



Arizona Center  
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Excellence

# young minds keep learning even after the school day ends

A Survey of Afterschool Programs  
in Maricopa and Pima Counties







# Young Minds Keep Learning Even After the School Day Ends

A Survey of Afterschool Programs in Maricopa and Pima Counties

A Project of the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence, Valley of the Sun United Way, and United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

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# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary . . . . . 7
  - Key Findings . . . . . 8
  - Next Steps . . . . .10
- I. The Role of Afterschool in Education & Youth Development . . . . .11
- II. Surveying the Afterschool Landscape. . . . .13
- III. The Findings . . . . .14
  - A. The Afterschool Landscape . . . . .14
  - B. Program Emphasis . . . . .17
  - C. Program Capacity . . . . .19
  - D. Addressing Hunger and Nutrition Needs . . . . .21
  - E. Program Fees . . . . .22
  - F. Staffing and Professional Development . . . . .23
  - G. Program Evaluation. . . . .25
  - H. Coordination . . . . .27
- IV. Knowledge into Action. . . . .30
- Maricopa County Action Agenda Committee Member List . . . . .34
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona . . . . .35
- Valley of the Sun United Way . . . . .36
- Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence. . . . .38





## Executive Summary

Afterschool youth-development programs (AYDs) have grown significantly during the past 15 years in Arizona and nationally. Many providers have moved beyond simply providing a safe haven to actively promoting young people's development. However, there is still tremendous opportunity for growth. There is also a continuing need to enhance coordination and collaboration among programs in order to extend their resources and heighten their impact.

For these reasons, the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence (AzCASE) and Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) collaborated with 40 community leaders in 2010 to establish the Maricopa County Afterschool Action Agenda. Its recommendations were designed to strengthen the disjointed afterschool provider network and to advance services for children and youth. The recommendations were to:

- Increase the **awareness** of the need for, and value of, quality afterschool programs.
- Increase youth's **access** to quality afterschool programs.
- Increase **coordination** between afterschool programs and schools, community based and governmental organizations, and parents.
- Measure and enhance the **quality** of afterschool programs.

As a first step in implementing the recommendations, the committee sought better basic information on the number, location and offerings of afterschool programs. To this end, AzCASE and VSUW, in partnership with United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona and Morrison Institute for Public Policy, developed a web-based survey of afterschool programs in Maricopa and Pima counties.

Morrison Institute, an independent, non-partisan research unit at Arizona State University, worked with AzCASE and VSUW to construct a 55-question survey using Qualtrics on-line software. While the term "afterschool" was used, the survey was designed to measure all types of out-of-school programs, regardless of whether they operate before or after school, on weekends, or during school and summer breaks. Approximately 1,800 questionnaires were distributed to individual program sites in Maricopa and Pima counties via a list provided by AzCASE. Though the survey did not utilize a random sample, its 38 percent response rate (681 returns) suggests that its findings can help educators, youth-development professionals, policymakers and the business community understand the scope, characteristics and needs of afterschool services in Arizona's two largest population centers.

## Key Findings\*

### **General**

- Public-school based afterschool programs are the most common type (64 percent), followed by community-based programs (25 percent) and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (16 percent). More than half of all programs (64 percent) reported that they operate both during the academic year and during summer months.
- Asked to cite their top three activities, 76 percent of programs chose “tutoring/academic enrichment,” 72 percent selected “arts and culture,” and 66 percent chose “sports and recreation.”
- Only 26 percent of Maricopa County programs and 23 percent of Pima County programs reported that they provide transportation to and from their sites. Most said the transportation was free.

### **Increasing Access and Awareness**

- The two counties possess considerable afterschool resources that are not being utilized. Seventy-two percent of programs in Maricopa County and 69 percent in Pima County do not operate at capacity on any given day. Home-based and 21st Century Community Learning Centers operated more closely to capacity, but only at 60 percent and 53 percent respectively.
- Asked to name the most important barriers to operating at full capacity, 37 percent cited fees and nearly one-third chose “other,” which included cuts in state child-care subsidies, parents’ job losses, family obligations and scheduling conflicts. Those programs that do not charge fees cited barriers “other” and “children lose interest.” Asked the second-biggest barrier to meeting capacity, programs responded almost equally between fees and insufficient recruitment.
- While most programs provide snacks, only 36 percent offer breakfast and 6 percent offer dinner. Educators and youth-development professionals know that many children rely on school and afterschool food as basic elements of their diet, with nearly half of AYD programs in both counties reporting that a majority of their children are eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program.

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\* In this report, “AYDs” and “programs” refer to those programs that responded to the survey.



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## ***Increasing Quality***

- Only 35 percent of the two counties' youth-development programs use a formal assessment tool to evaluate their programs; 24 percent use informal assessments and 34 percent use parent surveys, which actually serve more as an assessment of client satisfaction—only one component of program quality. Many programs still need to incorporate more rigorous evaluation techniques into daily practice.
- While afterschool programs cannot be all things to all people, relatively few cited character education (64 percent), leadership (40 percent), prevention (15 percent) and volunteering (14 percent) among their top three services.
- Youth-development professionals in the two counties need further training in the area of youths social-emotional development. Most youth-development scholars and professionals consider this to be one of the most crucial areas of potential impact by AYD programs.
- Nearly all programs rely heavily on internal training as the primary source of their staffs' professional development. While other sources are also used by some programs, the reliance on internal staff training signifies the need to increase “train-the-trainer” and other opportunities.

