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Policymaker Visits: Tips for Afterschool Providers



Site Visit Basics

What's a site visit?

A “site visit” gives a policymaker and/or their staff the opportunity to see your work firsthand by visiting your program where your work—and the benefits it provides—is in full action. Many site visits include a tour and give the policymaker a chance to meet your staff and speak with the children and families who are benefiting from your program.

A “site visit” is a surefire way to engage your policymaker in your work. It allows them to see firsthand the work that you are doing and connects them in an effective way by creating a visual image.

What's the value of asking a policymaker for a site visit?

Asking your policymaker to visit your program is one of the most effective ways to familiarize them with your work and show off your successes. It gives you the opportunity to get to know the policymaker better and build your relationship with them. A policymaker who has seen what you're doing for themselves is more likely to champion your issue in the future. It also provides some great photo opportunities!

How does the process work?

Policymakers receive many requests for site visits, but their ability to accept your invitation will depend on many factors, including the policymaker's busy schedule. The first step is to settle on a date. It is important to have a date or a few dates in mind when you first approach the subject, but it's also good to make sure the policymaker and their staff knows you can be flexible. As you work to determine a date, you should also develop an agenda for the visit and consider who else you will invite and how they will contribute to a successful visit.

Sources

Adapted from the *Connect Resource Manual* from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Site Visit Planning Guide

Before the Meeting

Ask Yourself the Following Questions:

1. What do I want the policymaker to remember about our work?
2. What is the objective of the event?
3. What is my ask?
4. Who will speak? What messages will each speaker deliver?
5. What do I want the policymaker to see during the visit?
6. Whom will she or he meet?

Find a date.

Suggest a specific date (or two) for the visit. However, unless these are the only dates available, indicate the dates are flexible and, if they aren't feasible for their office, you can work with them to find a date that suits.

Use your policymaker's time carefully.

Find out how much time the policymaker plans to spend. If he or she only plans to spend 20 minutes, you want to make sure that everyone is well prepared and that they can deliver their messages concisely. If the policymaker plans to spend an hour or more, take advantage of this extra time; you could arrange for an informal roundtable with the policymaker and a handful of key partners who have great stories to tell about your program.

Plan an activity:

You will want to include a fun, memorable activity with visual appeal – especially if there will be photographers from your organization, the policymaker's office, or the media. Some ideas include: a tour of the facility led (or supported) by children and/or families, a science experiment or other STEM activity, a physically active game, or preparing or eating healthy snacks.

Invite widely but wisely.

If your policymaker's schedule allows a lengthier visit and you have the space, consider inviting a wide variety of people—families, current and potential funders, existing and potential partner organizations and coalition members, and local civic leaders. Even for short visits, plan to invite one or two key people from among these groups. A visit from your policymaker is also an excellent time to invite any people whom you want to engage in your work but who have been reluctant to meet with you in the past. A note of caution:

Some people or organizations may see your policymaker's visit as an opportunity to advance their own agendas. Make sure everyone understands the focus and purpose of the visit to minimize potential distractions.



Make a Social Media Plan.

Try to create some excitement around the visit on Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram – before, during, and after the visit! Don't forget to "tag" or include the handle for the policymaker or other special guests, and highlight your key messages about the value of out-of-school programs.

Carefully consider speakers and messaging.

Think strategically about who should speak and how their remarks fit with your overall message. Be sure to include your mission, services and challenges in a way that is relevant to the policymaker. Also, be sure to mention partners and community and business support, if applicable.

Stage the room.

Think about how you want to arrange the room where most of the site visit will take place. If it's a smaller group, you may want to arrange the seats in a circle, or around a table, to create a more casual environment that will foster the sharing of ideas.

Share a personal story.

Choose one student or family who has benefited from your work to explain how it has affected his or her life. Be sure this person is a constituent of the policymaker. Often the true story of a single person carries more impact than any other part of a visit.

Invite media.

Check with the policymaker's press secretary before your event to find out if the office plans to invite media, and whether the policymaker will be holding other media events that day. If they are not issuing a press release, write your own and share it with the press secretary for approval in advance.

Send it to your local newspapers, as well as to TV and radio stations.

The policymaker's press secretary may be able to provide you with a list of media outlets, as well as a quote from the policymaker.

Appoint a key contact.

Appoint someone to greet the policymaker and guide him or her through your event. This person should also establish contact with the district staff person who will accompany the policymaker on the visit. Be sure that the policymaker and their staff person receive briefing materials before the visit. Depending on the type of visit, staff may request talking points for the policymaker, as well as project results, relevant data and the guest list.

Share the limelight.

Acknowledge funders, leaders and your staff members who have contributed to your work's success. If there is time, consider giving them a few minutes to explain why they have supported your work.



After the Meeting

Many thanks.

Send thank-you letters to any staff members who helped you set up the visit, as well as to the policymaker. In the letter to the policymaker, recognize the staff members who were particularly helpful to you or who offered to do additional work on your behalf.

Copy those staff on the letter to the policymaker.

Consider also sending thank-you notes from the children and teens who participate in the program, especially those who may have met with the policymaker.

Share some photos from the visit on Twitter and Facebook, and be sure to thank (and tag!) your policymaker and any other guests.

Stay in touch.

Keep staff updated on events and the impact you are making within the community. Keep them on your e-mail list.

Send photos.

Follow up with an email and share a few of the best shots with the policymaker and his/her staff. Encourage them to post on their website or share in their newsletter.

This is just the beginning.

If the policymaker agrees to take some action on your behalf, determine which staff person is the point person who will work with you to follow up. It's important to stay in touch and work with that staff person to make it happen.

