol than their peers that do not attend afterschool programming.¹² Additionally, a statewide

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evaluation of Wisconsin 21st CCLC programs found that participating students had a host of improvements in school behavior, including being more attentive in class, having better attendance, coming to school more motivated to learn, and getting along better with others.¹³ Here in Illinois, the Teen REACH program has had similar results: 99 percent of participating seniors graduated (compared to 86 percent of all seniors);¹⁴ 75 percent had improved grades; and 87 percent demonstrated improved anger management and conflict resolution.¹⁵

Conclusion

The evidence from high-quality afterschool programs from across the country demonstrates that these programs yield positive outcomes, including reducing crime and improving students' behavior, academic performance, and graduation rates. Unfortunately, these proven programs are not available to all children who need and want the opportunity. To begin closing that gap, state and federal funding will need to be expanded. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids members know that high-quality afterschool programming is critical to decreasing juvenile crime and victimization and to putting kids on the right track for success later in life. We stand ready to work with policymakers to provide more kids with access to high-quality afterschool programs.

Endnotes

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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