




2025 Advocacy Toolkit

ACTNOW
Afterschool for Children & Teens



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What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is an action taken to support a cause or proposal. ACT Now views advocacy as the act of sharing perspectives and personal experiences to highlight the importance of afterschool and community schools programming with diverse stakeholders.

Why is Advocacy Important?

ACT Now sees advocacy as a key strategy for educating change-makers and providing partners with the context needed to develop supportive policies. Out-of-School Time (OST) advocates may contribute by highlighting success stories within their programs and sharing their organization's plans and ideas with policymakers to gain support for their work.

Afterschool programs and community school providers actively serve the academic, social, and health needs of youth and families. Currently in Illinois, more than 1 million children would join afterschool program if one were available to them. The demand for high-quality programs is far greater than the availability of services for students in Illinois and current funding levels cannot address the increased need.

Afterschool providers and community schools are vital to youth's growth and safety, offering learning renewal opportunities, meals, and wraparound services. Programs collaborate with school districts and state agencies to leverage resources and provide youth development programming to all youth, especially in historically marginalized communities of color.

Advocacy efforts are critical to ensuring that policymakers understand the realities of youth and the communities your program supports. Advocacy campaigns support program providers in highlighting the challenges in facilitating these integral services and informing decision-makers of their actions! As a result, policymakers should be aware of the need and encouraged to prioritize funding for afterschool programs and community schools.

How Can I Advocate?

Many afterschool programs operate in a hybrid world, and so do elected officials! As a result, ACT Now encourages program providers to host both in-person site visits and virtual meetings with elected officials. Additional engagement with policymakers can be done through mailing letters, sending emails, calling offices, and utilizing posts and videos on social media.

Advocacy Tips and Best Practices



Be Nonpartisan

Share some key points about the situation without using an argumentative tone. This will keep the lines of communication open for discussion of future issues.



Know the Issue

Make sure you speak to the importance of afterschool and its impact on communities. [The Afterschool Alliance](#) is a great resource for finding data on the need for afterschool programs!



Know Your Lawmakers

Read about your legislators, their committee(s), and their interests so you can tailor your message accordingly. Many elected officials have worked in the youth development space!



Stay Focused

Focus your communications with your legislator on one topic. Make sure to use separate conversations for different issues and advocacy campaigns.



Learn the Legislative Process

In order to become a successful advocate, you need to know the basics of the legislative process. This means knowing who to go to for your particular advocacy ask.



Be Honest

It is okay to not know the answer to a question in the moment. Acknowledge it, and follow-up with the correct information later!



Send a Thank You!

Follow-up with an email, letter or social media post thanking your member of Congress or their staff for meeting with you. This will help to foster a great relationship going forward!

How Can I Engage Youth in Advocacy?

Engaging youth in advocacy amplifies their voices, empowers them to impact communities, and ensures others understand their experiences. Collaboration between youth and adults can address major challenges in afterschool programs and present solutions to overcome those challenges.

Working with youth requires intentionality and open-mindedness. Youth-adult partnerships recognize and value youth's opinions and ideas. Below are some tips for involving youth in advocacy efforts.

Tips

★ Establish Clear & Tangible Goals

Help youth identify exactly what they want to advocate for. Set attainable goals.

★ Create a Safe Space for All

Use aspects of a safe space such as using appropriate language, being nonjudgemental, accepting, and reassuring young people that their voices are important.

★ Let Youth Lead

Empower youth with leadership roles to build lifelong skills.

Resources

★ ACT Now's Civic Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit uses research and data to highlight the importance of providing consistent civic engagement programming for youth in Illinois.

★ A Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People

This framework outlines some of the key benefits of partnering with youth. It also explains how to create and maintain those partnerships!

★ Youth Advocacy Guide

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has developed a Youth Advocacy Guide that is available in English, Spanish, and French. The guide is directed towards youth and supports them in working towards their advocacy goals!

