

Illinois After-school Initiative

Interim Progress Report

History of the Illinois After-school Initiative

The Illinois After-school Alliance, a coalition of after-school stakeholders, was established in August 2000 following a national conference on after-school issues. The mission of the Illinois After-school Alliance is to ensure that quality after-school programs are available for all of Illinois' children and youth. Although "after-school" is commonly used, the term "after-school" encompasses programs that take place before school, after school, on weekends, and during school breaks including the summer time. The range of programs varies from community programs with a single focus to comprehensive programs that provide a full range of activities. After-school programs take place in a range of venues including community-based programs, schools, faith institutions, boys and girls clubs and other venues. The Alliance quickly recognized that Illinois faced many challenges in the after-school arena including:

- no clear statewide definition of after-school services;
- no consistent accounting of the number of children in need of after-school services;
- no system that coordinates after-school services in Illinois; and
- no assurance that after-school programs are developed based on best practices.

To begin to address these issues, a legislative resolution was forged by the Illinois After-school Alliance calling for a comprehensive assessment of after-school services in Illinois and the development of a strategic plan for ensuring that every child has access to a quality after-school program. The resolution proposed that the strategic planning process should be driven by the two state agencies having the most vested interests in after-school services: the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois State Board of Education.

This single resolution was subsequently passed by both chambers as separate actions. **HR 63** and **SR 70** passed the House and Senate respectively in 2001 and set in motion the Illinois After-school Initiative. The charge of the Illinois After-school Initiative is outlined below in an excerpt from the resolution:

That the activities of the Illinois After-school Initiative shall include (i) an assessment of the state of after-school services in this State, including identification of the number of children and youth served statewide in after-school programs, identification of the number and location of children and youth who are in need of after-school programs, and identification of the various funding streams currently supporting after-school programs, and (ii) the development of a plan for coordinating after-school services and for achieving a goal of providing after-school services for every school-age child in this State; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Illinois After-school Initiative plan shall include strategies for this State to promote best-practice models for after-school programs and to promote coordination and collaboration of after-school services at the local level; and be it further

*RESOLVED, That the Illinois After-school Initiative shall engage children and youth in development of the plan; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the Illinois After-school Initiative shall review and report to the General Assembly on model programs operating in this State and other states and that the review shall look at program components identified as best-practices and based on proven research...*

The Need for Quality After-school Services

Nearly 28 million school-age youth across the United States have working parents, with an estimated seven million receiving no adult supervision during their out-of-school time.ⁱ

Between 1985 and 1996, the percentage of children age 6-17 with parents in the labor force increased from 59 percent to 70 percent.ⁱⁱ

More than two out of three school-age children are in households where both parents, or the only parent (caretaker), are in the workforce. In Illinois, that translates to 1,412,098 children. Even with a generous estimate of 360,000 available slots for Illinois school-age children in after-school programs, thousands of these children are left unsupervised in the hours after school.

As the number of unsupervised children during the out of school time continues to climb, public and private funders, practitioners, families and communities are increasingly recognizing the need for safe and enriching places for children and youth during these hours. Ensuring the quality of after-school opportunities is critical to the healthy development of young people. Research shows that quality after-school programs can have a range of outcomes for its participants including:

- Children and youth who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 49 percent more likely to have used drugs and 37 percent more likely to have become teen parents than those who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Students in quality after-school programs have better academic performance (math, reading and other subjects), behavior and school attendance and greater expectations for the future.^{iv}

The public will for quality after-school programs also continues to grow

- 91 percent of adults say it is important to them personally to ensure access to after-school programs for children in their community.ⁱⁱ
- 86 percent of adults believe it is difficult for parents to find after-school programs in their own communities.^{iv}
- 67 percent of voters stated that they were willing to pay \$100 in additional state taxes each year to expand after-school programs.^{iv¹}

ⁱ*After-school Programs: An Analysis of Need, Current Research, and Public Opinion, The After-school Corporation, 1999, p. 4*

ⁱⁱU.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Adolescent Time Use, Risky Behavior and Outcomes: An Analysis of National Data, 1995.

Launching the Illinois After-school Initiative

The Illinois After-school Initiative officially launched in December 2001. Members (see Attachment #1) were officially named to the Initiative by its two co-chair's Secretary Linda Reneé Baker of the Illinois Department of Human Services and then-Superintendent Glenn "Max" McGee of the Illinois State Board of Education. Task Force members included a broad range of stakeholders representing the various disciplines outlined in the original legislative resolution.

