



# New England After 3PM

# Spotlight on Connecticut



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Opening Doors to Tomorrow

# New England After 3 PM: Spotlight on Connecticut

## Introduction

*Spotlight on Connecticut* is the second installment in *New England After 3 PM*. The first release in May 2006 took a look at afterschool across the region with a special focus on Massachusetts. Additional reports focusing on other states in the region will follow.

For *Spotlight on Connecticut*, the Afterschool Alliance worked with the Connecticut After School Network to gather new data from programs and parents throughout the state. In August 2006, the Afterschool Alliance distributed a web-based survey to afterschool coordinators across the country asking questions about program funding and accessibility. The Alliance received 87 responses from Connecticut, representing 283 afterschool program sites and more than 100,000 children. The survey respondents consisted of program coordinators and child care directors from across the state. Forty-four percent were community-based organizations, 23 percent school-based and 17 percent were affiliated with a national organization such as the YMCA, or Boys & Girls Clubs. The programs represented were 52 percent urban, 39 percent suburban, and 9 percent rural.

In addition, in late 2005, the Connecticut After School Network commissioned a telephone survey of 513 randomly selected parents or guardians with at least one child between the ages of five and 14. The survey was conducted by the Center For Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut.

Together these two surveys show that afterschool programs: are in great demand across the region; are serving high need populations; and are stretched to the limit. According to the Connecticut results of the Afterschool Alliance web-based survey,<sup>i</sup> 81 percent of programs operated at or above maximum capacity, serving as many or more children than they had budgeted to serve. Forty-four percent of respondents operated in an area where more than half of their participants qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program. Despite the fact that more than half of these programs have been in operation for more than ten years, funding sustainability and security remains an issue. Programs are struggling to get by as the demand for quality afterschool programs continues.

According to the Connecticut After School Network survey, many more children and families would take advantage of afterschool programs if programs were available to them. Families face barriers, such as cost and accessibility, that make enrolling in afterschool difficult, if not impossible. When families are fortunate enough to have access to quality afterschool programs, they reap significant benefits. Afterschool

programs help children do better in school, help parents focus more on their jobs and to miss less work.

## Assessing Need and Demand for Afterschool in Connecticut

The Connecticut After School Network survey finds that:

- 🔔 Only ten percent of Connecticut children participate in a structured afterschool program.
- 🔔 60 percent of parents with children who do not participate in a program agree that their children would be likely to attend a convenient, affordable, quality program if it were available.

According to Connecticut results from the Afterschool Alliance web-based survey, 81 percent of programs in Connecticut, more than the regional or national average, are operating at or above maximum capacity (*see Table 1*). This situation makes finding quality afterschool programs impossible for many Connecticut families. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents believe that there are currently children in their communities who need afterschool care and who are unable to access it. The Connecticut After School Network survey identifies barriers that make accessing afterschool programs difficult:

- 🔔 38 percent of parents agree that costs limit options when it comes to afterschool care.
- 🔔 37 percent of parents agree that finding programs that meet their needs is a challenge.

**Table 1. Program Capacity**  
*Connecticut, New England and National results from the Afterschool Alliance web-based program survey*

	Connecticut	New England	National
We operated at or above maximum capacity and served as many or more students than we had budgeted to serve.	81%	73%	75%

## Funding and Sustainability

Quality afterschool programs need sustainable resources if they are to meet the needs of their communities. However, Connecticut responses to the Afterschool Alliance web-based program survey indicate that over the past two years, nearly half of Connecticut afterschool programs have experienced a decline in funding while another 25 percent

have seen no change. Only 28 percent of programs surveyed increased their funding (*see table 2*). Almost half (45%) of the programs with decreased or stagnant funds have compensated by adding or increasing program fees—new costs that families must bear.

**Table 2. Program Funding Change Over the Last 2 Years**

	Connecticut	New England	National
Funding is down a little or a lot	47%	51%	48%
Funding is unchanged	25%	25%	30%
Funding is up a little or a lot	28%	24%	22%

Access to funding is also a challenge. Many program coordinators reported that they do not know how accessible various potential afterschool funding streams may be (*see table 3*). Connecticut respondents rated parent fees as most accessible followed by funds from foundations or philanthropic organizations, businesses or corporations, local government resources and state government resources. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal funding stream solely devoted to afterschool care, was the sixth most accessible funding stream in Connecticut. On average, fewer Connecticut respondents rated 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grants as accessible or very accessible (20%) compared to respondents in the New England region (32%) and throughout the nation (39%).

**Table 3. Six Most Accessible Sources of Funding**

	Connecticut			New England			National		
	Not/ Somewhat Accessible	Accessible/ Very Accessible	Don't Know	Not/ Somewhat Accessible	Accessible/ Very Accessible	Don't Know	Not/ Somewhat Accessible	Accessible/ Very Accessible	Don't Know
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers	36%	20%	44%	40%	32%	29%	37%	39%	25%
Corporation/Business	40%	33%	27%	42%	33%	25%	46%	27%	28%
Foundation/Philanthropic Organization	34%	41%	25%	37%	37%	27%	40%	31%	30%
Local Government (City/County)	38%	30%	33%	42%	27%	31%	44%	26%	31%
Parent Fees	30%	52%	18%	31%	59%	10%	41%	42%	17%
State Government	41%	22%	38%	39%	21%	40%	39%	20%	41%

Program coordinators were skeptical about the long-term sustainability of their current funding (*see table 4*). Fewer than half (48%) of respondents felt secure about their

funding for the next one to two years. When asked how they felt about their funding for the next three to five years, only 27 percent of respondents felt secure or very secure. Instability of funding is a barrier to program growth, strength and development. It also hinders programs' ability to adequately serve their communities. If the programs surveyed were to receive more funds, the most likely response would be to serve more children.