2025 ADVOCACY ACTIONS

[Send ACT Now's FY26 STATE Budget Action Alert!](#)

[Send ACT Now's FY26 FEDERAL Budget Action Alert!](#)

Funding Line	Budget Ask	Resources
<p>Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Budget (State)</p>	<p>The ISBE After School Programs line must allocate \$25 million and maintain funding at \$6 million for After School Matters. This funding line will enable continued support of teens across Illinois with paid opportunities to develop critical skills for work, college, and beyond.</p>	<p>ISBE's Proposed Budget for FY26</p>
<p>Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Budget (State)</p>	<p>The \$50 million appropriation from the FY25 ISBE Budget has still not been released. Tell your legislators to maintain the \$50 million annual appropriation in the FY26 budget to fund afterschool programs and community schools! It is imperative that this funding becomes a sustained investment to ensure the sustainability of afterschool programs in Illinois.</p>	<p>ISBE's Proposed Budget for FY26</p>
<p>Teen REACH (State)</p>	<p>Governor Pritzker's FY25 budget reduced funding for Teen REACH programs, failing to account for increased costs due to inflation, materials, and the growing number of youth served. Programs have not received rate adjustments, and the funding reduction will exacerbate challenges in meeting community needs. Tell your policymakers to increase Teen REACH funding in the FY26 budget to at least \$27.3 million to address these rising costs and ensure the sustainability of critical youth programming across Illinois.</p>	<p>ACT Now's FY26 Budget One-Pager</p>
<p>Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) (State)</p>	<p>Governor Pritzker's proposed budget for FY26 must include \$3.2 billion for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), with at least \$55 million allocated to cover an expected increase in CCAP participation. Current funding levels are insufficient to meet rising demand and ensure families have access to affordable child care. Urge the General Assembly to prioritize funding CCAP at these levels to support Illinois families and providers effectively!</p>	<p>ACT Now's FY26 Budget One-Pager</p>

2025 ADVOCACY ACTIONS

[Send ACT Now's FY26 STATE Budget Action Alert!](#)

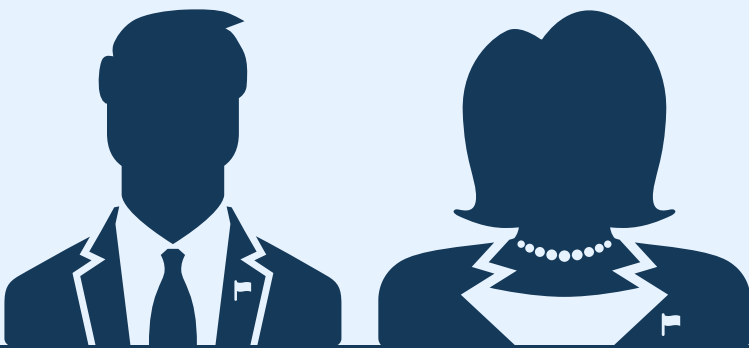
[Send ACT Now's FY26 FEDERAL Budget Action Alert!](#)

Funding Line	Budget Ask	Resources
<p>Raise Awareness of the Value of Afterschool & the Need for Funding</p>	<p>Afterschool programs provide youth with a safe place to learn, grow, and develop critical skills. These programs also help to prevent violence in the community by assisting families with workforce development, health services, educational opportunities, and more.</p> <p>Connecting with legislators and fostering these relationships can go a long way in helping to develop favorable afterschool policies and sustainable funding streams.</p> <p>Encourage your state and federal legislators to support afterschool and share information with them about your program!</p>	<p>Find Your Elected Officials</p>
<p>21st Community Learning Centers (Federal)</p>	<p>As Congress begins working on funding for FY26, we need it to support a \$750 million increase over the current level of \$1.329 billion for the Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant program.</p>	<p>21st CCLC Funding Fact Sheet</p>
<p>Full-Service Community Schools (Federal)</p>	<p>Community Schools provide comprehensive services that meet the holistic needs of children, families, and communities. We ask that Congress increase funding for the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant by at least \$150 million over current levels. This funding will be used for evaluation to measure the impact of Community Schools and programmatic activities.</p>	<p>Coalition for Community Schools Recommendations</p>

Who Are My Elected Officials?

Identifying Your Elected Officials

The Illinois State Board of Elections has a District and Official Search page where you can find your elected state officials and federal representative. The two senators currently representing Illinois are Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth. To access this website, click here.