## ***Increasing Coordination***

- Many afterschool programs collaborate on some level with school and district staffs, but most (67 percent) expressed a need to strengthen this area. Doing so would also enhance other needs expressed by the programs, including a better shared understanding of individual children's needs (52 percent), increased alignment of learning activities between schools and afterschool programs (45 percent) and improving data-sharing (44 percent).
- Only 20 percent of programs hold regularly scheduled parent meetings and 31 percent conduct regularly scheduled child/parent social events. This illustrates a tremendous opportunity for programs to strengthen their engagement with parents at the point of pick-up and through organized activities.



## Next Steps

Overall, the findings reinforce the goals and strategies set forth by the Maricopa County Afterschool Action Agenda and are aligned with current efforts in southern Arizona. The survey results will also help target efforts that promise to have the greatest impact on improving afterschool youth programs. These include:

- Supporting strategies to increase youth engagement in existing programs and to identify gaps where additional resources are needed
- Emphasizing the importance of improving program quality, such as through adoption or enhancement of quality-assessment tools
- Building partnerships to increase professional-development opportunities for program staff, with an emphasis on “train-the-trainer” formats
- Assisting programs to adopt or expand services focused on character development, leadership, civic engagement and prevention
- Helping programs improve relationships with parents and school staff, such as through information-sharing and reinforcing activities in multiple settings
- Informing program administrators about federally funded meal programs and other potential food and nutrition initiatives

Quality afterschool youth-development programs are proven strategies for promoting children’s learning and development outside the classroom, as well as for aligning the informal learning in afterschool settings with the formal learning in the classroom. Supporting, supervising and challenging Arizona’s children are not solely the tasks of our educational system. It is everyone’s responsibility to raise future generations that are academically, socially, and emotionally prepared and possess the resiliency to succeed in relationships, the workforce and their communities. The findings of this survey are meant to help parents, educators, providers, policymakers and philanthropists determine how best to collaborate to improve outcomes for all children and youth.



## I. The Role of Afterschool in Education & Youth Development

Education has many champions. It is difficult to find anyone in Arizona or elsewhere who disagrees that quality education is crucial for both individual development and overall prosperity. K-12 and higher education consume a greater share of state budgets than any other sectors. No study of social welfare or economic development omits discussion of education's central role in promoting both. Yet even many of education's most ardent supporters overlook the fact that a child's capacity for learning and development does not cease when classes let out for the day, the week or the summer. And few would deny the need to continue feeding that capacity in today's increasingly complex and competitive world.

Quality afterschool youth-development programs (AYDs) offer a proven, cost-effective way to meet that need. They can supply a critical component of a child's overall educational and personal development. Recognizing and supporting these programs promote positive social, emotional, cognitive and civic skills among children and youth, and strengthen the link with existing in-school curricula.

This is not mere wishful thinking. As the Harvard Family Research Project stated in a 2008 study: "A decade of research and evaluation studies, as well as large-scale, rigorously conducted syntheses looking across many research and evaluation studies, confirms that children and youth who participate in after school programs can reap a host of positive benefits in a number of interrelated outcome areas—academic, social/emotional, prevention, and health and wellness."

Similarly, a 2006 report presented to the Society for Research on Adolescence found that "...school-age children who frequently attended high-quality after school programs, alone and in combination with other supervised activities, displayed better work habits, task persistence, social skills, pro-social behaviors, academic performance, and less aggressive behavior at the end of the school year."

### What's in a Name?

We call them "afterschool programs," but that name doesn't say it all. First, because quality programs are actually "youth development" efforts that provide a wide range of supervised activities intended to encourage learning and development outside the typical school day.

Second, these "afterschool" programs operate not only after school but also before school, on weekends, and/or during summer and other school breaks.

But no matter what we call them, these programs offer academic support, educational enrichment, cultural and social development activities, recreation, visual and performing arts, tutoring and homework services, leadership skills and career and college preparation.

One reason why such robust findings have received less attention than they should may be that many people retain an outmoded image of afterschool youth-development programs. Historically, many such initiatives began as makeshift responses to newly perceived social and economic trends. As more and more families saw both parents entering the workforce, they faced an increasing need for ways to supervise and occupy their children when the school day ended but the work day did not. This was seconded by local law enforcement officials, who noted that weekday afternoons are peak times for juvenile crime and victimization. They warned city and school officials that children spending afterschool hours without supervision and constructive activities stood at increased risk of falling into less desirable pursuits.

Over the years, however, AYDs have taken on greater significance as parents and educators realize that children cannot develop the academic and social and emotional skills needed to become successful and productive adults when they are only in school six hours a day, 180 days a year. Grounded in years of research and experience, afterschool programs are increasingly recognized as critically needed youth-development programs that provide children nurturing, project-based learning and social environments in which 21st century skills can be developed and honed.

Arizona's high school graduation rate is 76 percent. In a world where an estimated 90 percent of new high-growth, high-wage jobs will require some level of post-secondary education—many, according to the U.S. Labor Department, requiring a bachelor's degree or better—academic success has become increasingly important for every child. AYDs offer a complementary avenue for providing tutoring, academic skill building, social-emotional development, exploration of interests and positive engagement, all which contribute to increased school engagement and academic success.

## 21st Century Skills Fostered in Quality Afterschool Programs

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Creativity
- Information, Communication and Technology Literacy
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Media Literacy



## II. Surveying the Afterschool Landscape

Many new providers and programs have sprung up to address children's out-of-school needs. However, they operate without the degree of coordination and collaboration that could extend their resources and heighten their impact. That is why, in 2010, the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence (AzCASE) and Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) brought together 40 community leaders to determine how Maricopa County could strengthen its disjointed afterschool network of providers and support services. This resulted in the creation of a Maricopa County Afterschool Action Agenda that contained findings and recommendations pertaining to:

- The county's **awareness** of the need for, and value of, quality afterschool programs
- Youth's **access** to these programs
- The **coordination** among afterschool programs and schools, community-based and governmental organizations, and parents, and
- Measuring and enhancing the **quality** of existing programs

First, however, was the need to understand the current state of afterschool services. That required the collection and analysis of reliable data on the number, type, location and quality of existing programs. In response, AzCASE and VSUW reached out to the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona with a plan for a comprehensive, web-based survey of afterschool programs in both Maricopa and Pima counties.

