

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS: Building Youth Resilience / Strengthening Families

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS INCREASE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).** Afterschool is an ideal setting to teach SEL skills; youth can focus on building friendships; and programming is flexible. Research demonstrates that children and youth who regularly attend afterschool programs that utilize consistent SEL practices benefit from improved self-awareness, positive social behaviors, increased academic achievement, and significant reductions in problem behaviors.¹
- **Self-Esteem and Workforce Development.** Positive afterschool experiences help children and youth gain essential skills in healthy self-esteem, personal agency, and problem solving. These skills translate to increased employability skills and career readiness.²
- **Community-Wide Support.** Afterschool programs bolster community-wide post-traumatic growth by providing children and youth with a safe place to learn and grow amidst trauma, family addiction, and disruptions. Additionally, programs that provide afterschool and summer meals and snacks make it easier for families to make ends meet, and may be a child's only chance to access nutritious food until the next school day.
- **Healthy Relationships.** Afterschool is a place where youth can build social skills with peers in a low-pressure environment and also develop trusting, stable relationships with adult staff. Across Vermont, only 60% of high school students feel like they matter to the people in their community. For young people who do not participate in afterschool activities at all, this measure of "belonging" drops to 47%, while for teens who participate 10 hours or more per week in afterschool activities it goes up to 71%.⁴

What Makes Sense?

With a proven track record for preventing substance abuse, increasing resilience, and supporting positive youth development, investment in afterschool programs is a compelling use of state prevention dollars.

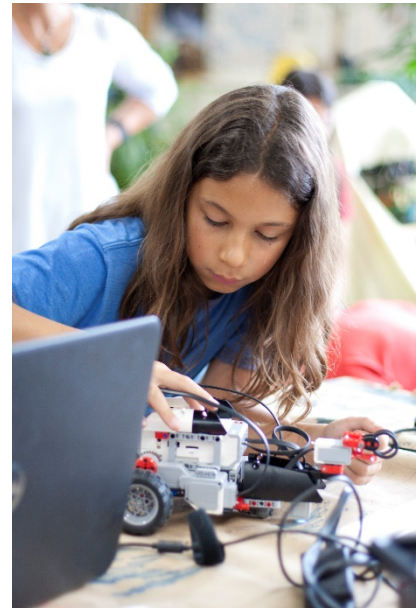
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE PROVEN TO REDUCE RISKY BEHAVIORS

- **Positive Youth Development.** In addition to keeping kids away from drugs after school, afterschool programs build protective factors that prevent substance use disorders from occurring and can reduce risk factors that lead to misuse of substances. Afterschool programs reduce substance abuse through the development of protective or resiliency factors such as school connectedness, self-control, self-confidence, and quality peer relationships.³
- **Reduced Substance Use.** Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that students who participate in extracurricular activities each week (up to 19 hours/week) are significantly less likely to use any alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana than those who did not participate in any activities.⁴
- **Response to the Opioid Epidemic.** Quality afterschool programs also provide trauma-informed practices that offset the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Addressing the impact of ACEs in turn reduces development of substance use disorders and other future health concerns.⁵ As the opioid epidemic continues to disrupt Vermont families this becomes increasingly important.

(1) Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., and Pachan, M. A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (3-4): 294-309, 2010. (2) American Institutes for Research. (2015) Ready for Work? How Afterschool Programs Can Support Employability Through Social and Emotional Learning. (3) SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. (2014). CAPT Decision Support Tools—Strategies and Interventions to Prevent Youth Marijuana Use: An At-a-Glance Resource Tool Using Prevention Research to Guide Prevention Practice. SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. (4) Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2017. <http://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/population-health-surveys-data/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs>. (5) SAMHSA - Adverse Childhood Experiences and Substance Use Disorders. <https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health/adverse-childhood-experiences>.

VERMONT NEEDS MORE INVESTMENT IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

- **Return on Investment.** For every dollar spent on quality afterschool and summer learning programs, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as accruing additional benefits from increased high school completion and work productivity.⁶
- **Need for Programs.** In Vermont, 79% of children and youth ages 6-17 have all available parents in the workforce.⁷ For most families, there is a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are still at work and children and youth are out of school and need supervision. This need for programs is even greater during school vacation weeks and over the summer.
- **Unmet Demand.** Approximately 24% percent of Vermont's children and youth, grades K-12, are currently enrolled in afterschool programs. Of those children and youth not currently in programs, 33% would participate if a program were available.⁸



THE ICELANDIC MODEL FOR BROAD-BASED PREVENTION

In response to concerns about the increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol use among adolescents, social scientists with the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), a non-profit research institute affiliated with Reykjavik University, developed and implemented an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder, community-based model for adolescent substance use prevention. The Icelandic Model of Adolescent Substance Use Prevention, or “Icelandic Model”, aims to reduce the use of substances including cannabis, cigarettes, and alcohol by increasing parental monitoring and parental social involvement, and through youth participation in organized sports, the arts, and other structured activities after school. Studies conducted on the data collected between 1997 and 2014 have found that through implementation of this prevention model, substance use and risk factors such as engaging in a “party lifestyle” have decreased dramatically.

THE FINNISH MODEL FOR YOUTH WORK

The Finnish model for youth work recognizes adolescence and young adulthood as a special and important time in a person's life. With one of the shortest school days but some of the highest test scores in the world, Finnish youth workers play an important role in supporting positive youth development in the out-of-school time. Finnish youth centers are open usually from 12pm to 9pm and offer a safe space for youth to congregate as well as access to a wide range of resources (e.g., digital recording studios, theatre programs, graffiti art, painting, crafts, jewelry making, video production, band equipment, etc.) Encouraging young people to discover passions and interests in community with other young people is a priority in Finland with the Ministry of Education and Culture setting as one of their key outcome measures that every youth in Finland will have a hobby. In this context, hobbies are seen as a way for young people to develop skills, interests, self-identity, self-efficacy, and social networks. Offering a cross between social workers, prevention specialists, and educators, Finnish youth workers are highly trained experts on youth development, youth transitions, youth living conditions, and youth culture and connect with youth to support healthy decision making. Bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees in youth work are all available in Finland.

(6) Vermont Afterschool. (2014). Return on Investment Study. <http://bit.ly/1zqTHp0>; (7) Kids Count Data Center. (2009-2013). <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>; (8) America after 3PM: Afterschool programs in demand. Afterschool Alliance, 2014.