

## After-school Programs

### Introduction

*How school-aged children spend their time between when they are let out of school and when their parents finish work is a concern to many. After-school programs have been shown to be beneficial to children's educational progress, decrease their chances for delinquent behavior, and reduces stress on parents. This Facts on Kids will discuss these benefits as well as what options are available for kids in South Dakota.*

### Afterschool Programs

Statistics in South Dakota show:

- 32% of all South Dakota children not in after-school programs would be if one was available.
- 37% of K-12 children spend an average of 8 hours unsupervised during the week.

The time children spend in out-of-school activities has an enormous impact on their health and well-being. The programs children engage in while school's out can play a key role in their ongoing learning. These programs can provide opportunities for exploring interests and gaining important lifelong skills such as problem-solving, conflict resolution and teamwork, as well as positive interaction with adults.

A growing body of research suggests that after-school programs can also have positive effects on motivation, engagement

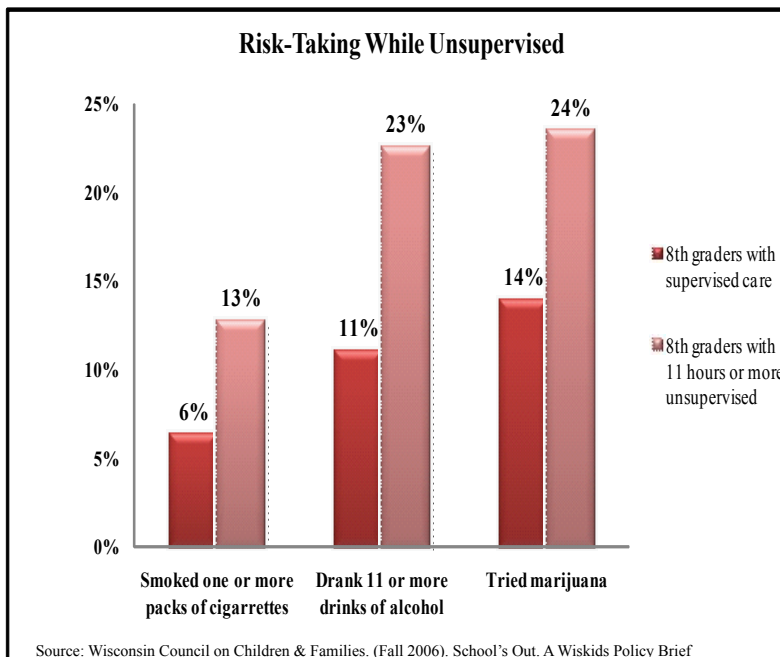
in learning, expectations of success, and social competencies. Children who gain these "intermediary" skills do better in school and are more successful as adults. For children from low-income families and children of color, after-school programs may actually help narrow the opportunity and achievement gap.

Furthermore, after-school programming adds to parents' employment stability. South Dakota has the nation's highest rate of parents in the workforce, with 76% (2007), which means that children are less likely to have a parent waiting for them at home after school.

### Risks to Children

During the time between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., the incidence of school-aged children engaging in destructive behavior nearly triples. Studies have shown that during this time young people:

- Become victims of violent crime.
- Be in or cause a car crash (for 16- or 17- year olds), the leading cause of death for teens.
- Be killed by household or other accidents.
- Get hooked on cigarettes.
- Experiment with other dangerous drugs.



After-school programs keep kids out of trouble by providing safe and structured activities during these critical afternoon hours. Overall, research shows that children who are supervised and engaged in structured activities are less likely to participate in high-risk activities. For middle school students, being supervised after school reduces by half the risk that they will

## Facts on Kids in South Dakota

smoke, drink, or abuse drugs. (See chart on page 1)

### Benefits to Children

Quality after-school programs play a crucial role in increasing youth development. Children gain new skills and are given opportunities to build self confidence.

After-school programs foster growth and learning of children in a variety of ways:

- Creative and conceptual skills through reading and fine arts assist children in considering and exploring abstract concepts.
- Healthy lifestyle choices are promoted through recreational programs. These programs also teach teamwork and leadership.
- Meaningful relationships, learning and refining social skills are created through interactions with peers and adults.
- Educational games help the child develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

### Benefits to Families

Enrolling kids in after-school programs provides benefits to not only the children, but to parents as well. Many parents are not able to leave work early to pick up their children, and others are forced to drop them off at home and return to work. After-school programs can offer an alternative solution to families and help alleviate unnecessary stress.

Working parents have reported decreased productivity during after-school hours because of disruptions from



their children. Parents also cite many reasons why children call them at work from: “I’m hungry, what do we have to eat?” to “Can I go to my friends house and play?” Workers with children say their reason for missing work is related to child care problems nearly 80% of the time.

Many parents want their children to participate in after-school programs. These parents believe it will help them have fun, improve their social and potential work skills, help them stay safe, keep them out of trouble, improve their physical activity and health, and provide help with homework.

### South Dakota After 3PM Study by The After School Alliance

In 2009, South Dakota families were surveyed to see how many children are in after-school programs and how many are unsupervised after school

#### After-school Care Arrangements

- 37% (48,969) of South Dakota’s K-12 children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. These children spend an average of 8 hours per week unsupervised after school.
- 12% (16,148) of South Dakota’s K-12 children participate in after-school programs. On average, after-school participants spend 6 hours per week in after-school programs. Participation averages 3 days per week.
- 66% of South Dakota K-12 children spend some portion of the hours after school in the care of a parent or guardian.
- Other care arrangements include traditional child care centers (9%), sibling care (13%) and non-parental adult care, such as a grandparent or neighbor (21%).