The survey was designed and administered by Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, an independent, non-partisan research unit in the School of Public Affairs. In cooperation with AzCASE and VSUW, Morrison constructed a 55-question survey using *Qualtrics* on-line survey software. The survey was distributed and left open from May through August, 2011 via an AzCASE email list to afterschool programs throughout Maricopa and Pima counties. As noted above, the survey was designed to measure all types of out-of-school programs, whether operating before or after school, on weekends, or during school and summer breaks. Approximately 1,800 questionnaires were distributed via email to individual program sites. The survey thus did not utilize a random sample and its results thus cannot be construed to represent the attributes or opinions of all programs in the two counties. However, the 38-percent response\* rate—681 total responses—suggests that the findings offer a useful foundation for understanding the scope, characteristics and needs of afterschool services in Arizona's two largest population centers.

\* In this report, "AYDs" and "programs" refer to those programs that responded to the survey.



## A. The Afterschool Landscape

There is no one type or size of afterschool program that fits the needs of all children and families, but it is important that Arizona provides a diversity of programs that do meet existing and projected needs. It is also important that children and families have access to programs regardless of their geographic location or economic status.

Of the 673 responding program sites located within the two counties, most were in Maricopa County; within that county, the greatest concentration were in the central and east Valley.

### Programs Responding from Maricopa and Pima Counties

Region	Number of Programs*	Percent of Total
Central Phoenix	189	28%
Phoenix/East Valley	203	30%
Phoenix/West Valley	90	13%
Tucson (Area)	191	28%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*Excluding eight programs located outside of Maricopa and Pima counties.*

Although there is a commonality of activities offered throughout the programs, the organizational structure of these programs varies, depending on where they are located and how they are funded. Asked to choose what best describes the organizational structure of their program, most chose “public-school based” followed by “community based.”

### Arizona AYDs Include Several Program Types\*

Public School-Based Program	42%
Community-Based Program	25%
21st Century Community Learning Center	16%
Corporate-Run Program	7%
Private School-Based Program	5%
Faith-Based Program	4%
Home-Based Program	1%

\* All percentages in this report have been rounded to whole numbers.

More than half of programs (64 percent) reported that they operate both during the academic year and during summer months, compared to 34 percent that reported operating only during the academic year. Community-based, public school-based and 21st Century Community Learning Centers were more likely to be open all year. The fact that there are almost twice as many year-round programs as there are school-year programs is a major plus in serving the needs of youth and families.

### Days of Operation

Most programs operate Monday through Friday, with a slight decrease in Friday program availability (8 percent). While there is clearly less demand for weekend programs, the survey revealed that only 11 percent of sites offer services on Saturdays and only 3 percent on Sundays. This leaves families whose parents work weekends with few options.

Program Type	Saturday	Sunday
Public School-Based Program	3%	0.4%
Community-Based Program	14%	7%
21st Century Community Learning Center	20%	1%
Corporate-Run Program	21%	8%
Private School-Based Program	8%	0%
Faith-Based Program	12%	4%
Home-Based Program	20%	0%

Since families' work and personal schedules vary widely, it is also important to note that 94 percent of program sites have fixed program schedules or hours of operation that parents must work around.

## Demographics

Approximately 26 percent of Maricopa County's population is under 18, as is 23 percent in Pima County. Children from low-income households or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds face multiple barriers to success in and after school. AYDs can complement the school day, increase student engagement in school and help them maximize their personal and academic potential.

### Profiles of Need

Measure	Maricopa County	Pima County
Children under 18 living in single-parent households	32%	37%
Children under 18 living in poverty during past 12 months	19%	22%
Children approved for free or reduced-price lunch	47%	54%
High school graduation rate	75%	71%
Dropout rate, grades 7-12	3%	4%
TOTAL	673	100%

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count 2010; data years vary

## Ages of Children and Youth Served

The survey further quantified what has long been known: The availability of afterschool programming in Maricopa and Pima counties declines substantially as children age. Opportunities are greatest for children aged 5 to 12, but there is a 50 percent drop in programs for youth aged 13 and 14. Children over 14 years old have only one-third the programs available as do children between ages 5 to 12—even though the 2010 Census indicates that each of these segments makes up about 7 percent of Arizona's total population. One explanation for this is the lack of age-appropriate programs for older youth.



While older children require different program options than younger children, research proves that all children that participate regularly in afterschool programming have higher attendance in school, achieve better academically, and experience less involvement in drug and alcohol abuse, gang involvement and teen pregnancy.



### AYD Children & Youth are a Diverse Group

Race/Ethnicity	Maricopa County		Pima County	
	Children Served	Under 18 population	Children Served	Under 18 population
White non-Hispanic	48%	43%	40%	37%
Latino	32%	43%	38%	51%
African-American	9%	6%	8%	4%
Other	4%	2%	6%	3%
Asian American	4%	3%	4%	2%
Native American	3%	3%	4%	5%

White non-Hispanic children and youth currently comprise the largest population group served by AYDs in the two counties. In both cases, they represent a larger portion of program clients than their percentage of the total under-18 county populations. African-American and Asian American children and youth are also present in AYD programs at a slightly higher level than in the general population. On the other hand, Latino children and youth represent a distinctly lower percentage in programs than they do in the general population, especially in Pima County.

