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House Bill 33: FY24-25 Operating Budget

Senate Health Committee  
Chair Huffman  
Ranking Member Antonio  
Senators Johnson, Hackett, Roegner, Romanchuk, Ingram

Testimony submitted by:  
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Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee. My name is Adam Shank, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs. I want to take a moment to thank the Administration and the General Assembly for their steadfast support of the Clubs over the years. Through your work and support, the Clubs are making significant impacts on the lives of the youth we serve.

If a child or teen in Ohio has access to a Boys & Girls Club, they have access to more hours of structured programming out-of-school than they do in their local classroom. Using out-of-school time to build communities of support and increase access to developmental resources is critical. It is also effective.

There is a significant body of research that shows the past few years have had a profound impact on youth mental health leading to widespread increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress. We know that social stressors, a global pandemic, and ongoing traumatic events have exacerbated a mental health crisis among Ohio's young people.

A meta-analysis of research found that Boys & Girls Clubs have a positive impact on a range of youth development outcomes, including mental health and well-being.\* Participation in Boys & Girls Clubs has been associated with reduced symptoms of depression and improved self-esteem among youth.† Further research shows that Boys & Girls Clubs play an important role in preventative efforts by reducing the risk of involvement in delinquent behavior, substance abuse, and other negative outcomes. By providing positive and constructive alternatives to risky behavior, Boys & Girls Clubs can help to prevent negative outcomes later in life, leading to a safer and healthier community for all. In delivering these mental-health outcomes, Clubs have documented a positive return on investment for the state of Ohio. In fact, for every \$1 that the state invests in Boys & Girls Clubs, Ohio communities recognize a return of \$11.35 (Institute for Social Research and the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan, 2015).‡

Attached, I have included a comprehensive summary of Club impact on school performance documenting that Club programs: foster mental health and well-being, meeting the needs of young people on a continuum from prevention to intervention; help youth find balance by reducing screen time, fostering positive social interactions and increasing physical activity; help youth develop self-management skills so they are able to regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts and manage stress; encourage young people to avoid negative risk-taking and unhealthy behaviors; discourage fighting and bullying by providing safety connection and opportunities to learn positive relationship skills; discourage substance use by helping youth gain self-control, feel more connected and build quality relationships; provide a supportive environment that encourages youth

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\* The Impact of Boys & Girls Clubs on Youth Development Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis, 2010

† The Impact of Boys & Girls Clubs on Youth Outcomes, 2017

‡ Preliminary results from an ongoing Social Return on Investment Study by the Ohio University Voinovich School indicate that the return on investment for Ohio is likely significantly higher today than it was when the University of Michigan study was conducted. The final report of this study is expected in August of next year. Ongoing research from the Paxis Institute will be included in this study that should exponentially highlight the impact of Club programs.

to think critically about choices they make related to sexual activity; discourage youth crime by providing a supportive and safe environment during the hours when most juvenile crime occurs; and help young people feel physically safe and supported emotionally by their peers and trusted adults.

For these reasons, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has routinely utilized funding in the past several cycles to partner with Clubs in Ohio to expand services and promote youth mental health and prevention programming in high-need rural, Appalachian, and urban areas. The impact of these investments resulted in the deployment of fully trauma informed programming utilizing Pax Tools in all Ohio Clubs, expanded suicide prevention efforts in partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital, and the placement of mental health professionals in Clubs and via telehealth to provide access to care at a level previously unavailable to these youth.

Through expansion efforts in concert with the Administration, General Assembly, OMHAS, and ODE, Clubs have grown to more than 100 sites across the state, a 33% increase in service area, and a service capacity of more than 60,000 Ohio kids, a 300% increase from early pandemic levels. Additional partnerships are underway to provide mobile Club programming in hard to reach rural and Appalachian areas where access to services is limited.