Event Checklist

- **Food**
You don't have to try to impress anyone, but do serve appropriate snacks and beverages.
- **Photographer**
Have a photographer – maybe someone on staff – record the event. These photos will come in handy. If you don't already have photo releases on file, be sure to secure proper permissions with consent forms.
- **Note taker**
Arrange for someone to take notes during the visit and prepare a written report afterward.
- **Name tags**
Name tags will be very helpful for the policymaker and his or her staff, as well as other guests.
- **Materials**
Be strategic in selecting the materials for the meeting. Limit yourself to just a few key documents, keep them brief, and make sure that your contact information is on everything you provide to the policymaker or staff person. The one pager about the Indiana Afterschool Network and the infographics are nice leave behinds.
- **Live-tweeter**
If possible, it's great to share photos, quotations, or other live highlights from the site visit.
- **Greeter**
Make sure your greeter is familiar with the objectives of the visit and knows the schedule for the day. Make sure he or she will recognize the policymaker upon arrival and knows everyone he or she needs to meet during the visit.

Sources

Adapted from the *Connect Resource Manual* from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Sample Invite Letter

[Your Address]

[Date]

The Honorable [Policymaker name]

[Office address]

Dear [Policymaker Name]: I would like to invite you and your staff to visit the [Bright Lights Summer Program] this summer.

Our program provides [300 middle school children] with safe, educational afterschool activities during the summer months. Research shows that summer learning loss is a significant contributor to the achievement gap; students from low-income families typically lose two to three months in reading achievement and two months of math skills during the summer months. Students in our program have valuable opportunities to [be physically active; learn to garden, cook healthy meals and explore new interests; and support their communities through service projects]. We would like to take you on a short tour of our program on [date] at [time].

If that time is not convenient, we would be happy to work with you to find a time that is. I have also invited members of the local [Rotary Club] and several parents to attend. They are eager to talk with you about the importance of keeping afterschool programs open and making these programs available to more children.

I hope you will join us and see our program, and our students, in action. Afterschool programs such as ours are important because they inspire students to learn, keep kids safe and help working families. The [Bright Lights] community relies on us.

A profile of the [Bright Lights Summer Program] is enclosed for your reference. I will contact your office within the next two weeks to follow up. I look forward to seeing you on [date].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

Sources

Adapted from *Afterschool for All Challenge: Take Action at Home Kit* from the Afterschool Alliance



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Sample Thank You Note

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [Ruth Smith]

[Local Office Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Senator Smith]: Thank you for taking the time to tour our [Bright Lights Summer Program] on [date]. The youth, parents and program staff enjoyed meeting you tremendously, and we were delighted to have the chance to share our activities with you.

I hope your visit helped reinforce how much our community values this program. As we discussed, and as I have witnessed firsthand, out-of-school programs keep kids safe, inspire learning and help working families.

I look forward to meeting with you again to further discuss the ways in which we can work together to ensure that out-of-school programs stay open and are available to more children in our community and our state. Thank you again for taking the time to visit!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

Sources

Adapted from *Afterschool for All Challenge: Take Action at Home Kit* from the Afterschool Alliance



Pitch Your Site Visit to Local Media

Inviting Media to Attend

Check with the policymaker's office before your event to find out if the office plans to invite media. If they are not, and they are OK with it, you can invite the media yourself! A short pitch note is all you really need, but you may also want to write a detailed press release, which you can add to the end of the email. Be sure to make sure this is OK with the policymaker's office.

Sample Pitch Note Inviting Media to Attend

Subject line:

Invitation: Mayor Millstone to Tour STEM-Focused Afterschool Program

Email body:

Hi, [reporter name].

Next week, Mayor Stephanie Millstone will join the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, along with business leaders and local families, for a tour – including viewing child-led demonstrations of science projects – of Stevens Middle School's STEM-focused afterschool program, Just For Kids.

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students' math and science grades, fewer disciplinary problems and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.

[I have pasted the full press release about the event below]. If you, or someone else at the Rivertowne Gazette, is interested in attending the event, please let me know!

Best,

[name]

[title]

[email address]

[phone number]



Sharing News With Media Who Didn't Attend Event

Some publications – especially those with smaller staffs – may not be able to send a reporter to the event, but will still write a story afterward. Or, they may be interested in publishing photographs that you have taken.

Sample Pitch Note: Following Up After Event

Subject line:

Photos, Interviews Available: Mayor Millstone to Tour STEM-Focused Afterschool Program

Email body:

Hi, [reporter name].

Last week, Mayor Stephanie Millstone joined the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, along with business leaders and local families, for a tour – including viewing child-led demonstrations of science projects – of Stevens Middle School's STEM-focused afterschool program, Just For Kids.

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students' math and science grades, fewer disciplinary problems and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.

[I have pasted the full press release about the event below]. I have some great photos from the event that I would be happy to share for publication. If you are interested in speaking with Mayor Millstone or Michael Koss (Principal of Stevens Middle School) about the new program, or in seeing the photos from the event, please let me know!

Best,

[name]

[title]

[email address]

[phone number]



Writing a Press Release

Key tips about news releases:

- ✓ News releases should sound like a news story written by a sympathetic reporter. That means that they should be written in a reporter's voice, not an advocate's. Commentary in a news release should be in quotes and attributed to a spokesperson.
- ✓ News releases should have a headline. Some may also have a "subhead," or a second headline.
- ✓ News releases should have a "lead paragraph" that clearly states the news of the release, and answers the Who, What, When, Where and Why questions.
- ✓ Many news releases are structured as follows (see Sample below):
- ✓ Lead Paragraph: Who, What, When, Where, Why
- ✓ 2nd Paragraph: Quote from organizational spokesperson
- ✓ 3rd Paragraph: More information about the announcement
- ✓ 4th Paragraph: More information and examples
- ✓ 5th Paragraph: Second quote from another organizational spokesperson
- ✓ 6th Paragraph: Contact information for the organization

You may be able to get a quote from the policymaker to include in the release. You can draft a quote yourself, and offer the policymaker (or their staff) the opportunity to read the release and either (1) approve the quote, (2) revise it, or (3) replace it with one that they have written themselves.

