KY⊙SA
Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance

Kentucky's Roadmap to Quality School-Age Child Care for All (2023-2025)

A robust child care system that provides a continuum of high-quality care from infancy through school-age is essential for meeting the needs of kids and families today.

That system includes afterschool, summer, and other school-age child care programs that serve children ages 5-12 when school is out.

These programs are a lifeline to Kentucky families and are proven to keep kids safe, engage young learners in enriching activities, and help working parents keep their jobs. Yet our state has never had enough programs to serve the families who need them.

The Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance (KYOSA) is working with a diverse group of stakeholders across all regions of the state to provide a clear path for building a robust school-age child care system that will benefit generations to come, strengthen our workforce, and boost our economic growth.
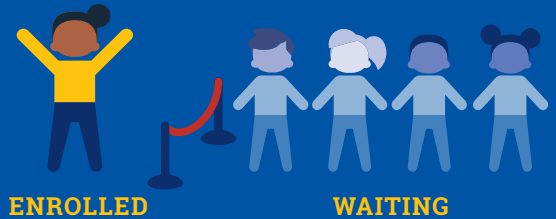
THE CHALLENGE

The lack of affordable, quality school-age child care programs in Kentucky means thousands of children are missing out on life-changing learning experiences, some parents are working less, and businesses see the cost in lost productivity.

Unmet demand for these programs across our urban and rural communities is greater than ever. Many school-age care providers rely on short-term, patchwork funding streams; lack resources to attract and retain staff; and face challenges obtaining licensure and access to existing resources.
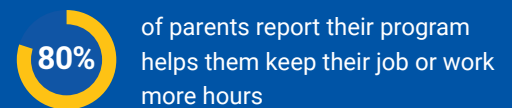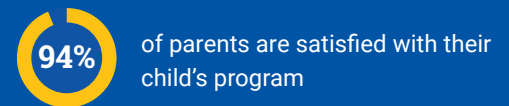
IN KENTUCKY[1]

More than **280,000** children are waiting for an available afterschool program. Cost and lack of programs prevent families from participating.
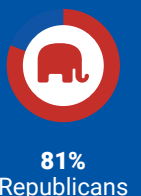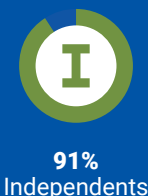
ENROLLED   **WAITING**

For every child enrolled in afterschool, 4 MORE are waiting to get in.

Families value and rely on afterschool programs

94% of parents are satisfied with their child's program

80% of parents report their program helps them keep their job or work more hours

There is strong, bipartisan support for greater investment in afterschool

83% of parents support public funding for afterschool programs

88%
Democrats

91%
Independents

81%
Republicans

MEETING THE MOMENT: Investing in Quality School-Age Child Care

Much work is needed to ensure that every Kentucky community has access to high-quality school-age child care programs that meet the needs of young people and working families. This set of legislative and administrative priorities for 2023-2025 provides a roadmap for how we'll do it.

1 Ensure School-Age Child Care Is Represented at Decision-Making Tables

In Kentucky, 1,600+ providers offer care and expanded learning opportunities to K-12 youth when school is not in session.[1] Providers have limited ability to share their ideas for improving program access and quality with the state government.

Recommendations

▶ Expand the Child Care Advisory Council's membership to ensure equitable representation, capacity, and resource-sharing across all types of child care in Kentucky, especially school-age care.

▶ Ensure that the needs of school-age providers and the families they serve are meaningfully addressed and incorporated in future Child Care Development Fund State Plans.

2 Address School-Age Needs in State Child Care Regulations

Updating state child care regulations to more thoughtfully incorporate programs serving K-12 youth would allow providers to obtain licensure and better access supports for quality improvement.

Recommendations

▶ Establish an Administrative Regulations Review Committee to ensure state child care licensing standards, youth camp regulations, and exemptions are clear, reasonable, and appropriate for Kentucky's diverse landscape of school-age programs and the children they serve.

▶ Ensure the final administrative regulations associated with HB 499, which establishes the Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership program, support families' child care needs through school-age.

3 Encourage Quality School-Age Child Care Environments

Kentucky's current Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (Kentucky All STARS) lacks separate metrics for school-age programs.

Recommendations

▶ Update Kentucky All STARS to include evidence-based school-age quality metrics under each domain.

▶ Train licensors to work in school-age environments and to understand what safe, quality school-age environments look like.

▶ Invest in partnerships that enable the lead agency to offer relevant and ongoing training and technical assistance (TTA) to school-age providers and staff.

4 Create a Thriving School-Age Child Care Workforce

Front-line staff need competitive wages, good benefits, and opportunities for growth.

Recommendations

▶ Finalize and adopt the proposed School-Age Youth Development credential.

▶ Ensure wage increases and benefits made possible to front-line school-age program staff through federal COVID-relief funding can be sustained past impending funding cliffs by creating a dedicated source of state funding for afterschool and summer programs serving K-12 students.

▶ Revise the Kentucky Career Lattice to include relevant pathways for school-age professionals at each level.

5 Improve State-Level Data on Kentucky's School-Age Program Landscape

Better data is needed to develop sound policies, target resources to address gaps in access, and help families make informed decisions around school-age child care.

Recommendations

▶ Require all child care license-exemptions to be verified by and recorded with the Kentucky Division of Regulated Child Care through a formal application process.

▶ Update Kentucky's current public child care search tool to align with "best practices,"[2] which include integrating both licensed and license-exempt programs into such tools.

▶ Ensure state child care data systems allow key data points, such as the number of children a provider serves, to be summarized by age group.

KYOSA stands ready to be a thought partner on school-age quality measurement, training and technical assistance, and professional development supports.

Learn more about our policy priorities and contact us!

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kyoutofschoolalliance.org

Sources

1. https://kyoutofschoolalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/KY-AA3PM-2020-fact-sheet.pdf

2. https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/best_practice_brief_online_child_care_search_tools_1.pdf