Through this work, Boys & Girls Clubs are actively demonstrating an inoculative impact that will result in a litany of positive indicators including: fewer drug/alcohol addictions, fewer attempted suicides, fewer young people involved in the criminal justice system, fewer youth

needing special education services, increased graduation rates, and increased enrollment in post-secondary education.<sup>§</sup>

To ensure the efficient deployment and enhancement of successful programs, the Ohio Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs is requesting that the House's allocation of \$1.5 million in each fiscal year be maintained in the Senate. Administered by the Ohio Department Mental Health & Addiction Services, the funding will support prevention and early intervention for underserved children, youth, and families in high-need and/or high-risk communities through the integration of evidence-based trauma-informed practices into Club programming and the provision of broader community partnerships for care management, direct services, clinical interventions, as well as additional support for addiction prevention and youth mental health. Coupled with a more restrictive increased earmark of federal pass-through TANF dollars included in the Governor's and House's versions of the bill, this amount will ensure the continued support and expansion of evidence-based prevention programs.

As the needs of Ohio's youth continue, it is imperative that the state support ongoing and impactful programs in a fiscally responsible way. One that is focused on outcomes and return for Ohio's communities and tax dollars. At the requested amount, annual preventative programming could be provided at the cost of \$25 per youth and generate a documented return of \$17,025,000 in economic benefit for the state.

State funding for Boys & Girls Clubs is an investment in the future of communities and the well-being of our youth. Boys & Girls Clubs have a proven track record. Clubs in Ohio have

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<sup>§</sup> Correlative data shows a calculated return on investment for these outcomes in excess of \$781,000,000 as validated by the Pax Institute for Pax Good Behavior Game. Research is being conducted to calculate the same figures based upon the Club deployed Pax Tools for Human Services and Youth Workers.

evolved beyond mere community-based organizations to become state partners in addressing youth issues. If you want to have positive impacts on state outcomes in academic recovery, youth mental health, and college/career readiness, an investment in Boys & Girls Clubs is sound state policy with a documented ROI. Therefore, we humbly request the maintenance of the aforementioned allocation in the Senate version of HB 33.

## MENTAL HEALTH

### MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

*Afterschool programs foster mental health and well-being, meeting the needs of young people on a continuum from prevention to intervention.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

There is a critical need to promote mental health and well-being for all young people, helping them develop the resilience to cope with challenges so they can have a positive quality of life and become well-rounded, healthy adults.<sup>1</sup> Yet the mental health of children and adolescents has been a growing concern over the past few decades; the ongoing stressors and challenges young people face in their daily lives is taking a toll on their mental well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this growing crisis, and youth are now exhibiting a significant increase in suicidal ideation, anxiety, feelings of loneliness and depression. Nearly three fourths (70%) of public schools nationally reported an increase in mental-health struggles, based on students who sought mental health services during the 2021-22 school year.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, 42% of high school youth reported persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness and more than one in five (22%) seriously considered attempting suicide.<sup>3</sup> Mental health challenges in childhood and adolescence can impact other areas of a young person's life, including academics and relationships, and youth with mental health issues are more vulnerable to substance use, experiencing violence and engaging in risky sexual behaviors.<sup>4</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs have the potential to promote healthy development and well-being for all youth, including those who have experienced trauma, and to provide ongoing health support for families.<sup>5</sup> In strong afterschool programs, youth feel a sense of belonging, knowing they are an active and valued part of the group. The key to belonging is positive relationships; when youth have the chance to form connections with adults who believe in them and peers who relate to them, they feel supported and known. This sense of connection and belonging can help buffer the negative impacts of stress.<sup>6</sup> Findings from research on one-on-one mentoring programs is also relevant and useful here, showing that ongoing, supportive relationships with adults can have a positive effect on young people's depressive symptoms and their emotional well-being.<sup>7</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- In 2022, nearly all (85%) of Boys & Girls Club members in high school who had an optimal Club Experience also reported feeling a sense of belonging at their Club. By contrast, 43% of high school students nationally reported feeling a sense of belonging at their school.<sup>8</sup>
  - Nearly all Boys & Girls Club youth (90%) in 2022 reported that they can talk to an adult at the Club if they have a problem, adults at the Club take time to talk to them (91%), adults listen and understand what they have to say (91%) and adults care about them (95%).<sup>9</sup>
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- More than three fourths of Boys & Girls Club teens said they are comfortable talking about personal topics with Club staff, including mental health (78%), personal struggles (75%) and personal identity (73%). Only 39% of high-school students in a nationwide survey reported having an adult at school to talk to when feeling stressed or having problems.<sup>10</sup>
- In 2022, almost all (99%) Boys & Girls Club staff said they believe they have some responsibility to engage teens in conversations about mental health.<sup>11</sup>
- After completing Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, most participants (85%) reported feeling more connected to staff and other girls at their Club.<sup>12</sup>
- In an evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, the majority of girls who completed the program reported an increase in their emotional awareness and regulation: calming themselves down when feeling stressed or overwhelmed (61%), paying attention to how they feel inside (76%), engaging in positive self-talk (76%), understanding what they are feeling (79%) and understanding how thoughts and feelings influence behavior (83%).<sup>13</sup>
- After completing Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, the majority of participants agreed that they can handle being disappointed (67%) and can handle problems that come up in their lives (79%).<sup>14</sup>
- More than three fourths (77%) of girls studied in the evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program reported that they are able to say "no" to something they think is unfair, unhealthy or wrong. Seventy percent also said they were able to resolve conflicts with other people in a positive and calm way.<sup>15</sup>
- In a study of youth ages 9 to 14 in afterschool programs, including Boys & Girls Clubs, in Utah, researchers found that those with a higher sense of belonging in their afterschool programs had fewer risk factors (attitudes toward anti-social behavior and sensation-seeking) and more protective factors (positive perceptions about the importance of school and perceived opportunities for prosocial behavior). The sense of belonging had a stronger influence on risk and protective factors than program attendance.<sup>16</sup>

## EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- Afterschool and summer programs demonstrate concern for youth well-being and respond by helping them find connections. An Afterschool Alliance survey in 2021 found that 80% of afterschool providers are creating the space for young people to talk with their peers or staff members about how they are feeling; 86% of providers also reported giving young people time to interact with their peers and build connections.<sup>17</sup>
- In an evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Center programs in Texas, most participants agreed that "there is an adult here who I can talk to if I am upset" (67%) and "there is an adult here who helps me when I have a problem" (73%).<sup>18</sup>



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- An Afterschool Alliance survey found that 9 out of 10 parents with children in afterschool programs were satisfied with the extent to which staff were knowledgeable and caring (89%) and said these qualities in staff were important when selecting an afterschool program (93%).<sup>19</sup>
  - In an evaluation of the CORAL afterschool program, participants experienced a sense of engagement and belonging; almost all said there was an adult they could talk to; 90% said they felt safe; and 71% said they felt they belonged in the program.<sup>20</sup>
  - High-quality afterschool programs emphasize many elements of SoLD (the Science of Learning and Development), specifically the focus on relationships as essential for well-being. Stable, responsive and supportive relationships create a sense of safety for youth and allow them to build trust, which mitigates the effects of stress, trauma and other adverse experiences. Children develop and learn best in supportive relationships with adults and peers.<sup>21</sup>
  - In a review of 43 studies of afterschool programs, most reported that participants experienced an improved sense of well-being – including self-efficacy and self-concept – as well as decreased anxiety and depression.<sup>22</sup>
  - Afterschool providers responding to a 2022 Afterschool Alliance survey reported that they prioritize student mental health and well-being. Nearly 75% offer opportunities for youth to talk with peers or staff members about their feelings and 32% have access to specialized mental health or counseling support.<sup>23</sup>

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Please see the Social Emotional Development topic in this library to see how social-emotional skills relate to youth mental health.



## IMPACT OF SCREEN TIME

*Afterschool programs help youth find balance by reducing screen time, fostering positive social interactions and increasing physical activity.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Young people live in an increasingly digital world, which means more screen time and use of social media. Despite common perceptions, recent research finds no significant evidence that screen time contributes to negative mental health outcomes for youth, and this holds true for social media specifically.<sup>24</sup> The use of social media, smart phones and screen time in general are integral parts of daily life for young people; a survey by Common Sense Media in 2021 showed that the total entertainment screen use for teens 13 to 18 years is more than eight hours a day; for tweens 8 to 12 years, it's more than five hours a day.<sup>25</sup> Findings from a national survey of teens show that they perceive social media to have more positive than negative impacts. Most teens said social media helps them stay more connected with their friends (80%) and provides a support network when they need it (67%).<sup>26</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

