



From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks

Acknowledgements

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime.

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2-6PM

**the hours in which
youth are more at
risk of getting into
trouble with the law.**

Executive Summary

The more than 5,000 law enforcement leaders around the nation who are members of **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids**, have long known that the hours immediately after school lets out, when parents are likely not available to supervise, are the prime time for juvenile crime.¹ In communities across the country from Maine to California, and every place in between, parents, educators, and law enforcement know that the hours between 2 and 6 p.m. are not only a time for risk among youth, but also can be a time of opportunity to develop their academic and social skills.

Since **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids**' first report on this issue in 2000, juvenile arrest rates have decreased by 70 percent across the nation, due in part to increased access to high-quality afterschool programming, as evaluations of a number of programs discussed later in this report have shown. Yet crime

“ My job is to keep my community safe. But, after 21 years of military service, I am concerned that 71% of young Americans (ages of 17-24) are ineligible to serve, partly due to a record of juvenile crime or drug use. So, I am very encouraged by research that shows that quality afterschool programs can help reduce crime and drug use.”

Chief Roger Pohlman

Red Wing (MN) Chief of Police



Program Enrichment for After-School Kids

The Program Enrichment for After-School Kids (PEAK) is an afterschool partnership that includes the City of Ventura Department of Parks & Recreation, Ventura Unified School District, and Ventura Police Activities League (PAL). PEAK was formed in 2002 to develop and implement an inclusive afterschool program for elementary and middle school children, and serves 630 kids per year. Today, PEAK serves five elementary schools and community centers in Ventura, and relies on After School Education and Safety (ASES) funding (California's statewide afterschool funding program) for their quality afterschool programs.

The mission of the afterschool partnership is to provide safe and supervised afterschool education, enrichment, and recreation opportunities for students. PAL's contribution is to provide activity funding along with occasional field trips and officer stop-ins.

continues to peak in the after school hours.² Over the past 20 years, law enforcement leaders across the country have relied 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 social and emotional development. This new report re-examines the prime time for juvenile crime and how afterschool programs have changed since our initial work in this field.

“ I believe quality afterschool programs are the best form of long-term crime prevention a community can provide. Afterschool programs can increase school-day attendance, student test scores, and reduce dropouts. All leading to lifelong success and achievement, which is integral to preventing crime and keeping our communities safe.”

Chief Ken Corney
Ventura (CA) Police Department

The good news is that there has been an increase in participation in afterschool programs over the years, with 10.2 million children enrolled—up from 6.5 million in 2004—thanks in part to more federal, state, and local investments.³ For every one participant in a quality afterschool program, however, there are two more who would participate but can't because there are no programs available to them. Over 11 million children leave school for an unsupervised environment when the bell rings. The law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids agree that one of the best ways to keep young people from dropping out of school and away from crime is to make sure they have supportive environments and engaging activities. Providing access to high-quality afterschool programs for kids today will reduce crime and incarceration now and in the future.



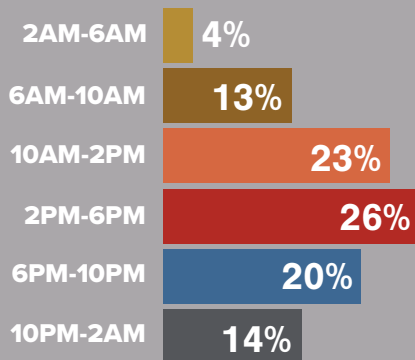
Greater Wyoming Big Brothers Big Sisters

The Greater Wyoming Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) provides comprehensive afterschool and summer learning programs. BBBS has evolved from a mentorship program in 2000 to include programming specifically for youth involved in the juvenile justice system today. With federal funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC), BBBS opened its first center aimed at preventing substance and alcohol misuse.

With continued 21st CCLC funding, BBBS has been able to expand its programming and centers. Participants receive academic help and choose from a variety of activities, such as arts, STEM, recreation, and life skills practice. Programming for system-involved youth has a service-learning component to strengthen connections between youth and their community. Once a week, BBBS meets with schools, community-based services, law enforcement, and the mental health community to discuss youth who have been involved with law enforcement. This group develops recommendations and action plans to provide support for youth and their families. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of juvenile citations in Albany County decreased by 46 percent.