Don't forget to include at the top of the document a name and phone number of someone the media can contact to follow up. Be sure to date the document.

Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jill Smith
jsmith@sample.net
(513) 555-1234

MAYOR MILLSTONE TOURS STEM-FOCUSED KIDS' AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Program Provides Supervised Activities, Including Learning Opportunities Focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, for Local Middle School Students

Rivertowne, Ohio - Mayor Stephanie Millstone joined the principal and faculty members of Stevens Middle School, business leaders and local families today for a tour of Stevens Middle School's afterschool program, Just For Kids. Nearly a third of the students attending Stevens



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Middle School have already enrolled in the program that will provide three hours (3 p.m. - 6 p.m.) of supervised afterschool activities, including homework assistance, arts and crafts, and recreation, with a special focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). The program is open to students in grades six to eight.

“The need and demand for high quality afterschool programs in our city is tremendous,” said Mayor Millstone. “Too many children are unsupervised between the time the school doors close and parents get home from work. Just For Kids will help give children educational, safe, exciting places to spend their time after school, and will improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) interest and skills for young people in our communities. “

More than 28 million school-age children have either their only parent or both parents working outside the home. More than 11 million “latchkey children” go home afterschool each day to a house with no adult supervision, and without the opportunities to learn that afterschool programs can provide.

“Colleges’ and employers’ demand for STEM skills is growing, and we are proud that our school is helping to better meet the needs of our students and their families,” said Michael Koss, Principal of Stevens Middle School. “Afterschool programs pay enormous benefits. They inspire children to learn. They keep kids safe in the sometimes perilous afterschool hours. And they help working parents keep working, free of fears about what their kids might be up to after the end of the regular school day.”

Just For Kids is the tenth afterschool program established through the Rivertowne Student Success program in the past two years, with nearly 2,000 students enrolled. The nine other participating schools offering afterschool programs have seen a noticeable improvement in the students’ grades, fewer disciplinary problems and higher attendance rates. The Rivertowne police department reports there has been a lower rate of juvenile crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. since the Student Success program began.

Rivertowne Student Success program is a collaborative effort of the Mayor’s office and the Rivertowne School District with the goal of making afterschool programs available to every public elementary and middle school student in the city.

For more information about Rivertowne Student Success program, contact Jennifer Greene at (513) 555-4567. Parents interested in enrolling their child in Just For Kids should call (513) 555-2345.



Preparing a media list

If you don't already have a list of reporters, editors, columnists, photo editors and producers who cover education, children and families, parenting, workplace and feature stories in your media market, now is a good time to create one.

Resources to tap for a start:

- ✓ The policymaker's office may be able to provide you with a list of media outlets and/or reporters.
- ✓ Some United Way locations have media guides that are available to community agencies for a nominal fee.
- ✓ Public relations offices at community colleges are often willing to share their media lists with other education agencies.

You can also make a list of all local TV and radio stations (including college and university-affiliated stations), daily and weekly newspapers (including ethnic, community and other specialty papers), wire services and magazines, locally-oriented websites, and newsletters or bulletins from interested community and faith-based organizations.

Call and ask for the name of the editor, reporter or producer who covers education, children and families, parenting, workplace and features. Request the phone number and e-mail address for each person. Ask also for the names of and contact information for producers at broadcast news and talk shows that cover issues like afterschool, and columnists who cover education and family issues at local newspapers of all kinds.

Media lists should be updated – ideally twice per year, as journalists tend to shift beats and jobs fairly often.

Sources

Adapted from *Afterschool for All Challenge: Take Action at Home Kit* from the Afterschool Alliance

Using Stories to Deliver Your Message

“A good story can transform a polite listener into an engaged champion of your work.”

The Power of Stories.

Stories can make facts and statistics come alive and make you and your work memorable to your audience. Stories can be used to:

- Initiate emotion and outrage
- Explain facts
- Explain successes
- Persuade

Tips for an Effective Story. Try to...

- Use your story to illustrate a key point about your work—a success, a challenge, a unique way your work addresses the issue at hand.
- Craft your story in a way that gives policymakers a better understanding of a specific problem facing the communities they represent and how your work improves the lives of kids and families in those communities.
- Seek out stories or examples that tie into your audience’s feelings, or their specific interests: For example, if your representative is on the Public Health committee, perhaps you can talk about children who really benefit from the healthy food or physical activity offered in your program.
- Keep the plot simple and vivid—not every detail is important.
- Repeat memorable phrases.
- Be concise.
- Share your optimism and resolve!



Questions to Keep in Mind

Despite the science behind storytelling, being successful is an art and it takes practice. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you craft your story:

- Who are you talking to?** How does your story appeal to the specific interests of your representative? What links to your member's interests can you include?
- What's your message?** Make sure that the story transitions smoothly into your message and ask. One way to do this is by thinking, if not saying aloud, "I tell you this story because..."
- How can I keep this short?** Your story doesn't have to be long and complicated and neither do your sentences. Keep your writing and delivery short, punchy and impactful.
- What are some telling details?** The difference between a story that resonates and sticks with your audience and one that falls flat is the detail that makes it genuine. Paint a picture through some small detail that brings the subject to life. If you're talking about a person, tell us how many children they have, or the exact number of miles they have to travel to get to school or see a doctor. Specific details take your story to another level.
- Does this story have suspense?** If the end of your story is predictable, it's also forgettable. Surprising or counterintuitive endings stick with people.
- How does the policymaker fit into the story?** Be careful not to cast your policymaker as the "villain" or the barrier to a good outcome. Show them how they can be part of the solution.
- Do you personally care about this story?** If you don't genuinely care about your story as you're telling it, your audience will know.