*Note: The maximum amount of time in after-school care arrangements is limited to 15 hours per week, which reflects the after-school hours of 3 to 6 p.m. Care arrangements add up to greater than 100% due to multiple regular care arrangements for many children.*

**Eleven million children and teens are home alone or hanging out unsupervised during the high-risk hours between school dismissal and dinnertime.**

**-2000 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Report**

## Facts on Kids in South Dakota

### Satisfaction with and Support for After-school Programs

- 100% of South Dakota parents are satisfied with the after-school program their child attends.
- South Dakota parents cited child enjoyment (90%), affordability (75%) and convenient location (72%) as their top three reasons for selecting an after-school program.
- 80% of adults surveyed in South Dakota agree that there should be some type of organized activity for children and teens after school that provides opportunities to learn.
- 70% support public funding for after-school programs.
- Over the last 5 years there has been no increase in after-school participation by South Dakota youth.

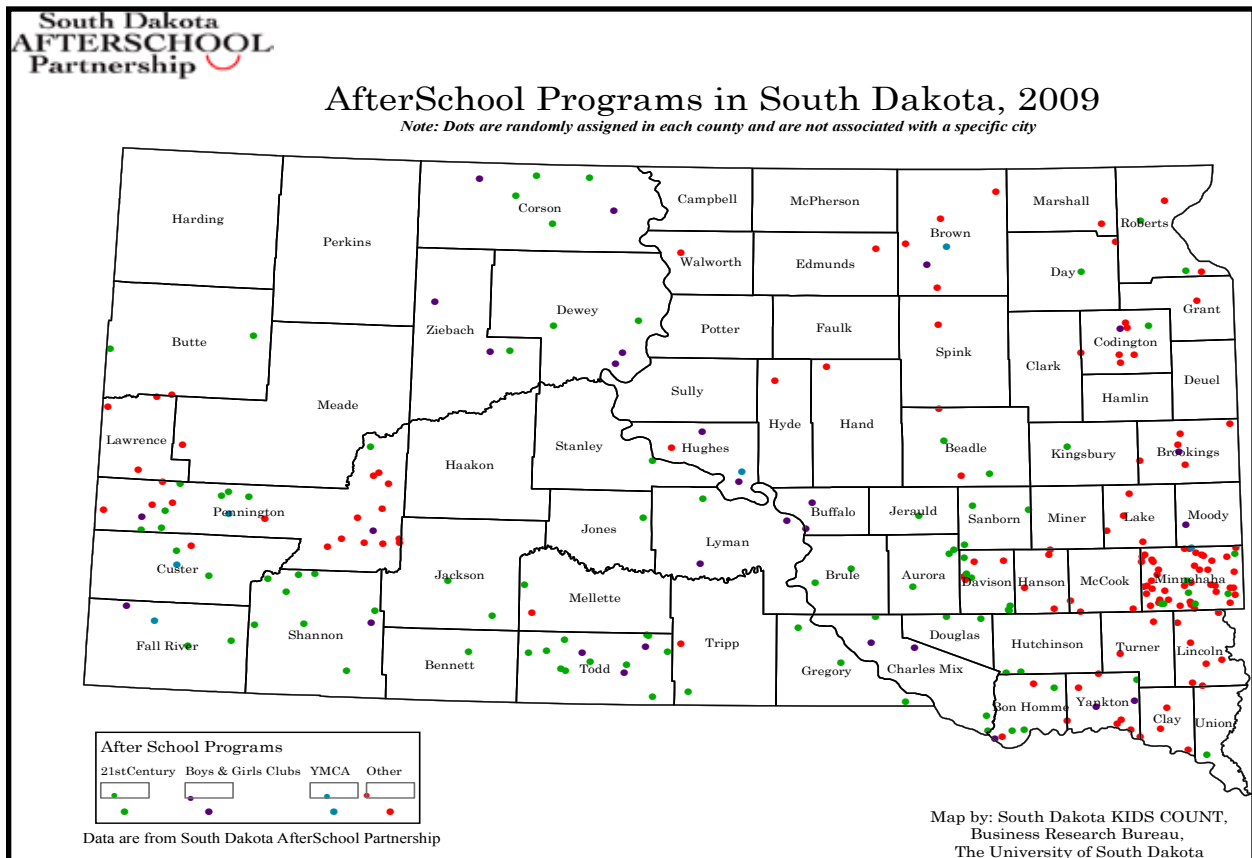
### Who Coordinates Programs in South Dakota?

The YMCA is the main provider of after-school programs in South Dakota (see map below). Other program providers include some public schools, some

private schools, churches and religious affiliates, and the Boys & Girls Club of South Dakota. Many parents who have chosen not to enroll their children in a program, say that it is because there is a lack of availability of programs. Others say they would enroll children, but that their preferred type of program is not offered, or that the cost to enroll their children in a program is too high. On average, families in South Dakota pay \$40 per week for after-school activities.

### Why Participation Matters

Participation is particularly important for middle and high school youth who are faced with situations in which they must make choices between a variety of productive and nonproductive after school options. These choices include whether to go from school to work, take care of their responsibilities at home, or hang out with friends. It is not participation in just any after-school program that matters. Parents should ensure that the programs their youth are participating in are high-quality and engaging. Youth should want to attend and should also benefit from their participation. Youth need to be challenged, need to be exposed to situations which enhance their skills, and need to be involved in activities that are geared toward their age group.





SD KIDS COUNT Project  
Beacom School of Business  
The University of South Dakota  
414 East Clark Street  
Vermillion, SD 57069

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### **The South Dakota KIDS COUNT Project**

([www.sdkidscount.org](http://www.sdkidscount.org)) is a national and state-by-state effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for children and families. Additional funding for the state project comes from the South Dakota Departments of: Education & Human Services.

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