Please Note: You must enter a complete address with a corresponding zip code (e.g.: 101 N Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606, Cook County) for the map to locate your legislators' information. Otherwise, you may enter the county in which you pertain (e.g.: Macon County, Macon County) in to find your elected officials.

Background Information on Your Elected Officials

It is helpful to understand what policies or bills your elected officials may have supported in the past and if they have previously championed afterschool programs in their legislation. For policymakers that are not as familiar with afterschool, community schools, and summer learning programs, NOW is the opportunity to highlight the work your program facilitates for youth and families.

The Illinois General Assembly's website has information on your state elected officials. To access this website, click here. More information may be found by visiting your state policymaker's personal website.



Letters & Emails to Elected Officials

One of the most effective methods of interacting with your elected officials is sending written or email communications.

Elements of an Effective Letter

Targeted & Focused

You should address letters to the appropriate legislators in the district where you live and/or where your organization is located.

Individualized

If you use a form letter, be sure to edit or modify it to deliver a unique message. Personal messages are more likely to influence legislators.

Brief

In one to two pages, explain the issue you are responding to and the impact of the proposed resolution or legislation.

Non-Partisan

There is a higher chance of receiving a response to your advocacy if the message does not center on partisanship.

Opening Statement

- State the subject of your letter
- Use the bill number or budget line name, if available
- Identify yourself and your organization

Body Paragraph

- Explain the issue clearly at a level your legislator will understand. They are not experts!
- Give a personal example of the impact of the issue.
- State your position on the bill or policy where appropriate.

Closing Statement

- Thank the elected official for their attention to the issue.
- Let your legislator know that you are a credible contact in the case they want more information.
- Ask for a reply!



Sample Letter/Email

Dear Senator **[Last Name]** or Representative **[Last Name]**,

I am writing to you with regard to **[resolution/bill/budget line item]**. I am the **[Your Title, ex. Program Facilitator/Director/Coordinator]** of **[Your Organization's Name]** which annually serves **[#]** students, youth, and their families ***OR*** I provide **[#/type of activity]** programs at **[Organization's Name]** in **[City or Town]** that **[highlight the activities you facilitate or impact of your program on youth and families]**.

Afterschool providers and community schools are crucial to young people's growth and safety because they provide supportive environments, essential childcare, and wraparound services. **[Insert examples from your program]**. It is imperative to ensure that afterschool, community schools, summer programming, and childcare programs are fully funded. **[Insert data points from ACT Now's FY26 Budget Fact sheet or our state/federal action alerts]**. To meet the growing and diverse needs of youth and families, we need your support to fund these programs in Illinois.

As you review these facts and line items, we hope you will consider supporting **[Your program name]** and all afterschool programs throughout Illinois. To learn more about the critical roles we play in the lives of the youth and families in our community, visit **[Insert your webpage or social media page link]**.

Thank you for your support! We look forward to working with you to help keep Illinois' youth learning, safe, and engaged. You can reach me at the following contact information: **[Your email address and phone number]**.

Sincerely,
[Your Full Name]
[Your Title/Position]



Sample Thank You Letter/Email

The Honorable **[Full Name]**
Illinois House of Representatives/Illinois State Senate
[Elected Official's Address]

Dear Senator **[Last Name]** or Representative **[Last Name]**,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me on **[Date of conversation]** about the importance of afterschool programs in Illinois and your district **[Include district number/area]**. As we discussed, and as I have witnessed in the field, these programs help improve academic and social-emotional outcomes, keep youth safe and healthy, and support workforce development not only in underserved and historically marginalized communities but across the state of Illinois.

I look forward to speaking with you again to strengthen the ways in which we can work together. We hope you continue to champion expanded learning opportunities to ensure that young Illinoisans within our communities have the tools they need to successfully transition into educated, self-sufficient, accomplished, empathetic, and civically minded adults.

Sincerely,
[Your Full Name]





Phone Calls to Elected Officials

How to Call Elected Officials

Research Your Legislator

Learn their position on afterschool before calling.

Prepare for the Call

Develop a concise list of talking points you want to share during the call. Design the points to highlight the main issue, your work, and the youth you serve. Incorporate the impact/outcome data from your program.