## B. Program Emphasis

The range of activities and learning opportunities among AYDs varies widely. Some are meant to be primarily recreational. Others put more emphasis on providing enrichment and experiential learning opportunities; while structured to be fun and entertaining, these programs nonetheless affirm and/or complement concepts learned in school in a nurturing and creative environment that is distinctly different from the classroom. It is important that parents have options and choose programs that best fit their children's needs and interests.

Asked what services and activities they offer, 86 percent of responding program sites cited "sports and recreation," followed closely by "arts and culture" (84 percent) and "tutoring and academic enrichment" (77 percent).

**"Participation in after school programs can have a positive impact on a range of prevention outcomes, including avoidance of drug and alcohol use, decreases in delinquency and violent behavior, increased knowledge of safe sex, avoidance of sexual activity, and reduction in juvenile crime."**

— Harvard Family Research Project (2008)

### AYDs Offer a Range of Activities & Services

Sports & Recreation	86%
Arts & Culture	84%
Tutoring/Academic enrichment	77 %
Nutrition	69%
Character Education	58%
Leadership	55%
Mentoring	48%
Prevention	42%
Volunteering	39%
Support Services	11%

More than half of the respondents also said that their programs included “character education” and “leadership,” which are both considered critical elements in a child’s personal development. Ideally, future implementation of the Afterschool Action Agenda will emphasize implementation of “character education” and “leadership” as components that denote programs of quality.

Similarly, 42 percent of the programs listed “prevention programming” among their base of activities; this is important as the 2010 Arizona Youth Survey reports that approximately 34 percent of youth in Maricopa County and 36 percent in Pima County can be classified as high risk for problems such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. Research shows that AYDs reduce risk factors by increasing positive engagement with peers, school, family and the community.

Another area where AYD program focus can be strengthened is age-appropriate “volunteering and community service” opportunities. Only 38 percent of survey respondents reported including “volunteering and community service” in their programs. Civic engagement is an important asset for young people to develop, as it strengthens their connection to the community, a factor proven to reduce risk factors and increase resiliency, as well as prepare young people to become active members of their community. Only 11 percent of programs responded that they provide medical, dental, and mental health support services. Since many programs are relied upon by low-income families, the provision of—or coordination with—these services could have an important impact on their children’s lives.

Even though most programs offer a range of activities, most also place greater emphasis upon one or more of them. Asked which top three activities they focus on, most chose “academic enrichment,” followed closely by “arts and culture” and “sports and recreation.”

### Programs Emphasize Various Activities

Activities	Ranked in Top 3
Tutoring/academic enrichment	76%
Arts & culture	72%
Sports & recreation	66%
Character education	64%
Leadership	40%
Mentoring	34%
Nutrition	25%
Prevention	15%
Support services	15%
Volunteering	14%

This suggests that programs put nearly equal emphasis on “arts and culture,” “tutoring and academic enrichment” and “sports and recreation”—which is important in addressing the creative, cognitive and physical needs and development of the children served. However, it also indicates that “nutrition,” “character education” and “leadership” lack emphasis. If strengthened, these could benefit children at a time when an estimated 18 percent of Arizona children are obese, and could contribute to developing character and leadership traits that bolster young people’s self-image and resiliency.

## C. Program Capacity

Despite a documented need for AYDs, as evidenced by the 2009 *Arizona After 3 p.m.* survey, most programs in Maricopa and Pima counties are not being fully utilized.

### Most Programs Don’t Operate at Capacity

		Maricopa	Pima	Total
On a typical day, does your program operate at capacity?	Yes	28%	31%	30%
	No	72%	69%	71%

In fact, 71 percent of the responding programs report that they do not operate at full capacity. The main reason cited was financial. Program fees were listed by 37 percent of the respondents as the greatest barrier to achieving full capacity. Nearly one-third of respondents picked “other” as the major barrier to operating at full capacity, with “other” including cuts in child-care subsidies provided by the Arizona Department of Economic Security, parents’ job losses, family obligations, and scheduling conflicts with

children's sports activities or other programs. Those afterschool programs that do not charge fees cited "other" and "children lose interest" as the greatest barriers. Asked to name their second-biggest barrier, the responses were a tie between fees and insufficient recruitment. Other barriers cited included lack of staff and children's loss of interest.

### AYDs Face Several Barriers to Full Attendance

Program	Biggest Barrier	2nd Biggest Barrier
21st Century Community Learning Center	Children lose interest	Child perception
Faith-Based Program	Other*	Lack of transportation/program fees (tie)
Public School-Based Program	Program fees	Insufficient recruitment
Private School-Based Program	Program fees	Other*
Home-Based Program	Children lose interest/insufficient recruitment (tie)	Program fees/child perception (tie)
Corporate-Run Program	Program fees	Insufficient recruitment
Community-Based Program	Other*	Program fees

\* "Other" included cuts in child-care subsidies provided by the Arizona Department of Economic Security, parents' job losses, family obligations, and scheduling conflicts with children's sports activities and other programs.

The economic recession has caused many programs to raise fees or initiate them. In almost all cases, programs experienced a drop in enrollment, meaning that more children previously in AYDs home alone or are supervised by older children. In other cases, financial strains led parents to pay for before-school care but not afterschool care. Low-income families are especially hard-hit by economic downturns, suggesting that many of the children most in need of AYD enrichment were among those forced out due to economic constraints.

