

AFTERSCHOOL ALERT

ISSUE BRIEF



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Afterschool Keeps Kids Safe

Afterschool programs provide safe places for youth after school in addition to improving academic achievement and helping working families. Afterschool programs provide youth a safe, supervised environment that reduces their risk of committing or becoming a victim of violent crime. A recent report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids has found that violent juvenile crime is most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., and that youth are more likely to smoke, drink or do drugs during these hours. Moreover, the U.S. Justice Department has found that murder rates among 14-17 year olds has increased 165% from 1985 to 1995.¹ Afterschool programs promote safety by preventing youth violence, providing safe places afterschool and educating youth about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids represents more than 1,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and crime survivors who view afterschool as a strategy to prevent crime and violence.

Preventing Youth Violence and Crime

In a survey of police chiefs, 86% felt that expanding afterschool programs would reduce youth crime and violence².

- Iola, Kansas has seen a significant reduction in juvenile crime since the beginning of the SAFE BASE afterschool program in 2000, a 21st Century Community Learning Center. In the first quarter of 2001, only 21 juvenile crimes were committed, compared to 69 juvenile crimes which were committed in the same quarter in 2000.

As a law enforcement officer for the City of Iola, the only reason that I can [attribute] to why the number of crimes being committed in our community by juveniles has reduced is due to the implementation of the SAFE BASE program.

-Thomas L. Rousch, Community Resource Officer, Iola Police Department³

- The Blossom Program in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York provides activities and mentoring afterschool to girls who are considered “at-risk” for gang activity. The program provides a supportive environment and supervised activities which include community service, computer labs, physical fitness or other activities which interest youth. Since its inception in 2000, the program has served 90 youth and has seen several participants improve their academic success and go on to college.

I was bad. I was always in trouble -- fighting, talking back to teachers....I didn't intend to finish school, but my guidance counselor introduced me to Isis (creator of Blossom), and I came to Blossom.

-Blossom Participant⁴

- Youth in Vancouver, Washington can turn to the Boys & Girls Club of Southwest Washington for a safe place after school. The Club is housed at an elementary school and provides activities such as cooking, art and homework help. The local police department credits the Club with a reduction in crime -- in the first year of the Club's operation, juvenile crime decreased 45% in a nearby apartment complex.

The program is about learning and having a safe place to be because so many kids don't have that in the rest of their lives.

-Becky Shipman, parent⁵

Providing Safe Places Afterschool

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids found the chances a youth will become a victim of violent crime more than triple between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.⁶

- The Boys & Girls Club in Visalia, California is providing youth with a safe environment after school and engaging them in physical activity and providing academic assistance. Participants' test scores have improved and a recent survey of Club members found that 95% are learning to say "no" to actions that seem wrong. Youth have access to sports, a library and a computer lab as well as to community volunteers who serve as role models.

...Kids need someplace to go where they won't get into trouble, instead of being babysat by the TV because their parents are at work. The Boys & Girls Club is a place where kids can go where they have good role models and adults they can talk to.

-Thora Guthrie, Development Director, Visalia Boys & Girls Club⁷

- The Police Activities League in New Castle, Delaware sponsors the "PAL-Ademics Program" after school. The program encourages good choice-making, develops academic skills and provides positive role-models. Activities include a drug awareness program led by the New Castle County Police Department, a homework club which is supervised by an educator and assistance with college applications and SAT preparation⁸.

Encouraging Drug and Alcohol Abuse Awareness

In a survey of American teens, the YMCA of the USA found that youth who are unsupervised after school are three times more likely to use drugs than their peers who are supervised. To address this finding, the YMCA has created a handbook for use in afterschool programs designed for middle-school aged youth. The handbook, called "Positively Drug-Free: A Prevention Awareness Handbook," provides practical activities which are meant to change youth perceptions about illicit drugs.⁹

- Youth in Fallbrook, California can participate in several programs through the Fallbrook Boys & Girls Club afterschool program. Smart Start, a program designed to prevent drug and alcohol abuse, includes games which teach drug awareness. The Boys & Girls Club also offers Smart Kids, a personal safety program, and Power Hour, which provides homework help. Additionally, youth can participate in a variety of recreational activities including music, nutrition or sports.

I have learned about bad drugs and the consequences that can happen to you if you take them.

- Fallbrook Boys & Girls Club member¹⁰

- Students in Waco, Texas, learn about the downfalls of drug and alcohol abuse as part of the Lighted Schools afterschool program. The Council on Alcoholism and Drugs leads a Straight Talk curriculum with youth once a week at every site. Police have also found that juvenile crime city-wide has dropped by approximately 10 % since the start of the program, which is funded in part by 21st Century Community Learning Centers and in part by Safe and Drug Free Schools, both through the U.S. Department of Education.¹¹ The school reported that youth in the program also showed less delinquent behavior and that school attendance has improved.¹²

¹ U.S. Justice Department, "Juvenile Offenders and Victims: A National Report," 1995.

² Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, "America's After-School Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime, or Youth Enrichment and Achievement," 1999.

³ Iola Police Department, Iola, Kansas, "Juvenile Crimes: City of Iola" 31 March 2001.

⁴ Shelby, Joyce, "Helping Girls to Blossom: After-School Program Gets High Marks," *Daily News* (New York), 17 March 2002.

⁵ Middlewood, Erin, "Club Clicks With Kids, Keeps Crime Down," *The Columbian* (Vancouver, WA), 21 March 2002.

⁶ Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1999.

⁷ Lieberman, Lisa, "Conference Reinforces Ideals of Area Keystone Teens: Tulare County Boys and Girls Club Sends Six to National Event," *The Fresno Bee*, 24 March 2002.

⁸ Police Athletics League of Delaware, Inc., 30 May 2002, <http://www.palde.org>.

⁹ Office of National Drug Control Policy, "National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign," 4 June 2002,

http://www.mediacampaign.org/newsletter/summerfall_01/.

¹⁰ Sheshadri, Triveni, "Boys & Girls Club Instills Life Skills in Kids," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, 6 February 2002.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, "Extending Learning Time: Creating Safe Havens for Learning," 4 June 2002,

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/LearnCenters/havens.html>.

¹² U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, "Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs," April 2000.