Introduce Yourself

State your name and identify yourself as a constituent of the district the elected official represents. Provide your address and telephone number if the legislative aide requests it. If you are calling about a specific piece of legislation, identify it by its name and bill number. If you are calling on behalf of a program, remember to note the name and location of the program.

Show Appreciation

If your legislator has supported your cause in the past, let them know you appreciated it. Add that you are hoping they will continue to support the issue.

Focus on a Single Issue & State Your Position

Briefly explain your position and what actions you would like your legislator to take.

Thank the Legislator

Remember always to be courteous and respectful. If speaking to a legislative aide, write down their name and contact information.

Follow-Up

If the aide requests additional information, try to provide it as soon as possible. Keep track of your legislator's actions and follow up with a letter expressing thanks for connecting.



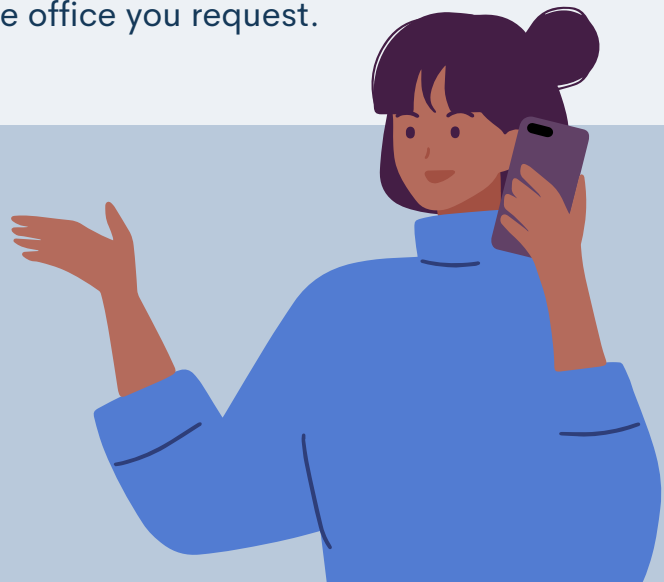
Phone Calls to Elected Officials continued...

State Legislators

As a constituent, you can call your legislator at either their district office or, during the legislative session at their Capitol Building office in Springfield. To reach your legislators in Springfield, you may call the switchboard at **217-782-2000**. You can also find the numbers listed for the Illinois **House and Senate**. Oftentimes, you will speak to a legislative aide rather than your elected official, but rest assured that everyone takes your input seriously and the message will be shared with the policymaker.

Federal Legislators

The **Clerk of the House** maintains the addresses and phone numbers of all of the U.S. House members and Committees, or you may call **(202) 224-3121** for the U.S. House switchboard operator. Additionally, you may choose to visit your member's website directly for further information. To reach your U.S. senators you may phone the United States Capitol switchboard at **(202) 224-3121**. A switchboard operator will connect you directly with the Senate office you request.





Sample Phone Call

Staff Member: Thank you for calling Senator [Last Name] or Representative [Last Name]'s office. How may I help you?

Caller: Hello, my name is [Your Full Name] from [City or Town], and I am calling on behalf of [Name of Afterschool Program or Organization].

Staff Member: Wonderful, what can I do for you?

Caller: As a constituent of Senator [Last Name] or Representative [Last Name]'s district, [Insert information on why you support the action/funding you are calling about. Include why this subject is of concern to you, your program, and the youth and community your program serves].

Staff Member: Thank you for sharing your concerns with us. I will relay your comments to Senator [Last Name] or Representative [Last Name]. Do you have a phone number or email address we can contact you at?

Caller: Yes, my phone number and email address are [Your phone number and email address]. I appreciate you allowing me to share my thoughts. Have a great day and I look forward to hearing back from Senator [Last Name] or Representative [Last Name].

Don't forget to follow up with the person you spoke with on the phone in an email that summarizes your points and clearly states your ask!

Using Social Media as a Tool

Social media is a great way to bring awareness to initiatives that matter to you! If you or your organization are not already on social media, the first step is to sign up for a free account on a platform such as Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn. Most legislators use these platforms to interact with their constituents and reach more people, specifically youth populations.