The Illinois After-school Initiative is structured with three working groups addressing three areas -- research/data collection, best practices, and policy (see Attachment #2). Each Task Force member participates in one of the working groups. The goals of the working groups include:

Research/Data Collection Goals:

- Identify the number of children and youth served statewide in after-school programs;
- Identify the number and location of children and youth that are in need of after-school programs;
- Identify the types of after-school programs that exist;
- Identify the various funding streams currently supporting after-school programs;
- Identify existing gaps in services and funding for after-school programs; and
- Establish processes for constituent and provider input, and coordinate these with the needs of the other working groups (e.g. Public Forums, Focus Groups, Web-based Survey, Regional Meetings conducted by the Alliance, etc.).

Best Practices Goals:

- Research best practice models/desired program outcomes;
- Ensure that a broad range of settings is considered in this process;
- Identify specific sites that exemplify best practices, both Illinois and non-Illinois based;
- Ensure that identified best practice models include evaluation systems;
- Consider establishing a protocol of best practices essential to successful after-school programs; and
- Explore issues of capacity building and sustainability.

Policy Goals:

- Identify current policies that affect after-school services;
- Review policies and make recommendations for changing/enhancing these policies;
- Identify current funding streams and gaps;
- Identify potential funding streams;
- Identify opportunities for collaboration; and
- Identify opportunities for coordination of services and funding.

The progress of these working groups will be described more fully below.

ⁱⁱⁱU.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2000

^{iv}Nationwide Poll conducted by C.S. Mott Foundation and JC Penney. Survey conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, Inc. and the Tarrance Group between July 27-29, 1999.

^vC.S. Mott Foundation and JC Penney After-school, National Poll of Registered Voters on After-school Programs.

Research/Data Collection Working Group

The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois has been contracted by the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide research and technical assistance to support the work of the Data Collection work group of the Illinois After-school Initiative. In addition to the staff at CPRD, the work group includes five other members representing a school district, an after-school program provider, the Day Care Action Council, the Chicago Department of Human Services/Youth Net, and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Together, the work group makes decisions about potential data sources, survey content, and data collection strategies.

CPRD is conducting a series of three studies to examine Illinois' after-school programs in multiple ways, ranging from understanding the need for after-school programs to determining what currently exists in Illinois in terms of after-school programming. A fourth study, the Key Informant Study, has been subcontracted to the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention (ICVP). Taken together, the data from these four studies will assist the Initiative members and working groups in understanding the depth and breath of after-school programs in Illinois. In addition, the studies will help to ensure that the efforts of the Policy and Best Practices work groups are based on data reflecting Illinois' diversity and needs for after-school programs. Each of the studies is described in greater detail below, along with progress made to date.

STUDY 1. Review of Social Indicator and Youth Survey Data

To provide the Task Force with background information regarding the needs of families and children for after-school and out-of-school programming, several existing archival and large-scale survey databases are being examined. These sources of data provide estimates of the number of children and families in need and the distribution of these needs across the state. United States Census data provide community-level population characteristics; School Report Card Data from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provide information about the academic domain; and data from the Illinois Youth Survey provide individual youth perceptions of their communities, their families, and their schools.

The primary variables to be extracted from the Census data are the number of youth living in households in which all adults are working outside the home and the number of youth in households in which income levels fall below poverty. Clearly, the children in these families are among those most likely to need after-school programming. Where available, 2000 Census data are used. For the remaining variables, 1990 data are used. Complete 2000 data are expected to become available by September 2002. Data summaries have been generated for state, county, place, and Chicago community areas, and these summaries have been shared with Task Force members.

ISBE maintains the annual School Report Card database, which includes critical information regarding the number of students who exceeded, met or fell below the statewide achievement test standards as well as statistics on chronic truancy, dropout rates, youth who are low income and children who have low English proficiency. Again, all of these variables speak to the need for after-school programming. ISBE reports data at the state, district, and school levels. For the purposes of the current study of need for after-school programs throughout Illinois, CPRD has

organized the data at the county, place, and Chicago community area levels. Data summaries have been generated and shared with Task Force members.

Finally, CPRD has examined youth survey data from the Illinois Youth Survey. This survey was conducted by Chestnut Health Systems and funded by the Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Illinois Department of Human Services. The data were collected in 2000 from over 400 Illinois schools at the elementary, middle and secondary levels, with more than 25,000 youth participating. These data include information on the following:

- Presence of supportive, caring adults in the youth's life
- Availability of youth-focused activities / programs in the community
- Perceived neighborhood safety
- Latch key status – hours / week
- Self-reported grades in school
- Levels of parental monitoring of youth

These data pieces speak to the need for after-school programming from the youth's perspective. Data summaries have been prepared and shared with Initiative members.