Table 4. Funding Security for the Next 1-5 Years

	Connecticut		New England		National	
	Not/ Somewhat Secure	Secure/Very Secure	Not / Somewhat Secure	Secure/Very Secure	Not Secure	Secure/Very Secure
<b>1-2 Years</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>3-5 Years</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>

## Afterschool Benefits Working Families

Despite experiencing difficulty with and uncertainty about funding, programs are using all their available resources to provide a variety of quality services that benefit children and families (*see table 5*). According to Connecticut results from the Afterschool Alliance web-based survey:

- 🔔 Over 50 percent of programs offer homework help; mentoring; science, math and/or technology; reading; community service; arts, music and/or cultural activities; obesity prevention, nutrition, athletics and/or recreation; and social services for parents and families.
- 🔔 75 percent of programs offer summer sessions.
- 🔔 79 percent of programs offer services before school, on weekends, and/or during holidays in addition to the traditional afterschool hours.

According to the Connecticut After School Network survey, families of afterschool participants are benefiting from afterschool programs in a variety of ways:

- 🔔 88 percent of parents agree that knowing that their child is in a supervised afterschool program helps them better focus on their jobs during the after school hours.
- 🔔 78 percent agree that having their child in a supervised afterschool program helps them miss work less often.
- 🔔 93 percent agree that the hours of operation meet their needs.
- 🔔 93 percent agree that the child enjoys the program that he or she attends.
- 🔔 79 percent agree that the afterschool program helps that child do better in school.

Table 5. Types of Activities and Services Offered

	Connecticut	New England	National
Arts/Music/Cultural Activities	87%	92%	92%
Before School Service	40%	37%	36%
Career and/or College Prep	35%	28%	31%
Community Service	71%	73%	68%
Drug, Alcohol, or Tobacco Prevention Programs	45%	40%	49%
Holiday and/or inter-session Service	62%	61%	48%
Homework Help	86%	90%	91%
Language and/or ESL Services	18%	20%	31%
Medical and/or Dental Services	8%	6%	12%
Mental Health Services	20%	15%	15%
Mentoring	55%	59%	61%
Obesity Prevention/Nutrition/Athletics/Recreation	53%	63%	64%
Pregnancy Prevention Programs	22%	14%	16%
Reading	72%	77%	84%
Science, Math and/or Technology	66%	71%	77%
Services for Children with Disabilities	28%	30%	25%
Services for Parents and Families	52%	46%	56%
Summer Program	75%	83%	81%
Weekend Sessions/Activities	29%	22%	27%
Violence Prevention Programs	41%	38%	45%

## Connecticut: Ready to Meet the Challenge

States and localities across the country face the challenge of meeting the demand for afterschool. The uncertainties that exist in Connecticut are not unique to the state, but rather, reflect the trends across the nation and the New England region. Fortunately, afterschool programs in Connecticut have gained the state support needed to put them on the path toward achieving afterschool for all. With the support of James Amann, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Connecticut lawmakers have appropriated \$4.4 million for afterschool programs. The State Department of Education has received \$3.1 million for the 2006-2007 school-year, and the Department of Social Services has received \$1.3 million for implementing after school initiatives. Federal policymakers are also supportive. In June, Senator Joseph Lieberman became one of the newest members of the Senate Afterschool Caucus, joining Senate Caucus co-chair, Senator Christopher Dodd. More recently, Representative Robert Simmons joined Representatives Rosa DeLauro and John Larson as members of the House Afterschool Caucus. According to a recent survey conducted by the *Stamford Advocate*, local residents support afterschool program initiatives as well. The subscriber survey finds that more than two-thirds of residents from Stamford, Norwalk and Greenwich would be willing to pay higher taxes

to implement academically-based afterschool programs that they feel would be a sound community investment.<sup>ii</sup>

Support for and investments in afterschool at the state and local levels will be key to making programs sustainable and achieving afterschool for all. Investments in afterschool will support more quality programs that help working families and give children safe, enriching environments in which to develop the skills they need to succeed. Connecticut is poised to help lead the New England region to Afterschool for All.

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<sup>i</sup> The Afterschool Alliance. “*Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk.*” [www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm).

*Methodology: UNCERTAIN TIMES used web-based survey software and the survey was emailed to more than 10,000 contacts in the Afterschool Alliance database in August of 2006. 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. 2,614 responses were reviewed. 503 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicate responses; therefore the final sample was 2,111 responses which represent approximately 9,813 afterschool sites serving more than 1.5 million children. (Many respondents are responsible for multiple sites.)*

<sup>ii</sup> “Pointing fingers: Teachers, parents and students share blame for gap.” The Stamford Advocate, 23 May 2006.