Examples of Compelling Stories

(see more at in America's Afterschool Storybook: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/storybook/gallery.cfm>)

From a Parent:

Amy Griffin

Clearwater, Florida

My story is about my son, Jamieson. When he was 12 years old, we moved from Hartford, Vermont to Clearwater, Florida. Jamieson and his brother had to leave behind everything they knew, say good-bye to all of their friends and family and start a new life in a new city. On their first day of school, my husband and I waited with guilt in our stomachs for our sons to come home. What they told us was, unfortunately, pretty much what we had expected: they knew no one and felt very much alone.

Meanwhile, I got involved with the YMCA of Clearwater. In Vermont, we had never had such access to such an organization. I started out working at Belleair Elementary School as a group leader under the direction of wonderful Mattie Herrar. I found that working for an organization that truly stood for helping families was exhilarating. Soon afterward, both my sons began volunteering at the "YREADS" program at Belleair afterschool. And Jamieson's involvement in that program has made a huge difference in his life.

After the program ended for the year, both of my kids spent their first summer helping out at the YMCA camp at Ponce De Leon Elementary. Jamieson floated from group to group working with different group leaders and getting to know all the children. After the summer was over, he went back to working at the "YREADS" program. Jamieson often speaks of the joy he gets from working with children and watching them learn and grow over the course of the year. I have watched his heart grow bigger and bigger as he worries about a certain child and what kind of day that child is having.

In January, Jamieson's father was diagnosis with colon cancer. Suddenly the love he had been giving to all these children was given back two-fold by those same children and the program staff.

In May, Jamieson was honored as Volunteer of the Month for the School Age Programs. He continues to give up vacations and days off to work with the YMCA. This summer he worked with me at the Belleair Pre K Camp. It is so funny to see this 6-foot-something man playing with these little campers who are only three to five years old. No matter what course he charts, I know that early on, Jamieson has learned that it is not what we get in life, it is what we give.

From a Provider:

Gloria Hernandez

Modesto, California

Although I have just completed my second year of teaching, I like to think my career really began eight years ago when I was assigned to work for the 21st Century Afterschool Program at Hanshaw Jr. High. I was a first-year college student back then, I was assigned to be a tutor through CSU Stanislaus' PAD program, and I had long ago abandoned my childhood dream of becoming a teacher. I stayed with the program for six years. I was an academic mentor, an AVID tutor, a Tae Bo instructor, a role model and a friend to these students. I saw four academic case managers come and go. I watched the program peak and flourish. I proudly attended six graduation ceremonies. I learned that a student is so much more than a face, an attitude, and a smile. I wanted to be a teacher again.



The 21st Century Program did so much for my future and for the future of the students who experienced the program. It was more than afterschool tutoring and recreation. We developed entities at our program that brought culture, self-esteem, happiness, life-skills, and support to so many children. For some, we were the only positive adult figures in their lives. I was so lucky to be there. I worked with people who loved children and truly cared about their well-being. I will never forget my experiences at Hanshaw. Through them, I learned the real life issues involved in teaching.

My students walk into my classroom with weights on their shoulders; the weight of their world. My job is to give them an education, provide support, and acknowledge that weight. I owe this insight to my mentors who taught me what it means to give back to the community, the 21st Century Director and all the past academic case managers: John, Jaime, Manuel, Jorge, and Jose. Thank you.

From a Teen:

Chondalaya Hurt
Chicago, Illinois

During my freshman year in high school, my dad was deployed to Kuwait. I reacted in all the wrong ways. I started to get into all kinds of trouble. I was fighting with girls at school and failing my classes. I was suspended more times than I can count. My mom was stressed out and mad at me, and when I got to talk to my dad, I could tell he was disappointed. At the time, I didn't care about anyone, including myself. I was so out of control that my cousin, our friend and I jumped a girl in the locker room at school. My school suspended me and put me on probation.

That's when I realized that I had gone too far. Fortunately, I was referred to Constance Carter at Project BUILD, which is a program that provides support and afterschool and summer activities for delinquent youth to help get us back on track.

This was a turning point in my life. Connie was always there for me, listening to me, making sure I came to BUILD, kept up with my school work and behaved myself. She always stayed positive even when I made mistakes. At BUILD, I got involved in the Becoming Women program, and was trained to counsel teenage girls who were engaged in self-destructive behavior, including drug or alcohol abuse, suicide, cutting, teen pregnancy, dating violence and eating disorders. That experience helped build my self-esteem and taught me to respect both myself and others, and how to make great choices and overcome stress and depression. I also joined Brand BUILD, which is the afterschool jewelry making program. There, I met Kaleen, who encouraged me to go to college.

Through BUILD, I got a summer internship with the Youth Council. I spent my summer organizing and planning the BUILD Board Awards, which acknowledge youth agencies in the Humboldt Park community that provide good afterschool programs and services to youth. I learned business and communication skills, and how to multi-task. We went on trips and played sports, all while preparing for the awards ceremony.

During my junior year, my dad came back. He's now retired from the Army. My attitude has totally changed. I'm staying out of trouble and I'm focused on school. I was chosen from 1,000 applicants in 2007 as one of the Bank of America student leaders. I graduated high school, got a volleyball scholarship and just completed my first year of a nursing program. I learned volleyball through the BUILD afterschool program. Thanks to the support I got from my parents and from BUILD, I plan on graduating from college and becoming a dedicated and helpful registered nurse.