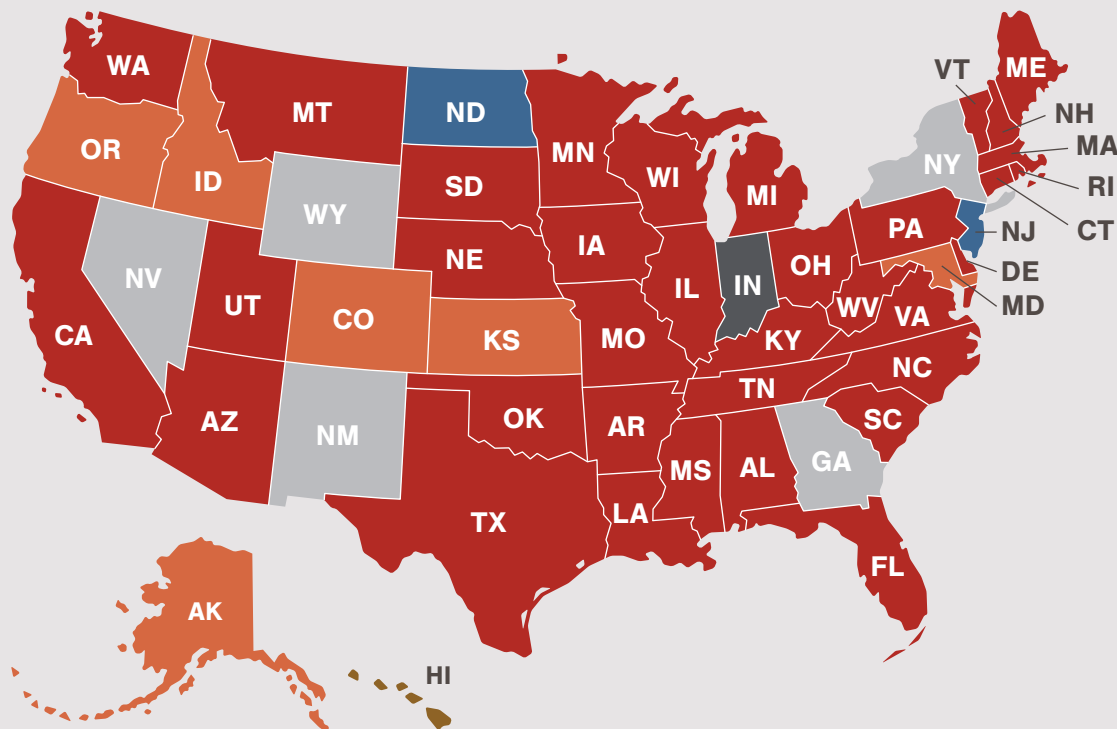
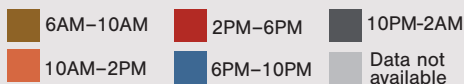
The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime Is Still 2 to 6PM

Juvenile Crime Rates by Time of Day



To determine when exactly juvenile crime peaks, we analyzed both FBI data and data provided by our law enforcement members on school-day crime rates for youth in 46 states.⁴ We found that the majority of states for which we had data (36) had a spike in crime during the after school hours from 2 to 6 p.m., as shown in the map below. To see how the states' rates compare with each other, each state's peak is presented on the home page of this project.⁵ When looking at the demographics of arrested youth, 71 percent are male, 63 percent are white, 32 percent are black, and 13 percent are Hispanic /Latino. Youth were most frequently arrested for assault, theft, and drug-related crimes.

These findings substantiate the sentiments of police chiefs and other law enforcement officers across the country—that the hours after school continue to be a time of risk for children. The data also reconfirm the importance of the availability of supports in communities—in particular communities where there are increased incidences of juvenile crime and victimization—for children during the after school hours.





Pathways/Senderos Center

Every week, Monday through Friday, youth aged 10-18 in New Britain, Connecticut head to Pathways/Senderos Center after school and during school breaks for comprehensive programming that helps keep them safe and prepares them for the future. Now in its 26th year, Pathways has expanded to focus on positive youth development, career readiness, and violence prevention that supports the academic, social, and emotional growth of its 5th through 12th grade students.