As young people's screen time increases, afterschool programs can help them find balance by reducing the amount of time they spend in front of screens, increasing their positive social interactions and increasing the time they spend engaging in active play or physical activity.<sup>27</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- An evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program showed that nearly two thirds of girls (61%), after completing the program, limited the amount of time spent on social media to less than two hours per day.<sup>28</sup>
  - After completing Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, almost all participants (93%) said they kept themselves safe while interacting with others online and on social media (Instagram, Snapchat).<sup>29</sup>
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### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- A study of middle schoolers found links between building positive relationships with peers and their participation in afterschool activities, their online friendships and their use of social media. Youth participating in afterschool activities integrated peers from afterschool into their social networks and sought support from and provided support to others while on social media more than non-participants.<sup>30</sup>
  - A survey of 20,000 high-school students in Vermont found that, as the amount of time spent in afterschool activities – such as sports, band, drama, clubs or community groups – increased, time spent using screens decreased. Among youth who participated in
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afterschool activities five to nine hours a week, less than half (47%) spent three or more hours on their screens. Among youth who did not participate in any afterschool activities, 62% spent three or more hours on their screens.<sup>31</sup>

- The majority of parents reported in a 2020 nationally representative survey that afterschool programs give youth the chance to engage with peers and reduce the time they spend in unproductive screen time (85%), help them build life skills (82%) and develop confidence (81%).<sup>32</sup>
  - In a 2021 study of afterschool programs conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, 81% of providers reported that they were offering opportunities for young people to be physically active and engaged away from screens.<sup>33</sup>
  - In a 2021 nationwide study by the Wallace Foundation, 40% of parents were worried about their youth missing out on social connections and friendships and almost one third (32%) were concerned about too much screen time. At the same time, several qualities of afterschool programs were highly ranked by parents as being important: their child gaining confidence (79%); developing social and emotional skills (77%); being exposed to new experiences (75%); pursuing interests and passions (73%), and finding their passion, purpose and voice (71%).<sup>34</sup>
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## SELF-MANAGEMENT

*Afterschool programs help youth develop self-management skills so they are able to regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts and manage stress.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Emotion regulation, the ability to manage one's emotional responses, is essential to the well-being of youth at all ages. As they interact with family members, friends and the broader environment from birth through adulthood, youth learn the self-management skills they need to be successful in school, relationships and the workplace. When young people learn to manage their emotions, they are better able to control their impulses, direct their behavior constructively and adapt to new people and environments more effectively.<sup>35</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

In afterschool programs, young people learn resilience and emotion regulation as they engage in activities, set and achieve goals, work collaboratively and make decisions.<sup>36</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- Self-management skills such as resilience are strong among Boys & Girls Club youth. According to 2022 NYOI Member Survey data, when something goes wrong in their lives, 92% said they try to figure out how to do better next time (61% responded “very true” and 31% “sort of true”); 85% also said they tell themselves they’ll do better next time (59% responded “very true” and 26% “sort of true”); and 80% said they talk about it with someone to understand what happened (49% respond “very true” and 31% “sort of true”).<sup>37</sup>
- Boys & Girls Club youth also have persistence: 91% of Club members participating in the 2022 NYOI Member Survey reported that if something is really hard, they keep working at it (57% responded “very true” and 34% “sort of true”).<sup>38</sup>
- Boys & Girls Club youth learn stress management strategies: nearly three-fourths (72%) said they are able to stay calm when they feel stressed (36% “very true” and 36% “sort of true”), and 80% said they know ways they can calm themselves down (49% “very true” and 31% “sort of true”).<sup>39</sup>
- Youth at Boys & Girls Clubs learn how to resolve conflicts. In 2022, most members said that when they have problems with other people their age, they talk things over with them (71%) or talk to an adult about it (72%).<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, 55% of members said that when other people their age try to hit or push them around, they fight back, which suggests they need more support in building skills for responding to physical aggression in positive, nonviolent ways.<sup>41</sup>
- In an evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs’ SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, the majority of girls who completed the program reported an increase in their



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emotional awareness and regulation: calming themselves down when feeling stressed or overwhelmed (61%), paying attention to how they feel inside (76%), engaging in positive self-talk (76%), understanding what they are feeling (79%) and understanding how thoughts and feelings influence behavior (83%).<sup>42</sup>