From an Indiana 21st Century Learning Center:

Austin Learning Center

The Austin Learning Center Afterschool Program targets at-risk students. The city in which these students live is second highest in the state in child abuse; moreover, this city's poverty level is nearly double the state average. This causes several students to go without essential foods when school is out. The Afterschool Program will meet these students' unmet needs with nutritious food. When students' needs are met, they can focus more intently on academic work, improving their chances of success in the future.

- James from the Middle School says if it were not for the Afterschool Program, he would be running the streets getting in trouble with his friends.
- Kane, a senior, needed one class for graduation and was thrilled to be able to concentrate on that one class and get out of school in February, instead of having to attend school until the end of May. He was able to connect with full time employment 4 months early.
- Dakota gets the one-to-one tutoring she needs to understand her math assignments by seeking help from other staff members during their student-free times.
- Luke moved here from Kentucky and needed help with food. He enrolled in Credit Recovery and was able to get on track for graduation.
- Christina moved here with her family. They were homeless. She joined the Credit Recovery program and through the donation fund and Afterschool contacts was able to get housing, food, and clothes.
- Kenneth's father got out of prison and worked to get his son out of foster care. Father reports a real need of the program to help with food, clothing, academic assistance and child care while he works.
- ALC had a kindergarten student, Brittney, who did not want to go home one evening. She curled up in a ball crying because it was time to go home. The child was afraid her dad's supplier would be there waiting to hurt her. Staff delivered her personally to ensure her safety.
- Tyler, a long time attendee at the Afterschool and then enrolled in Credit Recovery, was in need of medical attention that the family could not provide because of no medical insurance. The donation fund was able to pay for his medical care.
- Bernie, a success story, came back to tell the director that "had it not been for the program, I would never have made it." He now works at Cummins.
- Shanda and Devon, brother and sister, was greeted on the sidewalk after the program had started back after the summer break. They said they sure did miss the program and now they would be able to eat again. Shanda had lost 10 pounds or more over the summer break.
- A survey of the current 3rd grade class reveals the students really like being able to get their homework done before going home. The boys really liked having gym time after their homework was done. The girls commented they liked being able to meet with friends that they no longer had in the same classroom at school. A couple of them mentioned bonding with their instructor and wanted to keep her for the next year too.



Message Guide

These messages were developed in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance and its key partners to help state networks and other important stakeholders communicate clearly and consistently about the promise of and demand for quality afterschool programs. The manual includes core messages and facts that help illustrate the growing unmet demand and strong public support for afterschool programs, as well as the many ways afterschool programs benefit children, families, and communities

Working Families Depend on Afterschool Programs

For the moms and dads who are still at work when the school bell rings, the afterschool hours can present a real challenge. Families report that the gap between work and school schedules can be up to 25 hours per week. This leads to stress and missed work time for parents. Parental concerns about afterschool care result in decreased productivity that costs businesses nationwide up to \$300 billion per year.

Afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind and help them keep their jobs.

Afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs by ensuring that children are safe and learning while parents are still at work. Among Indiana parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 72% agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.
- 76% agree the programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work.

Parents value afterschool programs for many reasons and are highly satisfied.

Parents view afterschool programs as more than just a safe environment for children. They recognize that these programs provide a wide range of activities and enriching learning opportunities for children and teens. Parents want their child's out-of-school experience to be fun and varied--and they want it to provide learning activities that are not offered during the regular school day.

Among Indiana parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 88% are satisfied with the program overall.
- 83% are satisfied with the quality of care.
- 82% are satisfied with the amount of physical activity offered.

Indiana parents cite several factors as very important when selecting an afterschool program. They want a program that:

- their child enjoys.
- provides a safe haven.
- offers high quality of care.
- has a convenient location.
- has hours that meet parents' needs.

Afterschool programs provide critical support for working parents and the economy.

Parents are increasingly turning to afterschool programs to meet their own and their children's needs in the hours after school. Parents who are fortunate enough to have access to afterschool programs are highly satisfied, but the demand for available programs far exceeds the supply. We need policymakers, philanthropies, and businesses to step up because every child who wants to participate in an afterschool program should have that opportunity.



Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe, Help Them Avoid Risky Behaviors

One in five Indiana children (over 200,000 kids) are alone and unsupervised from 3 to 6 p.m. every day. Those are the peak hours for kids to commit crimes or become victims of crimes and to experiment with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and sex.

Afterschool programs provide a safe environment and help kids develop valuable life skills.

Afterschool programs give kids a safe place to play, learn, and engage with positive role models who help them develop leadership skills and the ability to make responsible decisions. Kids who regularly attend these programs:

- are more aware of the dangers of alcohol, drugs and other risky activities.
- learn how to manage their aggression and avoid situations that negatively impact their academics and future goals.
- are less likely to take part in criminal activities and have lower incidences of drug use, violence, and pregnancy.
- improve their self-perception and develop positive social skills, like cooperation and helping others.
- earn better grades, behave better in school, and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Parents depend on afterschool programs, believe they keep kids safe and out of trouble.

Today over 120,000 Indiana children participate in afterschool programs, and demand continues to grow. Another 300,000 children would participate if a program were available.

Among parents with a child in an afterschool program:

- 84% agree the programs keep kids safe and out of trouble.
- 83% say the program can help reduce the likelihood that kids will commit a crime, use drugs, and become a teen parent.

Afterschool is a smart investment.

Every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves \$9 by reducing crime and welfare costs, improving kids' performance at school, and increasing kids' earning potential. We need to invest in afterschool programs--at the federal and state level--to ensure that afterschool is available to all.



Afterschool Programs Help Kids Succeed in School and Life

Success in school and life requires a solid academic foundation as well as skills such as the ability to work collaboratively, problem solve, make responsible decisions, and communicate effectively.

