

Logistics

Selecting a Program Location

Choosing the right location is essential to creating a safe, engaging, and functional environment for afterschool programming. The physical space should support a wide range of activities, including both large and small group interactions, academic enrichment, recreation, and meals or snacks.

Program staff should maximize the use of all available areas creatively—some programs, for example, repurpose hallways or multipurpose rooms to accommodate activities. However, safety must remain the top priority, and all uses of space should align with local, state, and federal health and safety guidelines. When using shared spaces, it's also critical to respect the established rules and routines of the host organization.

Key Questions to Consider When Evaluating a Location

- Is the space appropriate and safe for youth of various ages?
- Is there an area available for serving and eating meals?
- Will the program include mixed-age groups, or is there a need for separate spaces for different age levels?
- Does the layout support continuous adult supervision, including visibility of hallways and restrooms?

Types of Program Locations

- **Single-Use Sites:** Dedicated spaces such as recreation centers, community centers, or leased facilities designed solely for afterschool programming.
- **Shared Spaces:** Facilities used in partnership with other organizations, including schools, libraries, and churches. These locations often require flexibility and coordination regarding usage schedules, storage, and access.

“A huge benefit of a dedicated space is the feeling of being settled. It creates a place separate from school where students feel like they are valued.”

- Mark Cowser, MASN Associate Director of Partnerships

Transportation Planning

Transportation is a critical factor in the accessibility and overall success of an afterschool program. If families are unable to access the program safely, conveniently, and affordably, participation will suffer.

The most effective solution is often to locate the program within the school building where the majority of participants are already enrolled. This eliminates transportation barriers and streamlines access. Alternatively, consider facilities within walking distance of the school.

Transportation Options

- **School Bus Coordination:** Partner with the local school district's transportation department to provide bus service to and from the program.
- **Walking Routes:** Ensure safe walking paths for students if the program site is near their school.
- **Program-Owned Vehicles:** Renting or purchasing vans or buses offers greater flexibility but requires funding, staffing, and adherence to transportation regulations.

Transportation poses a significant hurdle for rural communities. With long distances between homes, limited public transportation, and parents often commuting for work, getting students home safely after afterschool activities requires creative solutions.