- After completing Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program, the majority of participants agreed that they can handle being disappointed (67%) and can handle problems that come up in their lives (79%).<sup>43</sup>
- More than three fourths (77%) of girls studied in the evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs' SMART Girls health, fitness and self-esteem program reported that they are able to say "no" to something they think is unfair, unhealthy or wrong. Seventy percent said they were able to resolve conflicts with other people in a positive and calm way.<sup>44</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- An evaluation of the Success for Kids afterschool program, designed to build resilience in children by teaching them to access inner resources and build positive connections with others, found that participants improved significantly in skills such as adaptability, social skills and leadership.<sup>45</sup>
- In a review of evaluations of afterschool programs and their effects on young people, findings indicated that participants made improvements in attitudes, self-concept, self-esteem and social skills, as well as in the ability to resolve conflicts with peers, express opinions, communicate with others, maintain self-control, make constructive choices and avoid fights.<sup>46</sup>

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Please see the Social Emotional Development topic in this library to see how it relates to mental health and well-being.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>8</sup> Boys & Girls Clubs of America (2022). Data from the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) Member Survey, <https://mydata.bgca.net/Home.aspx>.
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- <sup>17</sup> Afterschool Alliance (June 2021). "Thriving in Afterschool: Promoting Healthy Futures for Young People," Afterschool Alliance, [afterschoolalliance.org, http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Promoting-Healthy-Futures-Fact-Sheet-2021.pdf](http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Promoting-Healthy-Futures-Fact-Sheet-2021.pdf).



- <sup>18</sup> Naftzger, N. and Arellano, B.D. (July 2021). *21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas Afterschool Centers on Education Final Evaluation Report: 2016–17 to 2018–19* (Arlington, Va.: American Institutes for Research), <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/tx21stcclc-yr4-report.pdf>.
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## AVOIDANCE OF HEALTH-RISK BEHAVIORS

### GENERAL HEALTH-RISK BEHAVIORS

*Afterschool programs encourage young people to avoid negative risk-taking and unhealthy behaviors.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Experimenting and taking risks are a natural part of adolescent development. As youth explore their identities and gain independence, they test limits and try out what they believe to be “grown-up” behaviors. Supportive adults can encourage them toward positive risks – trying an unfamiliar sport, taking a more challenging class or making a new friend – which is an important part of guiding them through adolescence. As youth engage in positive risk-taking, learning new skills, exploring their identities, trying challenging activities and discovering unknown strengths, they are less likely to engage in negative behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to help adolescents avoid negative risk behaviors such as substance use, unsafe sexual behaviors, fighting and bullying by providing a place to go where youth can feel safe, connecting them with adults they can trust, focusing their attention on positive challenges and encouraging them to make good choices. By engaging in meaningful activities with peers and adults in a safe environment, youth can challenge themselves in positive ways and, at the same time, find a sense of purpose, gain personal responsibility and learn how to set goals.

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- Boys & Girls Clubs provide connectedness, helping youth feel a sense of belonging at the Club, with their peers and with staff. In 2022, almost all (94%) Club members indicated they feel accepted for who they are at the Club.<sup>2</sup>
- An evaluation of Boys & Girls Clubs’ SMART Moves suite of programs showed they work well when facilitated in a way that participants find engaging and allows them to make close connections with their adult facilitators and peers. Highly engaged participants in grades 3 to 5 achieved three times as much growth across social-emotional and health decision-making skills as youth who did not take part in the program. Participants in grades 6 to 8 who had low levels of engagement showed less growth than those who were highly engaged and those who did not take part; highly engaged participants in grades 6 to 8 achieved six times as much growth as participants with low levels of engagement.<sup>3</sup>
- In a study of youth ages 9 to 14 in afterschool programs, including Boys & Girls Clubs, in Utah, researchers found that those with a higher sense of belonging in their afterschool programs had fewer risk factors (attitudes toward anti-social behavior and sensation-seeking) and more protective factors (positive perceptions about the importance of school





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and opportunities for pro-social behavior). The sense of belonging had a stronger influence on risk and protective factors than program attendance.<sup>4</sup>

