



*Safe Communities ~  
Safe Schools*

# FACT SHEET

FS-SC12

2001

## After School Programs

### After School Programs May Discourage Acts of Violence in Youth

Recent research studies reveal that violent crimes by juveniles peak in the afternoon at 3:00 p.m. and remain high until 9:00 p.m. By providing a safe and secure environment during these peak hours of violence, after-school programs may provide children and adolescents with an opportunity for constructive learning and positive development as an alternative to high-risk behaviors and violent activities.

Three types of after-school programs include the following:

1. **After-school programs:** These programs usually begin between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. and end around 6:00 p.m. on school days. The focus and content vary widely and staff may include certified teachers, trained youth workers, or teen-leaders.
2. **School-age child care:** These programs are explicitly understood to be responsible for children's care and well-being during the hours before or after school, on weekends and during summers and are often subject to state and/or municipal licensing requirements that cover facilities, staffing, etc.
3. **Youth development programs:** These programs promote positive development in one or several areas, for instance developing caring relationships, self-expression, or creative expression. Youth development programs often build on strengths and focus on skills and competencies the children possess.

There are two primary providers of after-school programs:

1. **Community-based organizations:** These programs have historically been the primary providers of after-school activities. They vary in their goals, content, structure, target population and approach. Five basic categories include:
  - . *National youth-serving organizations:* Examples of these include Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts, YMCA & YWCA, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.
  - . *Public-agency sponsored programs:* These include public libraries and parks and recreation.
  - . *Youth sports organizations:* Examples are Little League and the American Youth Soccer Organization.
  - . *Multiservice organizations:* These include religious institutions and the adult service clubs, such as the Rotary Club.
  - . *Independent youth organizations:* These start out at the grassroots level and provide a variety of services.

2. **Schools:** In the past, after-school programs were mainly administered by community-based organizations, but recently schools have also become involved as program providers.
  - a. *School-administered programs:* These tend to have more of an academic focus and are largely staffed by teachers. They may plan their activities according to the school district's standards/curriculum to coincide with classroom lectures.
  - b. *Community-based organization-administered programs:* These are administered by community-based organizations but located in schools. The Beacons schools in New York City are an example of this type of program.
  - c. *School-community partnerships:* These programs, often called "community schools," represent partnerships between community-based organizations and schools.

Regardless of the type of after-school program, there are some essential characteristics and components of high-quality programs. Programs that contain some or all of these have proven to be most successful in attracting and retaining youth's interest and gaining community support:

- Clear goals and intended outcomes
- Challenging and age appropriate content
- Opportunities for active learning processes
- Positive and safe environment
- Adequate materials and facilities
- Well-prepared and culturally competent staff
- Outreach to diverse groups of children and adolescents
- Willingness to work with other community resources and partners
- Parental involvement
- Willingness to continually improve

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#### References

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