Transportation is another critical barrier preventing children and families from having available access to AYDs, with only 26 percent of Maricopa programs and 23 percent of Pima programs reporting that they provide transportation to and from their program. Most of these reported that the transportation was free. If school-based programs lack buses to take children home, or if transportation to community based programs is not available, families have few options during afterschool hours or during breaks and in the summer months. The availability of AYDs means little if they are not accessible.

## D. Addressing Hunger and Nutrition Needs

Recent Census data report that Arizona has the fifth-highest poverty rate in the nation, with approximately one in five Arizonans living in poverty. Low-income families usually have the fewest options for AYDs and the greatest need for support to overcome the barriers they face. With many Arizona households coping with food insecurity, our youth are among those impacted the most.

According to recent reports from the Association of Arizona Food Banks, individuals seeking emergency food assistance said nearly half of household members receiving food were under 18. For children like these, school and afterschool programs often function as important sources of nutrition, with an after-school snack sometimes serving as dinner. In the survey, most AYDs (88 percent) report providing snacks, but only 36 percent provide breakfast and even fewer (6 percent) provide dinner. Nearly half of AYDs in both counties report that a majority of their children are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

### Most Programs Offer Some Meals

	Maricopa	Pima
Snacks	82%	69%
Breakfast	33%	28%
Lunch	21%	27%
None	6%	15%
Dinner	5%	6%

**“...elementary and middle school students who participated in high-quality after school programs... across two years demonstrated significant gains in standardized math test scores, when compared to their peers who were regularly unsupervised after school.”**

— UC Irvine Study, 2007



## E. Program Fees

Most (73 percent) of the responding program sites report charging fees. Of those, 75 percent said they offer financial assistance to families unable to pay; this number ranged from 80 percent in Maricopa County to 56 percent in Pima County. Among program types, 21st Century Community Learning Centers were the least likely to charge fees. The average reported monthly program fee for all programs was \$216 in Maricopa County and \$261 in Pima County.

### AYDs Charge a Wide Range of Monthly Fees

	Maricopa	Pima	TOTAL
<= \$60	19%	9%	16%
\$61 - \$200	22%	31%	25%
\$201 - \$224	17%	7%	14%
\$225 - \$242	13%	10%	12%
\$243 - \$333	16%	18%	16%
\$334+	13%	26%	17%

There is no one designated funding source for afterschool programs in Arizona. Federal funding supports the 21st Century Community Learning Center programs through competitive grants from the state Department of Education. School districts can also use federal funding to pay for district-sponsored AYDs. And in some instances, school districts use their afterschool and community education programs as revenue generators for their districts.

City governments have historically played an important role in funding afterschool programs through their parks and recreation and/or community service departments. In addition, the United Way and other philanthropic organizations fund programs for children whose families lack the necessary resources. However, Arizona lacks a comprehensive, coordinated approach to ensuring the availability of AYDs for all children.

### Many Programs Offer Financial Aid

	Maricopa	Pima	TOTAL
DES Subsidy	41%	19%	16%
Scholarship	34%	19%	25%
Sliding Scale	13%	14%	14%
Other	11%	6%	12%

## F. Staffing and Professional Development

AYD staffing varies by program type. The staff typically include young adults who are either in college or recently graduated. Some have or are pursuing degrees in education or youth development-related fields. Generally, however, the staff is attracted to the job simply because they enjoy working with children and youth. The nature of AYD operations means that most jobs are part time, with a typical pay scale of \$9 - \$16 per hour, depending on an employee's role and responsibility. The major exception are the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, which rely heavily on certified classroom teachers who have college degrees and are paid accordingly.

The current structure and lack of funding for afterschool youth-development programs seriously limit the career potential for staff. There are certainly instances in which staff who began working directly with children are promoted to "site coordinator" and possibly "regional or area manager" for programs having multiple sites. In general, however, there are few full-time administrative positions for young staff to aspire to.

### Average Staffing Levels Are Similar Across Programs

Staffing	Maricopa	Pima
Average Total Paid Staff	10	10
Average Full-Time Staff	4	4
Average Part-Time Staff	6	6
Average Volunteers	3	2
Average Daily Staff Level	10	8

Because safety of the children is of paramount concern, the survey reports that 80 percent of programs rely on a combination of reference checks, background checks and fingerprinting when screening and hiring new staff. Only 25 percent rely on drug testing as a screening tool.

Research shows that the quality of staff and their relationship with the children are major indicators of program quality. Contributing to quality is the amount and type of training that staff receive. Almost all (94 percent) of responding programs report providing staff with periodic formal training/professional development. Forty percent of those report providing monthly training opportunities, compared to 18 percent that train quarterly and 16 percent that train semi-annually.

### Most Programs Offer Regular, Formal Staff Training

Program Type	Yes
Private School-Based Program	100%
Corporate-Run Program	100%
Public School-Based Program	96%
Community-Based Program	94%
21st Century Community Learning Center	85%
Faith-Based Program	85%
Home-Based Program	80%

State law requires that state-licensed afterschool programs provide a minimum of 18 hours of professional development per year. But since the law does not require all programs to be licensed, the frequency and type of training vary widely.

### Professional Development Offerings Vary

Frequency of Trainings	County		Total
	Maricopa	Pima	
Monthly	55%	38%	51%
Quarterly	22%	24%	22%
Semi-annually	16%	28%	19%
Annually	6%	10%	7%
Less than once a year	1%	1%	1%

The preferred format for training AYD staff appears to be fairly equally divided between workshop/conferences, trainers, peer-to-peer coaching and direct supervision.

Asked about training staff, nearly all (95 percent) said they conduct internal trainings, while 41 percent rely on the Arizona Department of Health Services (the licensing agency for afterschool programs) and 30 percent rely on AzCASE. About 37 percent of respondents chose “other,” which includes Boys & Girls Clubs, local school district staffs, the Arizona Department of Education, outside consultants and specific knowledge experts.



