

Expanding access to afterschool is critical to Kentucky's future

New data from the Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance highlight ongoing afterschool and summer learning access disparities across Kentucky

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[Berea, Kentucky] — Summers, school breaks, and the hours between school dismissal and the end of the workday have long been a challenge for working families across Kentucky, but they don't have to be. New data from the [Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance \(KYOSA\)](#) highlights the significant and ongoing disparities in access to these types of programs, especially among low-income and rural youth.

Since 2020, KYOSA has been providing the public with critical information on Kentucky's afterschool and summer program landscape through an interactive mapping tool called the [KYOSA Data Explorer](#). The tool allows users to examine the supply of certain types of afterschool and summer programs in Kentucky (21st Century Community Learning Centers, school-age child care, youth camps, and programs supported annually by state appropriations) from year to year in the context of other important community characteristics like child poverty and educational attainment. To date, the *KYOSA Data Explorer* remains the only source of information on Kentucky's afterschool and summer program landscape.

"Quality afterschool and summer programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and enable workforce participation among working-age adults with children," says KYOSA's Executive Director, Tom Haggard. "Decades of research demonstrates the benefits of afterschool initiatives for youth, families, and communities."

The 2023 update of the *KYOSA Data Explorer* reveals an ongoing trend of inequitable access to afterschool and summer programs in Kentucky, especially for low-income youth and rural youth. At the state level, there are currently 177 federally funded [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (21st CCLCs), 1,283 licensed school-age child care providers (including 196 providers exclusively serving school-age youth), 151 regulated youth camps, and 67 other program sites that receive annual support from state appropriations. This translates to just 2.22 program sites overall for every 1,000 children in Kentucky aged 5-17, accounting for overlap.

But, it is important to note that [this supply is not evenly distributed across the state](#), with the bulk of programs concentrated in or around larger population centers. Out of the 24 counties identified as

having less than 1 program site per 1,000 children aged 5-17, 20 (83%) have a population of less than 25,000, highlighting the critical need for improving access in rural areas aside from a few rural counties already receiving significant public support.

These findings are in line with those from [America After 3PM 2020](#), a national household survey conducted every few years to examine afterschool participation and demand, which found that the number of students in Kentucky without access to afterschool has risen significantly over the past decade.

Between 2009 and 2020, *America After 3PM* found unmet demand for afterschool programs in Kentucky grew by over 15%, with parents in 2020 citing cost (56%), lack of programs (37%), and transportation issues (46%) as top barriers to participation. Unsurprisingly, this drop in participation was largely seen among children living in low-income households and often compounded by other factors like race and geography.

“Unmet demand for afterschool programs in Kentucky has soared in recent years. In Kentucky, for every child in an afterschool program, 4 more are waiting to get in, leaving an estimated 85,849 children alone and unsupervised after school each day,” added Haggard.

Other core findings from the *2023 KYOSA Data Explorer*:

- **The need for affordable, quality afterschool and summer programs far outweighs the current supply in nearly every community across Kentucky.** At the state level, 53% of counties in Kentucky have fewer than 2 program sites per 1,000 youth aged 5-17 and 83% have less than 3 program sites per 1,000 youth aged 5-17 identified in the *2023 KYOSA Data Explorer*.
- **Significant inequities exist between communities that have access to publicly funded programs and those that do not.** Public funding helps to ensure access for low-income youth, but many high-poverty areas of Kentucky still do not have any publicly funded programs. Of the 49 out of 120 counties with a poverty rate of greater than 20%, only 25 (51%) have at least 1 publicly funded program site identified in the 2023 update of the *KYOSA Data Explorer*.
- **Less than 1 in 5 (16%) Title I in Kentucky schools receive funding to operate a 21st CCLC program.** The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is a federal grant program designed to provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools at no cost to families. While most Kentucky public schools are eligible to apply for 21st CCLC funding, current federal appropriations (\$19.9 million for Kentucky for FY 2023) are far below the amount needed to sustain a 21st CCLC program in all Title I schools. As a result, only a small percentage of eligible schools receive 21st CCLC funding each year, with small rural schools often lacking the administrative capacity needed to apply for and manage a 21st CCLC grant.
- **A severe shortage of regulated school-age child care providers makes it difficult for families struggling to afford the soaring cost afterschool and summer care to take advantage of federal and state child care assistance programs.** As of May 2, 2023, there were 1,974 regulated child care providers in Kentucky, with a total of 1,283 (65%) providers licensed to serve school-age youth. Out of the 1,283 providers who are licensed to serve school-age, 1,087 (85%) are early care and education (ECE) providers that have elected to include school-age as part of their age-range of service and 196 (15%) are providers who exclusively serve school-age youth. Overall,

this translates to just 2.22 school-age childcare providers for every 1,000 youth aged 5-14 in Kentucky, assuming that all providers who are reported as “licensed to serve school-age” are providing school-age care at this time. 86% of all regulated school-age child care providers report that they accept subsidy recipients.

- **Incomplete state-level data on Kentucky’s afterschool and summer programs makes it impossible for policymakers to understand the complete range of options available to youth and families across Kentucky.** Unlike child care programs, there is no single data source that identifies the total supply of afterschool and summer programs for K-12 youth in Kentucky. While the state is required by law to collect certain types of information on all regulated school-age child care providers, permitted youth camps, and 21st CCLC grantees, there is currently no obligation to track the supply of afterschool and summer programs in Kentucky that are legally exempt from regulation or federal oversight even through the federal Office of Child Care (OCC) encourages this as a “best practice.” As a result, Kentucky’s true afterschool and summer program supply, which includes all regulated and unregulated programs, remains unknown.

“Afterschool programs are a smart investment. An overwhelming majority of Kentucky parents across the political spectrum favor public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs,” said Haggard. “Research spanning several states shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 by increasing kids’ earning potential as adults, improving kids’ performance at school, and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency.”

Findings from the *2023 KYOSA Data Explorer* are based on existing data sourced from the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Division of Child Care, Kentucky Department of Public Health, Kentucky Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, and Save the Children. Raw data were supplied to KYOSA between May and July 2023 through open data requests or data sharing agreements. After cleaning, location addresses were then used to geocode each program site to a specific location on the map and produce aggregate site counts for the following geographies: Census tract, zip code, school district, county, legislative district, and congressional district. Other descriptive data were used to create filters for the point data, which allow users to view a subset of the total program sites shown on the map based on certain criteria.

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The Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance works to support the continued growth, development, and accessibility of quality out-of-school programs to promote the success of children and youth. Visit www.kyoutofschoolalliance.org to learn more.