To effectively use and leverage social media, think critically about how you can make your content clear, short, compelling, and relevant. It is helpful to experiment with different types of posts. For example, sharing links to videos or blogs and using images and videos to get a better idea of what resonates with your audience. It's all about creating engagement and starting conversations.

The following pages include sample social media posts as well as images to go with each. Feel free to change the messages to fit your programs needs!

Tips



Be Concise

Keep posts short and to the point. Be clear and articulate the issue and what you think needs to be done about it.



Be Consistent

It is important to post regularly. This keeps followers engaged. Try to post at least once a day, or determine a schedule that works well for your organization.



Grab Attention

Stand out with a memorable ask. Including a photo, video, or graphic can engage more people.



Spread the Word

Make sure your ask is heard by engaging your supporters and encouraging them to help spread the word. Hashtags can be a big help for this!

Sample Meta Posts

Note: Meta includes Facebook & Instagram. These posts can be scheduled simultaneously on Meta Business Suites!

ISBE Funding (State Advocacy)

@**[Legislator]** @ISBNews The \$50 million for community learning centers must be released! These centers provide STEM, social-emotional learning, and many more enrichment opportunities for Illinois youth. This funding is essential to sustain these programs. Act now to secure our youth's futures:
<https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8> #AfterschoolMatters #ReleaseTheFunds



Dear General Assembly, allow the ISBE After School Programs line to continue to do the essential work of supporting our youth and communities by directly funding \$26 million to the initiative! Support the ISBE After School Programs line as providers leveraging this funding have supported Illinois youth statewide! @IllinoisStateBoardofEducation

[Fund Afterschool Social Media Graphic](#)

Our friends at After School Matters do amazing work in providing our youth with afterschool and summer programs. In addition, After School Matters provides our teens with a safe and supportive environment to thrive in within the City of Chicago! But they can't do this work without sufficient funds. We need the general assembly to maintain funding at \$6 million!

[After School Matters Social Media Graphic](#)

Teen REACH Funding (State Advocacy)

Teen REACH programs provide young people with a safe space to learn and grow, and these programs are integral to the well-being of youth in Illinois! Tell the General Assembly to fund Teen REACH at \$27.3 million:
<https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8> #AfterschoolAdvocacyIL

[Fund Teen REACH Social Media Graphic](#)

Teen REACH provides out-of-school services to youth, fosters valuable life skills, and believes in never losing sight of a young person's ability to thrive. For these reasons, we need the Teen REACH item line increased to \$27.3 million to help serve more youth! @Illinois Department of Human Services

[Fund Teen REACH Social Media Graphic](#)

Sample Meta Posts

Raise Awareness of the Value of Afterschool & Funding Streams (State Advocacy)

<p>Afterschool programs improve educational outcomes, keep our youth safe & support our working families in Illinois. Tell your state legislators to support out-of-school time experiences in Illinois by sending our alert: https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8. It only takes ONE MINUTE! #ACTNow4Access #FundAfterschool</p>	<p>Fund Afterschool Programs Social Media Graphic</p>
<p>92% of parents reported feeling assured of their kids safety in afterschool programs. Afterschool programs offer the necessary safe space for youth to continue their education, express themselves, and dive deep into activities that may not be offered during the school-day. Tell your legislators to support out-of-school time experiences in Illinois by sending our alert: It only takes ONE MINUTE! https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8</p>	<p>Afterschool Alliance Social Media</p>
<p>Consistent underfunding for afterschool programs exacerbates the workforce crisis and is a disservice to our youth that are unable to be served. Investing in afterschool programs = supporting our youth and diverse communities! Fund afterschool programs now to support our communities!</p>	<p>Fund Afterschool Programs Social Media Graphic</p>
<p>More than 1 million children in Illinois want to be enrolled in afterschool programs but do not have access to them. Change this by sending our alert to your legislators to support out-of-school time experiences and our youth: https://bit.ly/3TC9diS</p>	<p>Afterschool Alliance Social Media Graphic</p>
<p>Research has shown that parents value afterschool programs and the impact they have on youth! Afterschool programs provide youth with a safe place to go while parents are working. Fund afterschool programs so that they have the resources to continue to provide their crucial services! #FundAfterschool</p>	<p>Fund Afterschool Programs Social Media Graphic</p>

Sample Meta Posts

CCAP Funding (State Advocacy)

CCAP programs provide child care for essential workers, allowing families to thrive! We are asking the General Assembly to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at \$3.2 billion! #ACTNow4Access #AfterschoolAdvocacyIL

[Fund CCAP Social
Media Graphic 1](#)

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with necessary access to affordable, quality child care and afterschool programs. These programs are vital, not only for the services that our workers provide but for their dedication! @[Legislator] support CCAP and our workers by supporting \$3.2 billion in funding NOW!