### Professional Development Comes from Several Sources

Internal Training	95%
Arizona Department of Health Services	41%
Other	37%
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence	30%
Association for Supportive Child Care	15%
Southwest Human Development	14%
National Afterschool Association	7%
National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST)	3%

Since there is such heavy reliance on training staff internally, a further evaluation of trainers' knowledge and competency is in order to ensure that they are capable of teaching the components of quality programming. Future emphasis on "training the trainers" may be required in order to raise staff and program quality.

Asked to identify the two most important areas in which their staff needed training, nearly one-quarter (24 percent) listed "enhancement of social and emotional development" as their greatest need, and 14 percent cited it as their second-greatest need. "Effective program operation" was most frequently chosen for second place (16 percent), followed by social and emotional development.

## G. Program Evaluation

There is growing agreement nationally on the need to embrace some type of formal assessment of AYDs, both as a vehicle for improving program quality and to justify the increased investment in such programs. Multiple national tools are being used across the country, while some states are promoting their own. Because there is no consensus in Arizona regarding the need for assessment, nor on a specific tool to use, the survey sought data on current practices.

Nearly all programs (92 percent) responded that they do evaluate the quality of their programs. Asked how, 34 percent said they rely on a parent/client survey, 25 percent said they use a "formal self-assessment with agreed upon criteria" and 24 percent reported conducting informal self-assessments.

**“Quality afterschool program environments foster inquiry, critical thinking, and engagement in learning, and these features can support a range of positive academic and developmental outcomes. As such, afterschool programs are uniquely poised to support in-school learning and development without replicating the school day.”**



—Harvard Family Research Project, 2008

Program Quality Assessment Used	County		Total
	Maricopa	Pima	
Informal self-assessment	24%	23%	24%
Formal self-assessment with agreed upon criteria	27%	18%	25%
Parent/client survey	34%	34%	34%
Host school evaluation	3%	2%	3%
Nationally recognized assessment or accreditation tool	6%	19%	10%
Other	6%	5%	6%

Parent/client surveys may be good indicators of customer satisfaction, but they are only a small component of assessing program quality and are not typically considered valid measures. Parents needing a safe place for their children during working hours are typically happy with a program as long as their children are content and don't object to going. In addition, informal self-assessments lack standardized criteria against which programs can be measured and compared to one another. Credible program assessments go beyond measuring program safety, facilities, program content and staffing. For example, an assessment of a program's commitment to and degree of youth and parent engagement is often missing.

## H. Coordination

Both formal education and the informal learning that occurs in AYDs must be youth-centered to be effective. It is thus especially important that educators, parents and AYD providers collaborate in determining children's needs and how best to collectively meet them.

### Most AYDs Coordinate with Schools

Program Type	Do Coordinate
21st Century Community Learning Center	94%
Public School-Based Program	78%
Community-Based Program	78%
Faith-Based Program	69%
Private School-Based Program	65%
Home-Based Program	60%
Corporate-Run Program	48%

Seeking to assess the degree of collaboration, the survey asked whether programs regularly collaborate with the schools attended by the youth in their programs. Most (66 percent) reported that they do. Asked how often they collaborate, 36 percent reported weekly, 13 percent reported monthly and 9 percent reported quarterly. A full third (34 percent of respondents) chose not to answer the question at all, suggesting that there may be no collaboration with schools occurring in those programs. Those responding least often were corporate-run programs, private school-based and faith-based.

### Coordination Comes at Different Frequencies

Program Type	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Less than Quarterly
Private School-Based Program	55%	18%	9%	19%
Corporate-Run Program	32%	16%	37%	16%
Faith-Based Program	33%	22%	28%	17%
Public School-Based Program	64%	23%	7%	7%
Home-Based Program	33%	67%	0%	0%
21st Century Community Learning Center	60%	23%	15%	3%

Asked about collaboration in schools, 90 percent reported working with teachers, and 77 percent reported collaborating with principals. Relatively little collaboration is reportedly occurring with school counselors (42 percent), intervention specialists (30 percent) and social workers (25 percent). This was surprising, as the children these staff deal with on an ongoing basis would seem to be among those who could most benefit from participation in AYDs. Ideally, parents, educators and AYD providers would all work in partnership to serve the needs of each child. If principals would routinely include key AYD personnel in their faculty or all-school meetings, it would facilitate information-sharing and promote an overall culture of collaboration.

### AYDs Collaborate with a Range of School Partners

Teachers	90%
Principals	77%
Counselors	42%
Intervention specialists	31%
Social workers	25%
Superintendents	15%

Despite their different levels of collaboration, most programs indicated an appreciation of its importance. Asked how they thought they could best improve collaboration, most chose “strengthen relationships with school-level staff,” followed by “strengthen relationships with district and school officials” and “develop a better shared understanding of individual children’s needs.”

### AYDs Cite the Best Ways to Improve Coordination

Method	Ranked in Top 3 by
Strengthen relationships w/ school-level staff	67%
Strengthen relationships w/district and school officials	52%
Develop a better shared understanding of individual children’s needs	52%
Increase alignment of learning activities b/ schools and after-school programs	45%
Improve data-sharing b/schools and afterschool programs	44%
Communicate importance of youth development to school district staff	21%
Seek funding to initiate and sustain partnerships	21%

## ***AYD Coordination with Parents***

AYDs have a unique opportunity to partner with parents in meeting the needs of the children in their programs. Parents—especially those of elementary school children—typically pick up their children from AYDs on their way home from work; this means parents interact with afterschool staff more frequently than they do with school staff. Parents and staff need to view each other as trusted partners and share information regarding the needs and changes in a child's life. Working together, they can best shape strategies that each can implement to further the child's social, emotional and cognitive development.

