

## Afterschool Is a Game Changer

# Promoting Healthy Futures

Afterschool, summer learning, and other out-of-school time programs play an important role in supporting young people's safety, well-being, and mental health, and are all the more critical today.



## The Challenge

More young people are increasingly struggling with anxiety, depression, thoughts of suicide, and other serious mental health issues. Experts have declared children's mental health "[a national emergency](#)." Many youth also lack access to healthy foods, safe places to play, and other opportunities to live healthy lives.

In Michigan:

- **237,000** youth are alone and unsupervised after school, the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimenting with drugs and alcohol
- **16%** of youth ages 12-17 reported suffering from at least one major depressive episode in the past year—10% of them did not receive mental health services
- **282,320** children go to bed hungry
- **78%** of students are not getting the recommended level of physical activity

## Afterschool Is a Solution

Afterschool programs are uniquely designed to support young people's mental and physical well-being. They provide a safe welcoming space where kids enjoy social activities, healthy meals and snacks, and time for active play. Trained staff work with families, schools, and community partners to create a fundamental setting for healthy development where youth are encouraged to build healthy relationships and make responsible decisions.

### Afterschool provides developmental supports:



Caring and supportive mentors



Safe spaces where students build confidence and feel a sense of belonging



Opportunities to work collaboratively, problem-solve, and think critically

### In turn, these supports help kids:



Gain self-control and confidence



Improve work habits and grades



Develop strong social skills



Improve school day attendance and behavior



Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults



Reduce risky behaviors, such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use

## The Gap Between Work and School Time



Michigan youth spend about **32 hours** a week in school, and their parents work an average of **42 hours** a week. Afterschool programs close the child care gap by providing a safe place for youth to go when schools let out and parents are still working. Working parents need reliable, affordable options for their school-age kids so they can have peace of mind and be productive on the job.

## Experts Recognize the Power of Afterschool

The 2021 Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health encourages community-based organizations to "implement evidence-based programs that promote healthy development, support children, youth, and their families, and increase their resilience," calling out afterschool as an example program.



**I love being around my awesome teachers and friends, having dinner and snacks, and participating in activities I don't get to do during school."**

**KAYLEIGH, AGE 8, Hamtramck**



## Spotlight

# Guided Grace Family & Youth Services, Saginaw

Guided Grace offers enrichment and mindfulness summer camps for K-8 students. The program includes reading, math, science, tutoring, social emotional learning, and outdoor activities. They also provide daily breakfast and lunch. Program leaders developed an engaging curriculum using a hands-on science program, a music component integrated into academics, and additional learning components focused on leadership, recreation therapy, and financial literacy. In summer 2021, about 75% of youth served were receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families support.

## Afterschool Keeps Kids and Communities Safe

Afterschool and other out-of-school time programs are a safe haven for children and teens where staff who are trained to support youth help them develop coping skills and practice making thoughtful decisions so they learn how to deal with challenging situations productively. Programs are proven to help young people avoid drug and alcohol use and abuse and make smart choices—both online and offline.

**Research** shows youth who participate in afterschool programs benefit from:

- Improved social skills and self-confidence
- Feeling safe
- Decreased criminal activity and risky behaviors
- More awareness of the dangers of risky behaviors
- Less aggression and other problematic behaviors

## Michigan Needs More Afterschool!

There is no more important time to strengthen supports for Michigan families. But more than [750,000](#) children are missing out on life-changing afterschool opportunities because our state has never had enough programs for all the families who want and need them.

Afterschool and summer learning programs are an essential partner in Michigan's education system, and we need a sustainable funding solution to ensure that every child who wants to participate has the opportunity.

**Afterschool provides a solid return on investment. Research shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 by:**



- 1 Increasing kids' earning potential
- 2 Improving kids' performance at school
- 3 Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency



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