STUDY 2. Development of an After-school Resource Inventory

The second major study being conducted by CPRD is the development of a resource inventory database of after-school programs throughout Illinois. Ultimately, the inventory will include detailed program information collected from after-school programs throughout the state. A web-based survey has been designed, with Task Force members' input on critical survey items. Task Force and work group members have been instrumental in informing communities throughout the state of this important survey effort, and ongoing efforts are being made to continue to get the word out. As of April 15, 2002, surveys have been completed at 38 agencies and 108 program sites. The information collected as part of Study 2 will serve as an indicator of current resources in Illinois.

STUDY 3. Site Visits (to be completed)

The site visits will provide an in-depth assessment of a selected sample of 20 after-school programs. Visits will include program observations as well as focus group discussions with program administrators, staff, youth participants, and/or parents. These visits will occur in May through August of 2002. Selection of which program sites to visit will be based on classification of existing resources, geographic representation, and input from other Task Force work groups.

STUDY 4. Key Informant Study (to be completed)

Evaluation staff of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention will conduct the key informant interviews. A primary purpose of these interviews is to assess levels of commitment and support for after and out of school programs among providers, policy advisors, and advocacy groups. This may include interviews with government officials, state and local administrators, and educators to assess their perception of the importance of after-school programs, understanding of high quality programs, financing and effectiveness. The key informant study will provide support information for potential state policy that would reflect the interests, needs, and concerns of state and local policy makers. Identification of individuals or groups to be interviewed will be based on input from other working groups.

Best Practices Working Group

The Best Practice group is making strides toward a number of objectives. Based upon national research, this group has identified core programmatic elements for after-school programs. These core elements serve as a foundation for building programs based on best practices. The working group is currently exploring how many and which of these core elements constitute the minimal level of programming needed to serve as a best practice program.

Identified best practices principles will be “attainable” by all after-school organizations and/or tailored so programs can attain best practices elements. Recommendations will promote programs that are culturally sensitive to the specific community where they are located. Further, recommendations will employ aspects of positive youth development, family involvement, and a service-learning component to be coordinated at the community level across programs.

Identified Core - Programmatic Elements of After-school Programs

Organizational Elements	Program Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management/Structure Commitment and Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for Academic Enrichment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Ongoing Staff Training and Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Skills and Social Emotional Skill Building Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition Program for Participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Support for Program Participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and Adequate Facility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with other Community Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring Opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome Measures/Evaluation of Program Goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Youth Development Framework for Program

Work Group Activities:

- Core elements will be further developed so that they parallel national standards and apply to programs across Illinois;
- Recommendations will reflect current policies (or lack thereof) that guide after-school personnel;
- Policy recommendations regarding staff training and development, utilizing a long-term timeframe will be identified;
- Specific recommendations to create a state system that fosters program sustainability of after-school programs; and
- Identify programs in Illinois that exemplify elements of best practices.

The next stage of work for the Best Practices work group will be to develop a set of generally applicable guidelines/practices for after-school programs. Fundamental recommendations will

focus on building an after-school environment that fosters healthy development, academic achievement, and reduction in crime and violence. Additionally, the group will begin to address the issue of how to support moving programs to a level of best practices.

Remaining activities are scheduled to be completed as follows:

- Ongoing -- Researching models of best practice in Illinois
- April -- Defining core elements of best practices
- April and May -- Providing guideline recommendations for after-school programs
- April and May -- Exploring capacity building issues around training, staff development and program development
- June -- Developing recommendations that foster capacity building and program sustainability
- July -- Developing a multi-year plan for implementation of core elements, training and sustainability

Policy Development Working Group

The work of the Policy Group will largely stem from the work of both the Data and Best Practices Groups. The work of these two groups provides the foundation of information from which the policy discussions will be derived. The initial working group meetings focused on identifying policy issues in the after-school arena. From this discussion, a policy survey instrument was created with working group members' input that will be used by the Illinois Department of Human Services to glean policy information from a variety of programs that support after-school services.

The process of this data collection is ongoing. Additional strategies have been outlined to gather this information. Policy goals include identifying current and potential funding streams and opportunities for collaboration across programs. Further goals include the coordination of policies, expectations, and standards across funding entities.