While many AYD providers discuss the importance of parent engagement and education, only 20 percent of respondents hold regularly scheduled parent meetings, compared to 39 percent that hold randomly scheduled ones. Even conducting child/parent social events scored low, with 31 percent of programs reporting that they hold regularly scheduled child/parent social events and 29 percent reporting randomly scheduled events. The greatest amount (82 percent) of parent/staff interaction naturally occurs when parents are picking up their children at the end of the day; this is a critical juncture for building a relationship with parents, but does not permit deeper conversations or reflections on the needs of the child and how to best address them.

### **Parent Engagement Occurs at Several Points**

At time of parent pickup	82%
Newsletter	64%
Website	43%
Randomly scheduled parents meetings	39%
Regularly scheduled parent/child social events	31%
Randomly scheduled parent/child social events	29%
Regularly scheduled parents meetings	20%
Other	11%
None	1%



## IV. Knowledge Into Action

Last year, Maricopa County community leaders recognized that the effort to enhance quality afterschool programming must begin with a look at the number and types of existing programs. This survey thus represents a first step in implementing the recommendations of the Afterschool Action Agenda. It will also be used to improve and refine the online Afterschool Directory maintained by AzCASE. While the findings are almost wholly descriptive, they provide a better understanding of AYDs in Arizona's two most populous areas. There clearly are many strong programs in the survey area, staffed by caring workers dedicated to promoting the multi-phased development of children and youth. The range of program offerings is broad, from sports to prevention, while efforts at evaluation and collaboration reflect programs' desire to improve their offerings even in today's challenging economic environment.

AzCASE, UWTSa and VSUW are committed to supporting high-quality AYDs. Survey data will be shared with stakeholders to:

- Provide greater understanding of the afterschool landscape
- Advocate for needed changes relating to AYDs
- Link them to coordinated efforts to increase access to quality programs
- Partner to address the challenges and implement the next steps described below

## Increasing Access and Awareness

**CHALLENGE:** *Research shows that the out-of-school time needs of children and youth are not being met, and survey results show that currently available resources are underutilized. Program fees, insufficient recruitment, family/scheduling obligations, lack of child interest and lack of transportation are significant barriers to operating at capacity.*

- **Next Step:** Support advocacy and funding collaborations to decrease the cost to families to participate in AYD programs on an as-needed basis.
- **Next Step:** Educate and/or provide technical assistance on marketing strategies to afterschool youth-development programs.
- **Next Step:** Educate and provide technical assistance to AYD administrators on how to build effective youth engagement strategies for all ages.
- **Next Step:** Identify remaining access gaps where additional resources and/or programs are needed.

**OPPORTUNITY:** *Nearly half of AYD programs in both counties report that a majority of their children are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. While most programs offer snacks, few offer breakfast (36 percent) or dinner (6 percent). Unfortunately, for many youths, meals and snacks at school and afterschool programs may be the only meals they receive throughout the day.*

- **Next Step:** Educate AYD program administrators about federally funded meal programs.
- **Next Step:** Help AYDs to leverage and/or establish partnerships with existing food and nutrition programs to coordinate meal provision in AYD programs and/or refer to other community resources.
- **Next Step:** Engage AYD administrators in efforts to address food insecurity for children, youth and families.

## Increasing Quality

**CHALLENGE:** Research shows a correlation between the quality of AYDs and positive outcomes for youth. Yet only 35 percent of AYDs in Arizona use a formal assessment tool to determine the quality of their programs. The focus on common quality measures is relatively new in the youth-development field, and AYDs are still in the process of understanding and incorporating this knowledge into daily practice.

- **Next Step:** Educate AYD administrators on the value of quality-improvement strategies, including the adoption of quality-assessment tools.
- **Next Step:** Work with AYD professionals to develop common terms and measures to assist in advocacy and coordination of quality-improvement efforts.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Individual AYDs must clearly define their mission, strategies and activities, while leveraging as many opportunities as possible to build developmental assets in youth.

- **Next Step:** Assist AYDs in leveraging opportunities to embed and/or adopt activities focused on character development, leadership, civic engagement and prevention programming.
- **Next Step:** As part of quality-improvement strategies, educate AYDs in how to increase the level of engagement of program participants.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Survey results show that youth-development professionals need the most training in one of the field's primary focus areas: the social-emotional development of youth. Ideally, all youth-development staff would have expertise in this area, but the reality is that very few staff have formal training in it.

- **Next Step:** Increase the availability of "train-the-trainer" professional-development opportunities for AYD administrators and longer-tenured staff.

**CHALLENGE:** Nearly all surveyed programs (95 percent) rely on internal trainings to educate staff. While other resources are utilized, there is a significant dependence on internal trainings as the primary source of professional development.

- **Next Step:** Build partnerships in the community to increase access to professional development opportunities for youth-development professionals, with an emphasis on social-emotional development of youth.



## Increasing Coordination

**CHALLENGE:** *Few AYD providers or educators would deny the value of coordinating efforts. According to the survey, many AYDs are collaborating on some level with school staff; however, they should deepen their connections with school and district staff in order to have the greatest impact on individual and aggregate youth outcomes.*

- **Next Step:** Provide technical assistance and professional-development opportunities to school and afterschool programs to improve relationships and collaborative efforts.
- **Next Step:** Work with AYDs and schools to understand how to structure data-sharing agreements to provide needed student information while adhering to FIRRPA.
- **Next Step:** Educate AYDs on common core standards and how program activities can support student success through complementary activities.