Nick Jakubowski, co-Executive Director of Pathways, reflects, “When kids realize that they have adults that truly care about their well-being, that truly care about where they’re going in the world, that’s what makes a difference.” And 26 years’ worth of data show this difference in New Britain has been staggering. All students who remain with the program graduate from high school; 91 percent of graduates enroll in post-secondary education; and 97 percent of graduates who are able to work are employed. Additionally, program surveys have indicated that Pathways students are less likely to take drugs or engage in violence compared to national and state data.



Promise South Salt Lake

Spearheaded by Mayor Cherie Wood, Promise South Salt Lake is a citywide initiative that began operating neighborhood centers in 2012 in partnership with many stakeholders, including the Recreation Department, Police Department, and United Way. One of the main features of these centers is afterschool programming.

From athletics programs, such as boxing with the South Salt Lake Police Athletic League, to arts and technical programs like woodshop and dance, the neighborhood centers offer a variety of programming options that create spaces to engage youth and keep them safe after school. The 2014 Promise South Salt Lake report showed that between 2011-2013 there was a 50 percent increase in the number of surveyed 3rd-6th grade participants indicating, “I am confident I can use strategies to get out of peer pressure” with regards to smoking, drinking, and marijuana use. Surveyed school-day teachers noted that 69 percent of afterschool program participants improved or greatly improved their classroom behavior. Based on a 2015 analysis, the city’s overall juvenile crime rates between 3 to 6 p.m. dropped 64 percent in the time since South Salt Lake afterschool programming began in 2007.

“I believe that providing safe places and enlisting caring adults who address our youths’ academic needs, social and civic development, and physical fitness through quality afterschool programs have made a big difference in their lives and in the overall climate of their community.”


— Chris Snyder
Former South Salt Lake (UT)
Police Chief

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.⁶ 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 important to law enforcement leaders because they know that six in 10 inmates nationwide do not have a high school diploma.⁷

- **Reduce Crime:**

An example of an afterschool program that reduces crime among participants is the Chicago-based Becoming A Man (BAM) program, where male guidance counselors coach boys on life skills and use cognitive behavioral therapy to help them solve problems in high-stakes situations.⁸ Through several rigorous studies, this program was found to yield a 35 percent reduction in total arrests, a 50 percent decline in violent-crime arrests, and a 21 percent decline in

 As Chief, I support high-quality afterschool programming because of the many proven outcomes for at-risk youth. To continue Detroit's success, we need to invest in our children, and give them the tools needed to succeed as adults."

Chief James Craig

Detroit (MI) Police Department

recidivism among participants.⁹ Another example is LA'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.¹⁰

- **Boost Academics:**

The 21st CCLC initiative is the only federal funding source that is dedicated to supporting programs that provide additional instruction to students, particularly those who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. A statewide evaluation of Texas 21st CCLC programs found participating youth had improved scores on math

standardized tests, reduced absences, and a higher likelihood of being promoted to the next grade level.¹¹ Moreover, 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.¹² Last, the BAM program was also found to increase the likelihood of graduation by 19 percent among participants compared with non-participants.

- **Improve Behavior:**

The aforementioned meta-analysis found that students had improved social behavior after participating in afterschool programming.¹³ Moreover, an 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.¹⁴

- **Lead to Healthier Habits:**

Youth who attend afterschool programming on a consistent basis have been found less likely to use marijuana and drink alcohol than their peers who do not attend afterschool programming.¹⁵

- **Save Money:**

Afterschool programs also save money—at least three dollars for every dollar invested by increasing children’s future earning potential, improving their performance at school, and reducing crime and welfare costs.¹⁶

“ I know that we have some strong afterschool programs in my community. Unfortunately, with limited funding, these programs are not able to reach all of the youth who would benefit from positive social development, increased supports, and greater opportunities to channel their energy productively.”

Sheriff Donald Ash

Wyandotte County, Kansas

Millions of Youth Throughout the Country Lack Access to Afterschool Programs

Unfortunately, millions of our nation’s children each year are unable to reap the benefits of high-quality afterschool programming. Afterschool programming is unavailable for over 19 million children, more than half of whom are low-income, whose parents would enroll them if an afterschool program was available.¹⁷ These young people are missing out on the opportunity to connect with caring adults, develop relationships with peers, explore what interests them, and get additional supports like homework help, healthy snacks and meals, and opportunities for physical activity.