Kids who regularly participate in afterschool programs perform better academically. They demonstrate gains in reading and math and improved school attendance, work habits, and grades. They also are more likely to advance to the next grade and have higher graduation rates.

Afterschool programs help children develop the skills they need to learn, grow, and thrive in school and in life. Students who regularly participate in quality afterschool programs:

- develop strong social skills.
- make better decisions.
- improve their self-perception and esteem.
- are excited about learning.
- behave better in the classroom.

Parents believe afterschool programs help their kids succeed.

An overwhelming percentage of parents with kids in afterschool programs say the programs help kids:

- develop social skills. 88%
- complete homework. 82%
- gain interest and skills in science, technology, engineering, or math. 78%
- improve their behavior at school. 78%
- gain workforce skills, like teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. 77%

Investing in afterschool is critical to kids' success.

Afterschool programs offer enriching experiences that engage students, encourage creativity, and inspire a love of learning. They help students stay in school, graduate, and gain valuable life skills. All children deserve the opportunity to take part in afterschool programs that provide the building blocks they need to thrive in school, in career, and beyond.



Afterschool Programs Prepare Students for College and the Workforce

Given our complex and changing world, today's students need to be critical thinkers who can tackle modern challenges. Learning in science, technology, engineering, and math — the subjects called “STEM” — builds knowledge and skills that help students reason through tough problems and come up with creative, effective, and reasonable solutions. Young people also need to develop 21st century skills necessary for success in the global economy, such as leadership, cooperation, shared understanding, and civic engagement.

Afterschool programs help students graduate from high school and gain workforce skills.

Students who participate in afterschool programs are more likely to advance to the next grade and have higher graduation rates. Afterschool programs also are stepping up to offer learning experiences that prepare students for jobs in high demand.

Parents value afterschool STEM.

- Afterschool programs offer kids across Indiana STEM learning experiences.
- Most Indiana parents (59%) with kids who participate in afterschool STEM programs are satisfied with the STEM learning opportunities.
- 67% of Indiana parents agree that afterschool programs should offer opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning.

Afterschool programs help our nation's kids prepare for the future.

Afterschool programs do more than support learning that takes place during the regular school day. The afterschool space gives young people the freedom to explore outside of core curriculum subjects and engages them in hands-on learning that promotes collaborative thinking, leadership, and civic participation.

We have much more work ahead of us to ensure that all children are afforded the opportunities afterschool programs offer. It will take a united effort to increase the availability of quality afterschool programs that help children reach their full potential and succeed in school, college, career, and beyond.



Afterschool Programs Provide Opportunities for Healthy Living

Access to healthy options such as quality food and exercise is not equally dispersed among populations. The United States has reached a point where almost 1 in 3 children and teens qualify as overweight or obese. Obesity is connected with further ailments such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and asthma. Healthy eating and exercise reduce the risks of obesity yet only 42% of kids get the recommended amount of daily activity and only 10% are eating a recommended amount of vegetables. Instruction and access to healthy lifestyles can promote a healthy habit lifestyle and bring further rewards in how a student feels about themselves and their mental and physical energy.

Parents know this, which is why 8 in 10 Indiana parents agree that afterschool programs should provide children opportunities to be physically active, and 7 in 10 say that afterschool programs should provide children healthy beverages, snacks and/or meals.

Afterschool programs provide important access to nutrition and exercise.

- 82% of parents are satisfied with the amount of physical activity offered by their student's after school program*
- 75% of parents appreciate the variety of physical activities offered in their student's after school program*
- 71% of parents are pleased with the healthy foods offered*

*Among parents whose afterschool programs provide this offering

Afterschool programs boost opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

The fact that afterschool programs offer recreational activities for youth that engage them in extra time with physical activity supports national efforts to stem obesity and focus on wellness. Additionally, with programs often receiving support for meals and snacks, children are exposed to healthy eating habits and nutrition education that feeds their growing bodies and minds. Some afterschool programs go even farther, teaching students cooking lessons or having children grow and prepare their own local dishes directly from program based gardens. The opportunities for creativity and engagement are broad and the rewards can be seen in the short and long term academic and health outcomes of our youth.



Afterschool and Summer Programs work to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps between the rich and poor

The academic achievement gap between students from lower -and higher-income families has grown by 40% in 30 years. Research points to one reason for this disparity is unequal access to opportunities. For example, low income students lose more than two months of educational progress over the summer months, while middle income students make slight gains. In fact, this loss makes up about 67% of the achievement gap in reading among ninth graders . More generally, higher income students often have more access to the tutors, mentors, homework help, and enrichments that provide them with the extra time and attention they need to build and hone their skills toward school, college and career success. Ensuring that all students regardless of family income have access to academic, artistic, social and other types of enrichment should be a top national priority.

Afterschool Programs can Equalize the Playing Field.

Programs stem the tides of intergenerational poverty by providing opportunities to low income students.

- 69% say programs provide opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)
- Research shows that quality programs can reduce or reverse summer learning loss

Afterschool Programs bridge divides between “haves” and “have nots.”

Having resources means being able to provide one’s children with the benefits of academics supports and cultural enrichments when school is out, yet not having resources should not be a reason that young people are denied access to these essential supports. Afterschool and summer programs provide the links that many students need to the school day to keep their progress on-going. Without these links, gaps grow and inequalities entrench; with these links, all students have an opportunity to thrive and move up the ladder together.



