



Policy Updates

Farm Bill Update

The United States Congress is considering a multi-year spending bill that will have a huge impact on the nutrition and well-being of millions of America's most vulnerable citizens, including children, families and even veterans. The bill, known as the Farm Bill funds key programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program as well as SNAP. Programs like these provide much needed assistance and nutritional balance to people in need and the farm bill is the only way to fund these vital programs. To learn more, [click here](#).

School Lunch Rules Update

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its final school rule on school meals, relaxing nutrition standards championed by former first lady Michelle Obama. The new directive will ease requirements related to flavored milk, whole grains, and sodium in meals served through the National School Lunch and breakfast programs. Opponents of the original strengthened nutrition standards said they were difficult for schools to follow. Proponents of the nutrition standards set under the Obama administration said they are necessary to combat rising rates of child obesity and to guard against health concerns like heart disease, especially for students from low-income families who rely more heavily on school meals. To learn more, [click here](#).

U.S. STEM Strategic Plan

The White House unveiled their highly-anticipated 5-year STEM Education strategic plan detailing the federal government's strategy for expanding and improving the nation's capacity for STEM education and preparing citizens with the skills necessary for the STEM economy of the future. Regarding implementation, the plan highlights promoting informal STEM education, and the administration welcomes all stakeholders to engage with them to discuss implementation strategies and ideas that contribute to the plan's execution. To learn more, [click here](#).

For a list of previously listed policy updates, click [here](#).

Trainings and Events

12.11.18

STEM Pathways Cooperative

Twice a year the Chicago STEM Pathways Cooperative convenes its stakeholders to address inequities in the STEM learning continuum by facilitating cross-sector knowledge building, collaboration, and collective action. The next convening will be held on **January 14th in Chicago**. To learn more or to register, [click here](#).

Youth Development, Programming, & Activities

Creating Hands-On STEM Experiences

The Illinois Afterschool Network (IAN) is offering a training that will provide resources and best practices for creating fun and interactive hands-on STEM activities to inspire youth. This training will be held in **Chicago on December 13th from 10 AM to 12 PM**. (This training is \$15 for IAN members and \$30 for non-members.) To register, click [here](#).

Webinar: Faith-Based Mentoring

During this webinar, leaders in the faith-based mentoring sphere will share methods and considerations for recruiting, screening and training staff and volunteers. They will also speak about bridging the gap between secular and faith-based organizations, as well as how to sustain as an organization through family and community engagement. This webinar will be held on **December 20th from 12 PM to 1:15 PM**. To learn or to register, [click here](#).

To view ACT Now's calendar of events, click [here](#).

Opportunities for Providers

Summer Learning Awards

Each year, the National Summer Learning Association recognizes summer programs demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth. Prizes include \$10,000 and a national media spotlight. The deadline to apply is **Friday, December 21st**. To learn more, [click here](#).

2019 Governor's Volunteer Service Awards

The Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service presents the Governor's Volunteer Service Awards. These awards recognize individual volunteers through a statewide award program to highlight the importance of volunteerism and community service in the State of Illinois. Nominations are due **February 15, 2019**. To learn more, [click here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Opportunities for Providers, click [here](#).

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Funding Opportunities

OST Computer Science RFP

CME Group Foundation is excited to share further details about the upcoming RFP for out-of-school computer science (CS) education at their meeting on **December 13th from 12 PM to 2 PM in Chicago**. Attending organizations will receive information about expectations and next steps for the grant cycle. All members of the CS educator community are welcome! To learn more or to register, [click here](#).

Middle School OST RFP

The Afterschool Alliance invites out-of-school time programs to apply for a competitive grant opportunity to support and bolster the ability of afterschool and summer learning programs to help their middle school students make a successful transition from 8th to 9th grade. Applications are due **January 25, 2019**. To learn more, [click here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Funding Opportunities, click [here](#).

Resources for Providers

Youth Development, Programming, & Activities

Report: STEM Mentoring

This STEM Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™ provides additional research-informed recommendations for youth mentoring programs with a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics focus. To read the full report, [click here](#).

Afterschool Spotlight

Winter Break Programs in Illinois

By: Samantha Leary

Though winter break may bring feelings of excitement for students, it can also bring worrisome feelings to working parents and guardians. These breaks bring long stretches of time in which families must find alternative ways to keep their students safe, entertained, and engaged. Luckily, there are many winter break programs throughout Illinois that provide great activities and learning opportunities for youth of all ages. To read more about these programs, [click here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Afterschool Spotlights, click [here](#).

Call for Resources

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Do you have valuable resources, stories, or best practices to share with the afterschool field? Please click [here](#) to share your resources with ACT Now and we will disseminate them (via our newsletter and website) to other providers across the state! If you have any questions, please contact Faith Knocke (ACT Now - Youth Development Associate) KnockeF@metrofamily.org

NOTE: We are now sorting our trainings and resources by the Core Areas in the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards to promote better understanding and implementation of the Standards. Dark blue headings denote a Core Area. To learn more about the Quality Standards, click [here](#).