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## EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- An evaluation of New York City’s Beacon Community Centers found that 77% of youth in grades five through eight agreed that the program taught them about the dangers of using alcohol and drugs, and other risky behaviors.<sup>5</sup>
  - Afterschool programs encourage young people to get involved in volunteering and community service. A 4-H study found that teens who participate in community service are 50% less likely to engage in risky behavior.<sup>6</sup>
  - A study of risk factors related to substance use found that engagement in meaningful activities – including volunteering or service-learning projects – was associated with lower alcohol, tobacco and drug use.<sup>7</sup>
  - Afterschool programs foster connectedness, which protects youth against unhealthy behaviors. Youth who feel connected to family, school or other important people and organizations were 66% less likely later in life to experience unhealthy outcomes related to sexual risk, substance use, and violence.<sup>8</sup>
  - In a study of children ages 7 to 11 who self-identified as Black and participated in afterschool programs in Pennsylvania, those who reported feeling safe, happy and connected to staff and other children in the programs also reported having a strong, positive racial-ethnic identity and were less engaged with health-risk behaviors such as using cigarettes, marijuana or alcohol.<sup>9</sup>
  - In an Afterschool Alliance survey of parents with a child in afterschool, the majority agreed that afterschool programs provide working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised (83%), that they reduce the likelihood that young people will use drugs or engage in other risky behaviors (75%), and that they keep kids in their community safe and out of trouble (74%).<sup>10</sup>
  - Most parents responding to the Afterschool Alliance survey agreed that afterschool programs support youth needs – with opportunities to engage with peers (85% agree), positive relationships with caring adults and mentors (77% agree) and opportunities to build life skills (82% agree) – and they considered these as important for helping young people make positive choices.<sup>11</sup>
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## FIGHTING AND BULLYING

*Afterschool programs discourage fighting and bullying by providing safety, connection and opportunities to learn positive relationship skills.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Violence among young people usually takes the form of physical fighting and bullying; both can result in short- and long-term negative consequences for youth development. Physical fighting, the most visible form of violent behavior, involves intentionally hurting someone and is common among middle- and high-school youth. Youth involved in physical fighting are more likely to experience lower life satisfaction, lower psychological well-being, poorer family and peer relationships. Bullying, which is negative behavior directed by someone exerting power and control over another, also can impact a young person's health and well-being; those who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, socially withdrawn behavior, difficulties in school, substance use and being a perpetrator or victim later in life.<sup>12</sup> Between 2011 and 2019, one fifth of high-school students reported being bullied at school.<sup>13</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs can help prevent bullying and fighting by creating a safe environment, connecting youth with their peers, giving them opportunities to talk about what they are feeling, modelling respectful behavior and teaching positive relationship skills.<sup>14</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- Boys & Girls Club high-school members are less likely to fight than high schoolers nationally. According to 2022 NYOI data, 18% of Club members in grades 9 to 12 were in one or more physical fights in the past 12 months,<sup>15</sup> compared to 22% of teens nationwide.<sup>16</sup>
- High-school Boys & Girls Club members experience bullying at a much lower rate at the Club than they do at school; in 2022, 15% of members in grades 9 to 12 reported that they had been bullied on school property in the past year, compared to 6% who said they had been bullied at the Club in the past year.<sup>17</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- In a study of middle-school youth in an afterschool bullying prevention program, youth showed improvements in average scores between pre- and post-tests. There was a 19% increase in their overall confidence in the ability to prevent violence; a 30% decrease in beliefs that support violence; and a 28% decrease in behaviors supportive of violence.<sup>18</sup>



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- Three out of four youth (74%) involved in New York City's Beacon Community Centers afterschool program reported that the Beacon Center was helpful in encouraging them to avoid fighting.<sup>19</sup>
  - Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey questioned 20,000 ninth to 12th graders about bullying. Among youth who participated in afterschool one to four hours each week, 15% were bullied at some time in the month before the survey, compared to 18% of non-participants who were bullied in the same time frame.<sup>20</sup>
  - The Vermont survey of high-school youth found that those who participated in afterschool were less likely to bully others. Among youth who participated in one to four hours of afterschool programming each week, 7% bullied someone in the month before the survey, compared to 10% of non-participants who bullied someone in the previous month.<sup>21</sup>
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## SUBSTANCE USE

*Afterschool programs discourage substance use by helping youth gain self-control, feel more connected and build quality relationships.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Exposure to trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) puts youth at greater risk for use of substances like alcohol and tobacco during adolescence. These behaviors have negative consequences, compromising young people's academic achievement, future career potential and financial opportunities, as well as health later in adulthood.<sup>22</sup> In 2021, nearly one-fourth (23%) of high-school students reported that they currently drank alcohol; 18% currently used an electronic vapor product; and 16% currently used marijuana.<sup>23</sup>

### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs play a critical role in combatting substance use among young people. By increasing resilience and supporting development, afterschool fosters important protective factors that help youth gain self-control and confidence, feel more connected to school and build quality relationships with peers and caring adults. Afterschool programs also use trauma-informed practices that help youth overcome Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which in turn reduces the likelihood that they will develop substance use disorders.<sup>24</sup>

### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- Boys & Girls Clubs enable teens to make healthy, positive decisions. In 2022, Club members in high school were more likely than high schoolers nationally to have never tried: cigarettes (88% Club high schoolers vs. 84% of high schoolers nationally); electronic vapor products (82% vs. 64%); marijuana (83% vs. 75%); prescription pain killers without a prescription (95% vs. 90%).<sup>25</sup>
- Club teens with high stress-management skills are more likely to abstain from using substances than those with low stress-management skills: 92% of Club teens with high stress-management skills reported abstaining from cigarettes, whereas 86% of Club teens with low stress-management skills reported abstaining from cigarettes. Similarly, 87% of Club teens with high stress-management skills reported abstaining from alcohol, whereas 73% of Club teens with low stress-management skills reported abstaining from alcohol.<sup>26</sup>

### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control for Alaska showed that youth participating in afterschool programs as little as two times a week were 20% less likely than their peers to use alcohol and 40% less likely to use marijuana.<sup>27</sup>



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- A review of 43 studies of afterschool programs serving youth between the ages of 5 and 14 found significant declines in drug use and changes in attitudes toward drugs.<sup>28</sup>
  - A study of Alaska afterschool programs found that youth who participated at least once a week were 16% less likely to binge drink and 31% less likely to use marijuana than non-participants; those who participated at least two days a week were 18% less likely to use alcohol and 39% less likely to use marijuana.<sup>29</sup>
  - A two-year study of the CHOICE afterschool intervention program found that, by the end of the program, middle-school participants were half as likely to report having used alcohol or marijuana in the past month. They also were about half as likely to report that their friends used alcohol and marijuana.<sup>30</sup>
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## SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

*Afterschool programs provide a supportive environment that encourages youth to think critically about choices they make related to sexual activity.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Encouraging young people to delay sexual activity is important; not only does it prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections but also it promotes healthy outcomes and contributes to young people's positive development. Studies show that delaying sexual intercourse can result in higher rates of high-school graduation, short-term benefits in mental well-being, and improved relationships in early adulthood.<sup>31</sup> Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of high-school students who reported ever having had sex fell from 47% to 30% but in 2021, nearly one-fourth (21%) continued to be sexually active.<sup>32</sup>

### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs have the potential to help young people make positive, healthy life decisions. When youth have a space where they feel safe being themselves with supportive adults they can trust, they are more likely to think critically about the choices they make.<sup>33</sup>

### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- Among Boys & Girls Club members in high school, 81% reported abstaining from sexual activity in their lifetime. Among high school students nationally, 72% reported abstaining from sexual activity in their lifetime.<sup>34</sup>
- Sexually active Club high schoolers reported using safer practices than high schoolers nationally; 62% of Club high schoolers used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse compared with 52% of high schoolers nationally.<sup>35</sup>

### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- Evaluations of the 4-H afterschool program for elementary-, middle- and high-school youth found that participants were more likely to make positive life choices than non-participants. Twelfth graders in the program were three times more likely than non-participants to postpone having sex.<sup>36</sup>
- A study of 20,000 Vermont 9th to 12th graders showed that afterschool programs play a positive role in reducing sexual activity among teens. Among teens who participated in afterschool between one and four hours per week, 25% were sexually active, compared to 34% of non-participants.<sup>37</sup>
- Teens in the study of Vermont afterschool participation reported using safer practices if they were sexually active; 6% of afterschool participants reported *not* using a



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contraceptive during their most recent sexual encounter, compared to 10% of non-participating teens.<sup>38</sup>

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## JUVENILE CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

*Afterschool programs discourage youth crime by providing a supportive and safe environment during the hours when most juvenile crime occurs.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Studies by the Afterschool Alliance show that, in the afternoon hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., nearly 8 million youth are alone and unsupervised, placing them at risk of becoming involved in juvenile crime.<sup>39</sup> Violent crimes committed by young people peak in the afterschool hours on school days; nearly one fifth (18%) of these crimes take place between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., the time when many youth are left unsupervised. Research shows that initiatives to reduce crimes by youth after school have greater potential to reduce a community's violent crime rate than setting curfews.<sup>40</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs are a deterrent for juvenile crime because they provide a safe and supportive environment, adult supervision in the afterschool hours, caring mentors, skill-building activities and positive interactions with peers.