General Lobbying Rules For Non Profits

Types of Organizations

When it comes to lobbying, there are common misconceptions about what 501(c)(3) organizations can and cannot do. Because of this lack of clarity, many organizations simply avoid lobbying altogether. But 501(c)(3) organizations have every right to express their views through lobbying legislators and mobilizing their supporters. In fact, if they do NOT express their views, an important voice will be missing when policy is formed. For afterschool in particular, the voices of non-profit providers are absolutely indispensable. The information below is meant to help your organization figure out how you can lobby for your program, and all afterschool programs, within the bounds of the law.

What is lobbying?

There are 2 types of lobbying: Direct Lobbying and Grassroots Lobbying.

Direct lobbying is defined as communication with a legislator, an employee of a legislator or legislative body, or any covered executive branch or other government employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation. The communication refers to a specific piece of legislation and expresses a view on that legislation.

For example:

- You call your Senator to say that you'd like her to increase the amount of funding in the new appropriations bill for the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program;
- You write an email to your Representative urging him to support a change in the No Child Left Behind Act that would make Supplemental Education Service funds more accessible to afterschool programs;
- You attempt to influence a legislator on a confirmation vote;
- You meet with officials of the executive branch to influence testimony on a legislative proposal.

Grassroots Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about that legislation. A communication constitutes grassroots lobbying if it refers to specific legislation, reflects a view on that specific legislation and encourages the recipient of the communication to take lobbying action. This type of communication is known as a call to action.

For Example:

- You send a letter to afterschool supporters in your community asking them to contact their state representative to encourage him to support a bill that would provide new state funds for afterschool programs;
- You send an email to afterschool supporters in your community asking them to contact their Members of Congress and urge her to sign on to a letter to the President asking him to increase funding for afterschool programs in his budget;
- You send an email to the afterschool community encouraging them to ask their legislators to vote for or against a bill.



Lobbying is NOT: nonpartisan analysis, study or research, examinations and discussions of broad social, economic and similar problems, promoting and touting the success of your program, requests for technical advice or assistance, or “self-defense” communications.

For Example (these would NOT be considered lobbying):

- Sending an email to the afterschool community with an update on or summary of legislation that does not include a call to action (such as a monthly legislative update);
- Making the results of an independent and objective nonpartisan analysis, study, or research on a legislative issue available to the public;
- Responding to verbal or written requests from a legislative body, committee, or subcommittee for technical advice on pending legislation;
- Participating in a discussion of policy issues where the resolution might require legislation, as long as the discussion does not address the merits of specific legislative measures;
- Meeting with your Member of Congress to discuss your program, as well as the general need for and benefits of afterschool programs in your community, without referring to a specific legislative proposal;
- Planning and hosting a briefing on the unique needs of rural communities when it comes to afterschool programs.

Defining Terms

What is communication?

Communication can be a phone call, letter, email, fax or some other mechanism for conveying a message.

Who is a legislator?

A legislator is a member of a legislative body OR his or her staff. Members of administrative bodies, such as school boards, housing authorities, zoning boards or other bodies for special purposes, whether elected or appointed, are generally not considered legislators.

Who is the public?

The public can be defined as anyone except for a legislator or member of an organization. Communication to the members of your organization asking them to contact legislators and express an opinion about a specific bill is considered direct lobbying. Communication to the public is considered grassroots lobbying. A member of your organization is someone who has given more than a small amount of time or money to the organization. For example, you pass an email to your staff or organization members that encourage them to contact their Member of Congress about a specific bill. Though you have not contacted the Member of Congress yourself, this is considered direct lobbying.

What is nonpartisan analysis, study or research?

Nonpartisan analysis, study or research is a study or research that provides information on all sides of the issue and is made available to at least a segment of the general public or to governmental bodies and employees. It may also be distributed, in part, to Members of Congress as long as it is widely distributed.



What are examinations and discussions of broad social, economic and similar problems?

Examinations and discussions of broad social, economic and similar problems are communications that do not refer to specific legislation or directly encourage the recipients to take action.

What are requests for technical advice or assistance?

Requests for technical advice or assistance are not considered lobbying if a legislative body or committee requests in writing that you respond or provide information about a certain piece of legislation.

What are “self-defense” communications?

“Self-defense” communications are communications from your agency to a legislative body concerning specific legislation that could affect your organization’s existence, powers, duties, tax-exempt status, or the deductibility of contributions.

How do you measure lobbying?

501(c)(3) organizations can choose one of two methods to measure their lobbying: The “Insubstantial Part” Test is the default method. This test requires that lobbying be limited to an insubstantial part of an organization’s overall activity. There are no clear definitions or guidelines as to what constitutes lobbying, what an “insubstantial part” is, or how to measure activities. An organization is subject to this test unless and until it elects otherwise.

The 501(h) Expenditure Test is the second method of measuring lobbying activity. This test provides clearer guidelines, defining lobbying, providing an exact dollar-based lobbying limit and measuring lobbying based upon an organization’s expenditures. Under 501(h) rules, you can calculate the overall lobbying limit of your organization as follows: you can spend 20% of the first \$500,000 of your budget on lobbying. You can spend 15% of the next \$500,000, 10% of the next \$500,000 and 5% of the remaining. Of the total amount that you spend on lobbying, only 25% can go towards grassroots lobbying. Be sure to keep track of all lobbying expenditures, differentiating between direct and grassroots lobbying.

If you plan to engage in lobbying, we strongly advise you to consider the 501(h) election. It provides much clearer guidelines for how much and what sorts of lobbying you may engage in and the penalties for violating the lobbying limits are less severe under the 501(h) test.

What are considered 501(c)(3) organizations?

They are organizations organized and operated for religious, charitable, scientific, testing or public safety, literacy or educational purposes, or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals. These organizations must file for and receive 501(c)(3) status by filing Form 1023 with the IRS.

Which 501(c)(3) organizations can elect to lobby under 501(h)?

