



# After School Recreation Benefits Fact Sheet

After school programs decrease juvenile crime and violence, reduce drug use, cut smoking and alcohol abuse, and decrease teen pregnancy. Children who participate in these programs show improvement in standardized test scores and decreased absenteeism and tardiness. Public park and recreation agencies can play an enormous role in improving the lives of at-risk children by offering interesting, stimulating and enriching after school programs. <sup>1</sup>

Academic performance, social and emotional development, prevention of criminal/risky behaviours and overall health and wellness - after school programs can have positive effects in all these areas. <sup>2</sup>

Elementary school students attending after school programs **improved their regular school day attendance and participated in 30% less criminal activity.** They also reported higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college. <sup>3</sup>

**Parents are able to focus on work and become more productive** when they know that their children are safe and engaged in positive activities and behaviours. Parents and their employers benefit when children have access to excellent after school programming. <sup>4</sup>

**Quality after school programs can develop “soft skills” such as communication, teamwork and problem solving** – which are critical to the social development of children and youth. These skills are increasingly important to youth, as they aid their transition into the workforce. <sup>5</sup>

**Community engagement and feelings of belonging** are facilitated through opportunities for youth to participate in extracurricular activities and are associated with better self-reported health, higher perceived self-esteem and feelings of control. <sup>6</sup>

**Law enforcement officials view after school and summer youth programs as primary prevention strategy for juvenile crime.** An overwhelming majority (91%) of law enforcement officials agreed that failure to invest in afterschool and educational child care programs reaps greater costs in crime, welfare payments and other public services. <sup>7</sup>

**At-risk youth benefit from the positive role modeling fostered by involvement in scheduled extracurricular activities.** These programs help youth feel accepted, increase their ability to resolve conflicts and encourage the development of leadership skills. <sup>8</sup>

After school programming provides opportunities for physical activity and participants are **less likely to be overweight and generally lead more active lifestyles** than their inactive counterparts. <sup>9</sup> Encouraging healthy after school activities is especially important among children and adolescents from low to middle income families. <sup>10</sup>

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