**OPPORTUNITY:** *AYD providers have a tremendous opportunity to strengthen their engagement with parents at the point of pickup, as well as through organized parent activities. Currently, only 20 percent of programs hold regularly scheduled parent meetings and 31 percent conduct regularly scheduled child/parent social events.*

- **Next Step:** Explore strategies to more effectively engage parents at the point of child pick-up.
- **Next Step:** Provide technical assistance and professional-development opportunities to AYDs to improve relationships with parents through parent-education workshops and/or child-family social events.

Quality afterschool youth-development programs are proven strategies for promoting children's learning and development outside the classroom, as well as for aligning the informal learning in afterschool settings with the formal learning in the classroom.

Supporting, supervising and challenging Arizona's children are not solely the tasks of our educational system. It is everyone's responsibility to raise future generations that are academically, socially, and emotionally prepared and possess the resiliency to succeed in relationships, the workforce and their communities. The findings of this survey are meant to help parents, educators, providers, policymakers and philanthropists determine how best to collaborate to improve outcomes for all children and youth.

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United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, founded in 1922, has played a critical role as a catalyst in the community by creating new relationships with government and business and by forming alliances with agencies, corporations, the faith community and other partners to improve the quality of life in Tucson and Pima County. United Way's strategic goals include achieving measurable results in the areas of Education, Income and Health by supporting programs that positively impact Children, Youth, Families and Seniors.

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**Please visit our website at [unitedwaytucson.org](http://unitedwaytucson.org)**



Valley of the Sun  
United Way

## Valley of the Sun United Way

With a vision of ensuring that all youth are prepared for success in college, work and life, Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) is the largest nonprofit funder of health and human services in Maricopa County. Since 1925, we have been building caring communities where individuals and families are successful, stable and secure. With 86 years of experience, we truly understand the challenges facing vulnerable individuals and families in our community. We partner with the right people, organizations and businesses that bring the passion, expertise and resources needed to get things done.

With support from our donors, volunteers and community experts, VSUW professionals find innovative solutions to address short- and long-term needs to create community results. We develop and invest in programs throughout Maricopa County that demonstrate measurable results and help us meet our goals of Ensuring Children and Youth Success, Ending Hunger and Homelessness, and Increasing the Financial Stability of Individuals and Families.

### ***Ensuring Youth Succeed***

With an overall goal of improving graduation rates, VSUW strives to develop and support diverse programs that address needs, reduce risk and build protective factors in the lives of youth. This survey supports our strategies to improve access to quality afterschool programs and other youth-development services; and to increase youth-development resources through community partnerships to improve student performance in communities where the need is greatest.

**Please visit our website at [vsuw.org](http://vsuw.org)**

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## Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence

The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence (AzCASE) is the state's leading advocate and information resource for promoting high quality, afterschool programs as a critical component in the positive development of Arizona's youth. Our vision is for all Arizona's children and youth to be actively engaged in life and prepared for successful, young adulthood. Our goal is for afterschool and out-of-school programs to flourish in Arizona and share in common a fundamental commitment to the promotion of high level personal and educational achievement and adherence to standards of performance and assessment of outcomes.

AzCASE is one of 40 statewide afterschool networks comprising the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks supported by the Charles Steward Mott Foundation. As a member of the national network, AzCASE is linked to a diverse, nationwide network of professional resources and advocates including the Afterschool Alliance, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governor's Association Centre for Best Practices, and the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families. AzCASE is funded by the Arizona Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families; the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Arizona Department of Education and local, state and national grants.

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**“Learning doesn’t just happen in a classroom between school bells... Children learn all day long.**

**So it’s vital to give students and their families the tools, the facilities and the opportunity to continue working on traditional academic subjects as well as a place for broader lessons in areas like art and music to enrich their lives.”**

*--U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan*

# Quality Afterschool Program Checklist

Prepared by the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence

[www.azafterschool.org](http://www.azafterschool.org)

## Afterschool Program Basics

- What is the program's mission and philosophy?
- Is the program licensed? Is it licensed-exempt?
- Does the program have an orientation and policy manual for new families?
- How are families involved in the program?
- What is the program fee? Is there financial assistance available?
- Does the program serve children with special needs?
- What is the procedure for handling emergencies?

## Physical Space Requirements

- Does the facility appear clean, safe and organized?
- Is there adequate space and materials for a variety of activities?
- Are there quiet, soft spaces for reading, homework, quiet games and those times when a child might want to be away from the larger group?
- Is the outdoor space safe and large enough to host a range of recreation and physical activities?

## Social and Emotional Development

- Are the children happy, having fun and actively engaged in the program?
- Do the children have a role in planning program activities, content and schedule?
- Are children encouraged to try new activities and build new skills that may be unfamiliar to them and out of their comfort zone?
- How are children encouraged to resolve differences among themselves?

## Academic Enrichment

- Does the program provide a rich, informal learning atmosphere that expands on and reinforces concepts learned in the classroom?
- Is homework assistance provided?
- Is creativity fostered and encouraged through music, art, dance, theatre?
- Is problem solving and critical thinking fostered and encouraged through hands-on experiments?
- Is technology available and what meaningful role does it play (beyond the playing of video games)?
- Is physical activity an important component of the program?
- Is the programming sufficiently varied or change with some frequency so as not to become boring and repetitive?
- Are the children having FUN!?

## Staff

- Does the staff greet each child's arrival in a warm and friendly manner?
- Is staff actively engaged in activities and conversations with the children and youth?
- Is staff respectful to each other, the children and the parents?
- What is the staff to child/youth ratio?
- Does the staff give meaningful and frequent feedback to parents about their child's growth and development?