Those that relate to educational institutions, hospitals and medical research organizations, organizations supporting government schools, organizations publicly supported by charitable contributions or admissions, sales, etc. and organizations supporting certain types of public charities. This does NOT include organizations relating to churches, an integrated auxiliary of a church or of a convention or association of churches, or a member of an affiliated group of organizations.



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What about State and Federal lobbying disclosure laws?

In addition to the IRS limitations on lobbying activities, charities are also governed by state and federal lobby disclosure laws which require certain organizations and individuals to register when they begin to engage in lobbying and to file periodic reports on their lobbying activities. If your organization pays anyone—be it a staff member, outside lobbying firm or a volunteer who is reimbursed for expenses—to influence legislation or administrative rules, you should explore the extent to which these laws apply to you.

For further information on the thresholds and requirements for registering and filing quarterly lobbying reports under the Federal Lobbying Disclosure Act, please see this website: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/Public_Disclosure/new_thresholds

This document is intended to provide guidance on federal lobbying laws but is not legal advice and we would advise you to consult an attorney if you have specific concerns. This information was adapted from the Alliance for Justice's series on non-profit and foundation lobbying and advocacy. Visit www.afj.org for more information.

Sources

Adapted from the Alliance for Justice's series on non-profit and foundation lobbying and advocacy.

Election Do's and Don'ts for Non Profit 501(c)(3) Organizations

What can 501(c)(3) organizations do? Whether you're a seasoned advocate or completely new to advocacy, there's no reason to scale down your advocacy efforts during an election year. Advocacy and lobbying activities may take place during election season provided you follow the rules detailed below. You may engage in the following activities:

- Issue advocacy, as long as you do not attempt to intervene surreptitiously in a political campaign;
- Sponsor appearances by a candidate or public official:
 - If you invite them as a candidate, make sure you indicate no support or opposition to them at the event and that all other candidates are given equal opportunity to appear at the event as well;
 - If you invite them in a capacity other than as a candidate, you don't need to invite opposition, but make sure the event doesn't turn into a campaign appearance or fundraiser.
- Sponsor a debate between candidates as long as:
 - You invite all qualified candidates;
 - An independent panel prepares the questions;
 - The topics cover a broad range of issues, including those of particular importance to your organization;
 - Every candidate has an equal opportunity to speak;
 - The moderator is neutral and states at the beginning and end of the program that the views expressed are not representative of your organization.
- Try to persuade candidates to agree with you on issues and to take a public stand—but that is as far as you can go.
- Work to get your positions included on a political party's platform by:
 - Delivering testimony to both parties' platform committees;
 - Including a disclaimer in both oral and written testimony that the testimony is being offered for educational purposes only;
 - Reporting the testimony and any responses in your regularly scheduled newsletter to members.
- Operate a nonpartisan voter registration or get-out-the-vote drive. Note that get-out-the-vote activities must be designed solely to educate the public about the importance of voting and must not show any bias for or against any candidate or party.



What can 501(c)(3) organizations NOT do?

- Support specific candidates or parties in races for elected office, including:
 - Support or oppose a declared candidate or third party movements;
 - Conduct efforts to “draft” someone to run;
 - Conduct exploratory advance work.
- Endorse a candidate or contribute to a campaign with money or time:
 - Members can, of course, donate or volunteer on their own time.
- Contribute any cash or in-kind support:
 - Includes loans or paying to attend partisan political dinners;
 - An in-kind contribution is considered providing anything of value to a candidate, political party or political organization when you are not paid the fair market value in return.
- Send partisan political communications to their members or employees telling them how to vote.
- Sponsor joint fundraising events or solicitations with candidates or political group.
- Directly approach candidates and ask them to endorse your organization’s agenda.

Additional Information from the IRS

Section 501(c)(3) provides a federal tax exemption to a charitable organization, so long as it “does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. The IRS also forbids such organizations from trying to prevent a public official from being re-nominated.

- Candidate: any individual who offers himself or herself, or is proposed by others, as a contestant for an elective public office.
- Public office: any position filled by a vote of the people at the federal, state or local level, ranging from the President of the United States to the local school board, and elective party offices, such as precinct committee persons and party nominations.

Can an organization state its position on public policy issues that candidates for public office are divided on?¹

- An organization may take positions on public policy issues, including issues that divide candidates in an election for public office as long as the message does not in any way favor or oppose a candidate. Be aware that the message does not need to identify the candidate by name to be prohibited political activity. A message that shows a picture of a candidate, refers to a candidate’s political party affiliations, or other distinctive features of a candidate’s platform or biography may result in prohibited political activity.



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Can an organization post information on its website (or link to other websites) about a candidate for public office?²

- A website is a form of communication. If an organization posts something on its website that favors or opposes a candidate for public office it is prohibited political activity. It is the same as if the organization distributed printed material, or made oral statements or broadcasts that favored or opposed a candidate.
- If an organization establishes a link to another website, it is responsible for the consequences of establishing and maintaining that link even if the organization does not have control over the content of the linked site. Because the linked content may change, the organization should monitor the linked content and adjust or remove any links that could result in prohibited political activity. This document is intended to provide guidance on federal lobbying laws but is not legal advice and we would advise you to consult an attorney if you have specific concerns.

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Sample Photo Release

I hereby give permission to the [Provider] to photograph, film and/or videotape _____, and to use and adapt the image(s) in any material promoting afterschool and the [Provider], forever. I understand that the [Provider] may authorize the use of the image(s) by any other existing person or entity that wishes to use that likeness for the benefit of the [Provider]. I am giving this permission recognizing the many benefits that the [Provider] provides in educating the public on the importance of afterschool programs.

I have the authority to give this permission on behalf of _____, a minor child.

Print Name of Parent/Legal Guardian _____

Signature _____ Date _____