

Summer 2022 Outlook From Program Providers



As the end of the school year approaches and families face another pandemic summer, a new survey of afterschool and summer programs brings some encouraging news: Providers are more likely to be open and operating in person this summer and are more optimistic about a return to normal than in previous surveys. However, providers also anticipate challenges, with staffing being the primary concern. Below are five key takeaways related to the upcoming summer from the seventh wave of Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19* series, which surveyed 948 program providers between March 21 and April 12, 2022.

1 Most program providers plan to open and operate in person this summer

Providers are much more likely to report planning to offer programming during the upcoming summer compared to last spring. Today, 9 in 10 program providers (90 percent) report plans to offer summer programs this year, 11 percentage points higher than what was reported last spring (79 percent). Across community type and region, most providers plan to offer summer programs, including in rural (93 percent), suburban (90 percent), and urban (89 percent) communities. Conversely, the percentage of providers unsure if they will be offering summer programming is down significantly, from 18 percent last spring to 3 percent today. Moreover, nearly 1 in 3 providers say that they are expanding their program to serve more children this summer (31 percent).

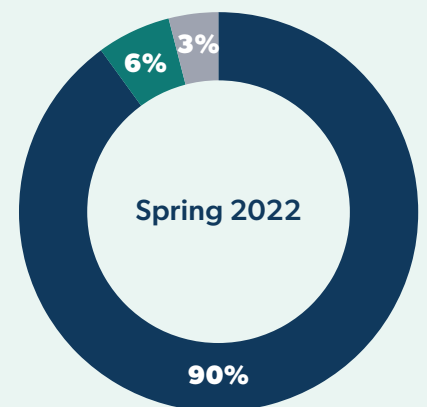
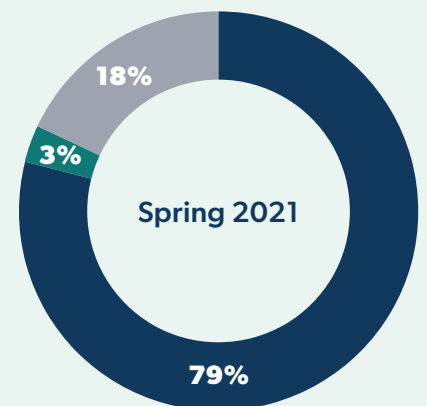
Program providers are also more likely to report planning for in-person services, with 94 percent of providers reporting that they plan to serve students mostly or all in person, compared to 64 percent of providers last spring. Similar to plans to offer summer programs, there is very little variability across community type or region. For example, more than 9 in 10 providers in the Northeast (96 percent), South (95 percent), Midwest (94 percent), and West (94 percent) report that their summer programming will be mostly or all in person.

2 Summer programming to take a holistic approach

When asked about planned changes to their summer program, nearly 1 in 3 providers say that they will be placing a greater focus on ensuring a balance of academic and enrichment activities (31 percent) or more intentionally focusing on students' holistic needs and supporting overall well-being (31 percent). Urban (37 percent and 34 percent, respectively) and rural program providers (32 percent and 33 percent, respectively), as well as programs serving mostly students in families with low incomes (38 percent and 34 percent, respectively), are more likely than suburban program providers (26 percent, all) and programs serving mostly students in families with higher incomes (25 percent and 28 percent, respectively) to report plans to ensure a balance of academics and enrichment and to place a greater focus on students holistically.¹

¹ Programs serving majority families with low incomes are defined as program providers who report serving more than 75 percent of children who qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program and programs serving majority families with higher incomes are program providers who report serving less than 50 percent of children who qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

Providers this spring are much more certain about summer plans



- Planning to offer summer programming
- Not planning to offer summer programming
- Unsure