Members will be presented with state-level after-school regulations/policies. Members will review and make recommendations for enhancing these policies:

- a review of infrastructure needs (staffing, training, facilities, transportation) of programs and how policy principles could promote building infrastructure (this will be in coordination with the best practice work group); and
- working group members will make recommendations for enhancing program sustainability and coordination at state and local levels.

Future policy work includes reviewing the state policies across the variety of after-school programs that are governed by state agencies. Policy elements that will be reviewed include:

- Infrastructure
- Program Standards
- Current providers and collaborative organizations
- Federal and state funding policies, and
- Evaluation of programs

Remaining activities are scheduled to be completed as follows:

- May -- Program Standards/Regulations and Recommendations

- May -- Staff Training and Development Recommendations
- June -- Program Infrastructure Needs Recommendations
- June -- Sustainability and Collaboration Recommendations
- July -- Group Input on Policy “Barriers” to Program Delivery
- July -- Transportation Policy and Recommendations.

Parent, Staff and Youth Involvement

Ensuring that the consumers of after-school services have a voice in the work of the After-school Initiative is crucial to its success. Parents and youth will be asked to participate in community forums as a means of eliciting their perspectives on after-school issues. The Task Force will also use national research to gauge support for after-school. Initial locations slated for these meetings include: northern Illinois, southern Illinois, central Illinois, western Illinois, and Chicago.

The task force community forums to be held throughout Illinois, will address questions concerning:

- Are parents aware of the value of quality programs?
- What are after-school priorities from the perspective of parents, staff and youth?
- How effective is parental involvement in the program?
- How effective is youth involvement in the program?
- What recommendations could be made to improve parent or youth involvement?
- What are barriers to utilizing after-school services?
- How effective are after-school programs in marketing their services?
- Are parents satisfied with the program outcomes?
- Are youths satisfied with the programming?
- Do parents, staff, or youth have any suggestions about programming?

Conclusion

The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services look forward to presenting a final report and strategic plan to the Illinois General Assembly in October 2002. In advancing the need to support the healthy development of the children and youth of Illinois, there is ever-increasing research that underscores the critical role that after-school programs play in this regard. In addition, the public understanding about both the importance of after-school and the demand for increasing after-school opportunities continues to grow.

In a time when the national call is to “leave no child behind” and Illinois is being increasingly looked to for leadership around this issue, the work of the After-school Initiative Task Force is even more crucial. The resulting strategic plan will be an essential tool for policy and decision makers to ensure that indeed there is after-school for all. We look forward to presenting a final report and plan, which will support that goal.

TO: Honorable James "Pate" Philip, Senate President
Honorable Emil Jones, Senate Democratic Leader
Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House
Honorable Lee A. Daniels, House Republican Leader
Honorable George R. Ryan, Governor

FROM: Linda Reneé Baker, Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services

Respicio F. Vazquez
State Superintendent of Education

Last year, the Illinois General Assembly passed House Resolution 63 and Senate Resolution 70, which created the Illinois After-school Initiative. The Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois State Board of Education, as the appointed co-chairs of the Initiative, launched the Illinois After-school Initiative, comprised of dynamic leaders from across the state that have a vested interest in quality after-school services. The Initiative's members are working diligently to meet the goals of the resolutions, which call for the first-ever study of after-school programs and the development of a strategic plan that will ensure quality programs for all Illinois' children and youth. Details of the work of the Task Force are included in this mid-project report. Highlights of the project's first four months include:

- After-school Initiative Task Force launched in mid-December 2001
- Best Practices, Policy Development, and Research/Data Collection Work Groups developed to drive the work of the Task Force
 - Data group launches statewide survey of after-school programs
 - Best Practices group identifies core elements of quality after-school programs
 - Policy group identifies key policy questions
- The cutting-edge work of the After-school Initiative continues to garner national recognition

This document serves as the Interim Report. **The final study and report will be completed in October 2002.**

We have already begun to see the fruits of labor of this Initiative. We know that this strong working partnership is critical not only the success of the Initiative, but also to the success of carrying out its recommendations. Illinois is being noted as a model for other states in this arena because of these resolutions and the collaboration between state agencies and stakeholders.

Should you need any further information, we stand ready to assist in any way that we can.

cc: Jim Harry, Secretary of the Senate
Tony Rossi, Clerk of the House
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center
Senator Laura Kent Donahue
Senator Christine Radogno
Senator Carol Ronen
Senator Dave Sullivan
Representative Gwenn Klingler
Representative Mike Bost
Members of the Senate Education Committee
Members of the House Elementary & Secondary Education Committee