Partners in Education, Community Educating Students

At the Burlington Community School District (BCSD) Partners in Education, Community Educating Students (PIECES) afterschool program in Iowa, students in kindergarten through 8th grade have a safe place to go to engage in enriching learning activities that range from STEM to art to the environment. In the 2017-18 school year, PIECES, a free 21st CCLC program, served over 1,000 BCSD students.

PIECES has strong community partnerships, including Southeastern Community College and the Burlington Police Department (BPD). Through the BPD partnership, PIECES students received mentoring from detectives in a Crime Scene Investigation club and heard from female officers about being a woman in law enforcement.

PIECES students also saw improvements in their academics, with 78 percent improving their state literacy assessment scores. School day teachers also reported improved behavior among 48 percent of PIECES middle school students.

“Afterschool programs give kids a safe place to be and a place where we can reach out and begin to break down some of those barriers that exist between the department and the neighborhoods.”

— Major Darren Grimshaw
Burlington (IA) Police Department



Detroit Police Athletic League

The Detroit Police Athletic League (PAL) works in partnership with the Detroit Police Department to bring afterschool and summer programming to more than 14,000 children each year. The program is a priority of Chief James Craig, who has seen how effective such programs can be in reducing crime in targeted areas. The Detroit PAL team understands the connections among youth self-esteem, staying active, and being successful in school. The Detroit PAL aims to invest in that self-esteem. The program primarily consists of large athletic and leadership programs to develop character and involves parents in supporting their children's successes.

In one case, for some middle schoolers who previously struggled academically, attendance increased over 65 percent. Routinely, Deputy Chief Todd Bettison says that he sees more kids staying in school, improving their grades, and generally having more hope and direction for their future. One factor that sets this program apart is that the department is able to provide officers to participate daily, which helps to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community.



Boys & Girls Clubs of Tennessee Valley

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tennessee Valley has been serving youth and teens in the greater Knoxville area for 76 years. During that time the Club has grown and evolved to serve 1,400 kids daily and 9,800 youth and teens annually with three-quarters of those kids coming from non-traditional households.

The Club—funded partly by local, state, and federal grants, including funding from the 21st CCLC program—operates 17 sites that provide nutritious and healthy meals, tutoring, mentoring, academic programming, and youth sports. One of the reasons that youth keep coming back are the relationships they are building with caring staff and volunteers.

Some of those volunteers come from the great relationship the Club has with the local law enforcement departments in the region. In fact, in the past, several departments in the region required their cadets to volunteer at the Club sites in plain clothes and not identify themselves as future officers. Once they are sworn in, the officers will come back in uniform. Not only does this help build empathy in those police officers for the community they will be serving, but it also humanizes those officers for the kids served by the program.

“The bonds our officers make with the kids at the Boys & Girls Clubs have a lasting impact on our public safety. Not only do these relationships help the kids see our officers as caring adults they can trust, but it also helps our officers better understand the community they are serving. I encourage all law enforcement agencies to build this type of partnership in the communities they serve.”

— Chief Eve M. Thomas Knoxville (TN) Police Department

South Carolina Teen Center

Founded in September 2012, the Carolina Teen Center is a teen afterschool center (TASC)—part of a network of 45 daily afterschool programs funded by the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ) designed to reduce the risk of incarceration for participating youth. TASCs help build resiliency skills, offer academic support, expand career readiness, and are shown to reduce recidivism, decrease absences and suspensions, and improve student academic performance. According to the SCDJJ, compared to the average \$426 a day it would cost to incarcerate each youth, TASCs provide comprehensive and preventative programming for just \$1 a day per participant.

The Carolina Teen Center offers crime-reduction programming alongside anti-bullying, childhood obesity, and other prevention services. The Center partners with the SCDJJ and other community organizations to provide free, comprehensive programming that keeps participants safe and cultivates the program's values of stewardship, empowerment, engagement, and dedication (S.E.E.D.). In 2017, the Carolina Teen Center was named the TASC of the year by the SCDJJ for its exceptional work in prevention and engaging the community.

Conclusion

The evidence from high-quality afterschool programs from across the country and the stories highlighted in this report demonstrate 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. Nationwide, 19 million students, more than half of whom are from low-income families, are unable to access these programs each year.¹⁸ 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. They know afterschool is one of the most effective ways to improve public safety for their communities and our country.

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1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005