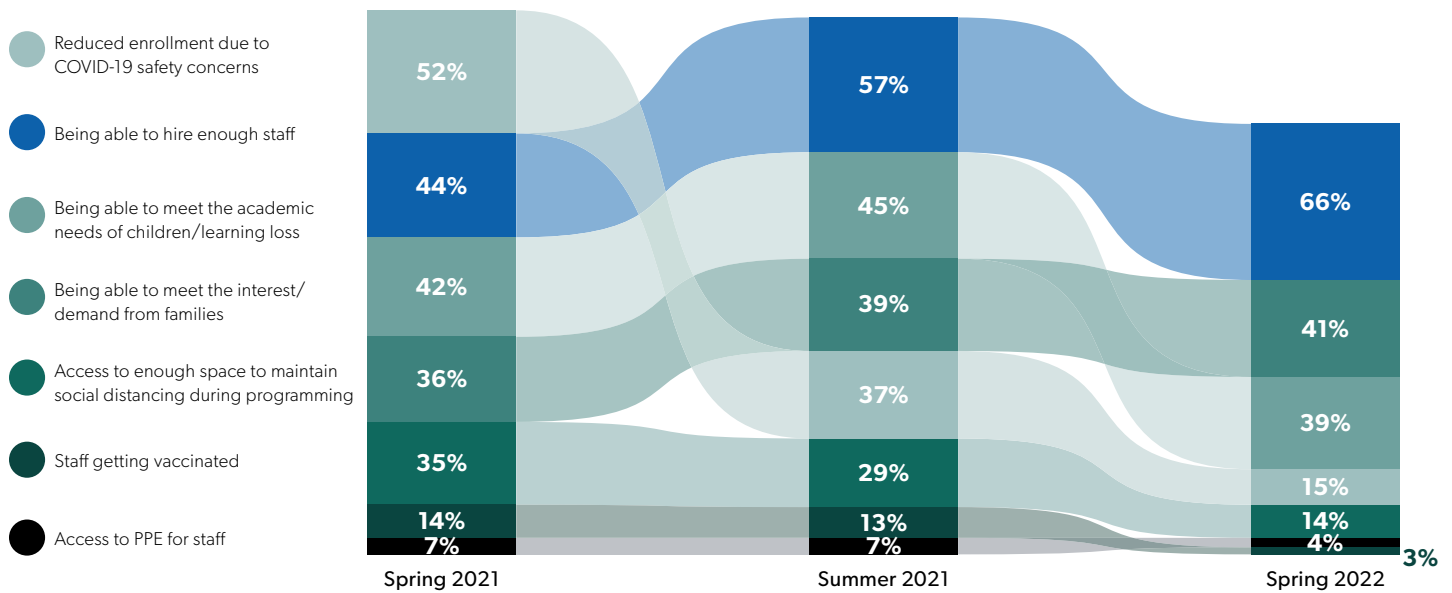
3 Staffing concerns for the summer continues to rise

Concern surrounding the ability to hire enough staff during the summer has continued to trend upwards, from 44 percent in the spring of 2021, to 57 percent in the summer of 2021, and now reaching a high of 66 percent. Other top concerns for providers include being able to meet the demand from families (41 percent) and meeting the academic needs of children (39 percent).

Worries about reduced enrollment due to COVID-19 safety concerns have decreased significantly, dropping from a majority of program providers in the spring of 2021 (52 percent), to 37 percent in the summer of 2021, to just 15 percent of program providers today.



Being able to hire enough staff is now the most pressing concern for the summer



4 Programs with COVID relief funding are more likely to have plans to expand summer programming

Although there is very little difference between program providers with and without COVID relief funding regarding their plans to offer summer programming (84 percent vs. 82 percent), providers who report receiving COVID relief funding are much more likely to report plans to expand summer programming to serve more children (36 percent vs. 29 percent), as well as more likely to place a greater focus on balancing academic and enrichment activities (43 percent vs. 28 percent) and more intentionally focusing on students’ holistic needs (42 percent vs. 27 percent).²

As programs with COVID relief funding are more likely to anticipate expanding their summer programming, they are also more likely than providers without COVID relief funding to be worried about being able to hire enough staff for the summer (72 percent vs. 65 percent) and being able to meet the demand from families (48 percent vs. 40 percent).

² Programs with COVID relief funding are those that report that they have received any public funding to address pandemic related challenges. The COVID relief funding streams range from education specific funds that flow from state and local education agencies, education funds that flow from governors’ offices, and relief funds that local elected officials can direct to afterschool and summer programs.



COVID Relief Funding Supporting Summer Learning

In Bloomington, Illinois, American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III funds will be helping the Bloomington Public Schools District 87 to offer a summer enrichment program in collaboration with several local community-based organizations. The full-day program will run through the summer, blending academics and informal learning opportunities. In the morning, the program will take a more structured academic approach, utilizing school-day teachers and transitioning to enrichment activities facilitated by community partners in the afternoon, including, but not limited to the Children's Discovery Museum, Illinois State University for Math and Science, and local Boys & Girls Clubs.

To find more examples of how COVID relief funds are being invested in summer and afterschool programs, visit Afterschool Alliance's interactive map at: <http://afterschoolalliance.org/covid/partnerships.cfm>.

5 Collaboration between afterschool and summer program providers and schools is an area for improvement

While a majority of program providers (56 percent) report that their organization has been involved in conversations with their school district or local schools about how best to support students' learning this upcoming summer, 1 in 3 providers (33 percent) report that they have not. Similarly, 32 percent of providers report that their organization has not been in communication with local education leaders about American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds.

Conclusion

In a directional change from survey results in the fall of 2021, most program providers (64 percent) report they feel that the worst is over, compared to 48 percent of providers in the fall, and 76 percent are optimistic about the future of their afterschool program. However, as staffing continues to be a concern for program providers and only 1 in 5 program providers (20 percent) report having received COVID relief funding, more work remains to ensure that all young people have access to a quality summer learning program.