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- A study of seventh and eighth graders attending Boys & Girls Clubs found that when they attended more frequently (at least once or twice per week) over the 30 months of the study – and when they had a safe, engaging experience and nurturing, consistent relationships with staff – they reported decreased levels of aggression, decreased numbers of negative peers as friends, decreased number of times stopped by police and a lower likelihood of beginning to carry a weapon, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, smoke marijuana and engage in sexual intercourse.<sup>41</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- A long-term study of LA's BEST afterschool program shows that youth who attended regularly were less likely than non-participants to participate in criminal activities. Youth who had a medium level of participation in afterschool (between 10 and 14 days a month) were 30% less likely than non-participants to engage in juvenile crime, and those who attended frequently (at least 15 days a month) were 50% less likely.<sup>42</sup>
- The BUILD afterschool program targets youth in Chicago communities who are in trouble at school, are skipping school, or are getting into trouble with the law – providing academic help, physical activity, mentoring, leadership development, social and emotional skills, and college and career preparation. Evaluations of the program found that more than 8 in 10 participants (87%) saw a decrease in risky behaviors and improved their conflict resolution skills (85%).<sup>43</sup>





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- The Promise South Salt Lake initiative, which includes afterschool programming designed to keep youth safe in the afternoon hours, collaborated with law enforcement and other community members to build protective factors, mitigate risk for youth and reduce juvenile crime. A 2015 analysis showed that the risk of gang involvement for South Salt Lake's eighth graders dropped from 25.6% to 7.2% since the time South Salt Lake's afterschool programming began in 2007, and the city's overall juvenile crime rates between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. dropped 64% during that same time.<sup>44</sup>
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## SAFETY

*Afterschool programs help young people feel physically safe and supported emotionally by their peers and by trusted adults.*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Research shows that young people need safe, trusted environments in order to thrive and reach their full potential. When youth spend time in a setting that is physically and emotionally safe, they are more likely to have positive relationships, experience a sense of belonging and have improved physical, cognitive and emotional outcomes throughout their lives.<sup>45</sup>

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### DEEPER DIVE | IMPACT OF AFTERSCHOOL

Afterschool programs provide the environment youth need to feel safe and find adult mentors who they trust and who can help them grow, thrive and connect.<sup>46</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

- According to the 2022 NYOI survey, youth and teens find safety at Boys & Girls Clubs. Compared to other places they spend time with friends, 57% reported feeling safer at the Club. The majority (68%) also reported that they feel safe being themselves; believe adults would respond if someone said mean things (67%) or wanted to hurt them (64%); and feel safe from harm (71%).<sup>47</sup>

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### EVIDENCE FROM OTHER PROGRAMS

- According to a national survey of parents and caregivers, when selecting an afterschool program, almost all parents (93%) thought a safe environment is important. Nearly all (92%) also were satisfied with the safety of their child or adolescent's afterschool environment.<sup>48</sup>
- An evaluation of afterschool programs in Oakland, Calif. found that most participants reported feeling safe in their afterschool program. More than nine in 10 high schoolers (95%), three in four middle schoolers and more than five in six elementary schoolers (87%) felt positively about their safety in the afterschool program.<sup>49</sup>
- A study of New Hampshire's 21st Century Community Learning Centers found that 89% of participants reported feeling safe in the program most or all of the time.<sup>50</sup>
- A 2000 evaluation of a Los Angeles afterschool program found that parents and children both found the safety of the afterschool program far superior to the safety within the neighborhood.<sup>51</sup>



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- A two-year evaluation of the CORAL afterschool initiative, serving primarily elementary-age children in California, found that nine in 10 program participants reported feeling safe at the afterschool program.<sup>52</sup>
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Please see the Social Emotional Development topic in this library to see how it relates to helping youth avoid risky behaviors.

## ENDNOTES

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