[Fund CCAP Social
Media Graphic 2](#)

21st Century Community Learning Centers (Federal Advocacy)

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant line is the single-largest funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs in the United States. Programs in Illinois utilize this funding to provide critical services such as learning enrichment activities, STEM programming, and curricula that focus on the social-emotional well-being of students. Urge your elected officials to increase funding for FY26 to \$2.09 billion in order for program providers to be able to serve more youth: <https://bit.ly/4aurZAG>

[21st CCLC Social
Media Graphic 1](#)

Nearly 25 million children are not in an afterschool program because there is not one available to them. Increasing funding for 21st CCLC to at least \$2.09 billion for FY26 means more youth are able to participate in life-changing programming. Tell your elected officials that we must fully-fund 21st CCLC: <https://bit.ly/4aurZAG>

[21st CCLC Social
Media Graphic 2](#)

Sample Meta Posts

Full-Service Community Schools (Federal Advocacy)

Community schools provide necessary wraparound support services for youth and families across the country, oftentimes in historically marginalized communities. Funding the Full-Service Community Schools grant program and increasing it by \$150 million for FY26 means that more will youth have access to these services as well as high-quality education and expanded learning time opportunities!

[Community Schools Graphic 1](#)

Congress must increase funding for the Full-Service Community Schools grant by \$150 million to ensure community schools across the nation are sustained and have the opportunity to expand their services. Not only do community schools focus on learning renewal and enrichment opportunities, but they also provide integral mental and physical health services for students, as well as child care for families. Tell Congress to support community schools now: <https://bit.ly/4aurZAG>

[Community Schools Graphic 2](#)

Sample LinkedIn Posts

ISBE Funding (State Advocacy)

@**[Legislator]** @ISBENews The \$50 million for afterschool and community schools in the FY25 budget must be released! These programs provide many enrichment opportunities for Illinois youth. This funding is essential to sustain these programs. Act now to secure our youth's futures!
#AfterschoolMatters #ReleaseTheFunds



Dear Illinois General Assembly, allow youth development programs to continue to do the essential work of supporting our youth and communities through directly funding ISBE's After School Programs line at \$26 million!
@ISBENews #AfterschoolAdvocacy

[Fund Afterschool Social Media Graphic](#)

@**[Legislator]** make the accessibility of summer programs and other out-of-school programs a priority for our youth! Secure \$6 million in funds for After School Matters now! @ISBENews #AfterschoolAdvocacyIL
#AfterschoolMatters

[After School Matters Social Media Graphic](#)

Teen REACH Funding (State Advocacy)

Teen REACH provides out-of-school services to youth and fosters 21st Century skills. Teen REACH believes in never losing sight of a young person's ability to thrive. For these reasons, and more, the Teen REACH item line needs to be increased to \$27.3 million! @ILHumanServices

[Fund Teen REACH Social Media Graphic](#)

Teen REACH programs continue to meet the diverse needs of youth. They focus on the mental health of young people & help students renew their learning in IL. We ask that the General Assembly fund Teen REACH at \$27.3 million! #AfterschoolAdvocacy #FundAfterschool

[Fund Teen REACH Social Media Graphic](#)

Sample LinkedIn Posts

CCAP Funding (State Advocacy)

CCAP funding allows for families to continue working & provides young people with high-quality youth development opportunities. We ask the General Assembly to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at \$3.2 billion! #AfterschoolAdvocacyIL

[CCAP Social Media Graphic 3](#)

CCAP grantees continue to provide families with child care. CCAP providers also work to support school age youth by facilitating engaging afterschool programming. We ask the General Assembly to fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at \$3.2 billion! #FundAfterschool

