



NEW YORK STATE
NETWORK FOR
YOUTH SUCCESS



April 23, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your robust leadership during this difficult time. Your response to the COVID-19 crisis, including recognition of childcare and school-age childcare as essential, has helped to ensure the immediate safety of our youth, families, and communities. As we look ahead, we will need strong commitments and coordinated efforts to ensure that we recover fully and quickly—and that includes making sure our youth have the support they need to catch up and re-engage in school and community life. As an organization focused on the healthy development and education of youth, the New York State Network for Youth Success has pulled together a number of resources our state can tap now to help ensure a bright future ahead.

Afterschool and summer learning programs have long provided supplemental education and support to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need. We invite you to review some of the longstanding research on the [impact of these programs here](#).

- During this crisis, afterschool programs are adapting to support students and families; where possible, many have shifted to providing full-day learning and/or enrichment environments for the children of essential workers. Programs are also shifting to provide virtual programming, serve and deliver meals, and share diverse resources and connections to needed services to help families stay safe and whole during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Despite the need and incredible resources these programs are currently providing, 75% of programs are at risk of laying staff off or shutting down permanently due to financial concerns, according to a recent survey of the afterschool field conducted by the Afterschool Alliance. Professional afterschool staff that have been supporting students' academic and social and emotional gains for years may be lost as assets for our youth, as staff are being forced to leave the field. Unfortunately some programs in New York have already had to make the difficult decision to lay off staff, but these programs are prepared to restart their crucial services as soon as funding allows.
- As we look toward recovery, it will be critical to help youth re-engage and catch up on hours of lost learning time. Academic content that was not delivered due to school closures can best be supplemented by afterschool and summer programs, which have a demonstrated expertise in how to keep students engaged in learning and supported socially and emotionally. Students, including those who need the most support, will need teachers and program leaders who have the ability to teach academic content while engaging students through their interests and specialized needs. Returning to learning, when done well, should feel like a reward to students.



- As parents return to work, they will need afterschool programs. Before the pandemic, parents already relied heavily on afterschool programs to keep their children safe and engaged while they work, with 4 in 5 saying it helped them stay employed. Parents will need those same supports to be able to return to the workforce.
- If the State's education system, economy, and future workforce is to rebound quickly, using federal and state supports to maintain staff and keep afterschool and summer programs running and serving additional students will be essential. Immediate action can be taken now and will mitigate more costly interventions later. Our recommendations for action are below:

Immediate Recommendations

Ensure that New York State is utilizing the supports offered at the federal level to support students, families and staff.

1. **Child Care (CCDBG) Funding:** Use the flexibility provided by the Federal Office of Child Care, as well as additional flexibilities and funding provided in the CARES Act, to ensure that childcare centers are safe, educational, and operational where open, and supported and prepared to re-open quickly for families returning to work where closed.
 - Use the CARES act flexibility to continue to fund programs despite enrollment numbers and closures to ensure (as the law recommends) that "they are able to remain open or reopen as appropriate."
 - Support the ability of the new \$163M federal allocation of CCDBG funds to support children of essential workers, and use the regular allocation to support the programs that would have been serving these children under normal conditions as suggested in the [Office of Child Care FAQs](#) (Question #9) for these new funds.
 - Establish hazard pay for staff working during this time as allowed under [Office of Child Care FAQs](#) (Question #14).
 - Ensure that New York has a statewide policy to provide program and staff pay based on previous enrollment rather than current attendance as allowed in federal flexibility.
 - Use CARES flexibility, in combination with state and other funds, to support child care centers not currently in the CCDBG program to help keep them afloat, including allowing school-age license exempt programs to be funded.
 - Ensure essential workers' children are being supported with these funds – including those of child care workers themselves.
2. **21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) Grant Flexibility:** Ensure that New York continues to use full federal flexibility to make sure quality afterschool professionals under the Department of Education Title IV B 21st CCLC grants remain employed, support immediate needs, and prepare to support students fully when in person operations resume.

Ensure that the New York State Department of Education opted in to the [Federal Government Waiver](#) to extend fund availability for Title IV B funds through September 2021.



3. COVID Education Relief Funding: New York State should utilize resources in the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (State allocation: \$164M) and Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Funds (State allocation: \$ 1B) in the CARES Act to strengthen afterschool and summer programs.

- The uses of the funds include specifically (Sec. 18003 (d)(11)): *“Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.”*

Ensure that guidance goes from the New York State Education Department to Local Education Agencies on the uses of these funds for afterschool and summer programming work.

- These Education Relief funds can be used to support any activity in ESSA which includes the 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds.
- Also, there are many opportunities to coordinate other uses of these funds with both in school and out of school services, for example funds spent on planning, on professional development, on cleaning spaces, on meal delivery, and technology may be best leveraged by bringing afterschool and summer program educators into the conversations. **Ensure coordination with afterschool partners as funds are spent.**

4. Meals supports for Students: Use flexibility in USDA congregate feeding requirements, provided in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to provide creative solutions to provide meals and other resources to students.

- Where feasible, afterschool programs can continue to act as meals delivery sites.
- As possible, afterschool staff can assist in home meal delivery, especially alongside other academically related supplies and resources.

Utilize afterschool and summer programs to implement a statewide “recovery summer”.

As the pandemic continues to take its toll and New York moves further into its time on PAUSE, the State must integrate afterschool and summer programs as essential elements in education-related recovery and sustainability efforts for students and families. However recovery will look like for New York, providers already have an arsenal of contingency plans ready to provide virtual programming or a combination of programming as appropriate. These programs will help mitigate further learning loss, keep youth safe and engaged, and allow guardians time to work or search for job opportunities. The State must ensure that funding for afterschool and summer programs are sustained, and that these programs are given the flexibility to support the recovery of students and families as the State begins to reopen.