[CCAP Social Media Graphic 1](#)

Raise Awareness of Afterschool & Funding Streams (State Advocacy)

Afterschool programs improve educational outcomes, keep our youth safe & support our working families in IL. Tell your state legislators to support out-of-school time experiences in IL by sending our alert: <https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8>. It takes ONE MINUTE! #ACTNow4Access

[Fund Afterschool Programs Social Media Graphic](#)

92% of parents reported feeling assured of their kids safety in afterschool programs. Tell your state legislators to support out-of-school time experiences in IL by sending our alert: <https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8>. It only takes ONE MINUTE!

[Afterschool Alliance Social Media Graphic](#)

Consistent underfunding for afterschool programs exacerbates the workforce crisis and is a disservice to our youth that are unable to be served. Investing in afterschool programs = supporting our youth and diverse communities! <https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8> #AfterschoolAdvocacyIL

[Fund Afterschool Programs Social Media Graphic](#)

More than 1,059,786 children in Illinois want to be enrolled in afterschool programs but do not have access to them. Change this by telling your legislators to support out-of-school time experiences: <https://bit.ly/4jsBdS8>

[Afterschool Alliance Social Media Graphic](#)

Sample LinkedIn Posts

21st Century Community Learning Centers (Federal Advocacy)

<p>The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant is the largest funding stream for out-of-school time programs. In IL, 21st CCLC providers focus on learning enrichment activities, STEM & social-emotional programming. Sustain 21st CCLCC funding to reach more youth: https://bit.ly/4aurZAG</p>	<p>21st CCLC Social Media Graphic 1</p>
<p>Nearly 25 million children are not in an afterschool program because there is not one available to them. Sustained funding for 21st CCLC for FY26 means more youth can participate #fundafterschool #21stcenturylearningcenters</p>	<p>21st CCLC Social Media Graphic 2</p>
<p>More than 5 in 6 parents say that afterschool programs like 21st Century Community Learning Centers allow them to keep their jobs while also providing youth with a safe place to be creative and explore college & career experiences. Tell your legislators to fund 21st CCLC to ensure healthy futures: https://bit.ly/4aurZAG</p>	<p>21st CCLC Social Media Graphic</p>

Full-Service Community Schools (Federal Advocacy)

<p>Community schools provide necessary integrated wraparound services for youth & families across the country, and oftentimes in historically marginalized communities. Fund the Full-Service Community Schools grant program and increase it by \$150 M so more young people access OST & support services!</p>	<p>Community Schools Graphic 1</p>
<p>Congress must increase funding to the Full-Service Community Schools grant by \$150M! Community schools focus on learning renewal & enrichment opportunities & provide integral mental/physical health services for students, as well as child care for families: https://bit.ly/4aurZAG</p>	<p>Community Schools Graphic 2</p>

CONCLUSION

Advocacy is a powerful tool for driving change and amplifying the voices of youth and families. To ensure afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) programs are prioritized and supported in Illinois, advocacy must be done. Through this toolkit, ACT Now has provided a guide to understanding advocacy, engaging in impactful actions, and empowering individuals through advocacy.

By understanding the basics of advocacy, building meaningful connections with elected officials, and utilizing diverse communication tools like social media, you are equipped to champion afterschool and OST programs effectively. Your advocacy can secure vital funding, resources, and policies that strengthen the futures of youth and families across the state.

As you take action in 2025, remember that your voice matters! Whether through a phone call to a legislator, a letter of support, or a post on social media, every effort contributes to creating more equitable opportunities for youth. By working together and engaging youth partners in this work, we can ensure Illinois remains a leader in providing accessible, high-quality programs that meet the needs of all youth.

Thank you for your commitment to advocacy! Together, we can make a lasting impact that transforms lives and strengthens communities.

For more information, please contact
Emma Giamberdino
spencere@actnowillinois.org
Deputy Director of Policy,
Communications, and External Affairs

A special thank you to Emma Doell (Policy and Communications Intern SY 24-25) and **Elizabeth Hartnett** (Policy and Communication Associate) **for compiling these resources and creating this toolkit!**