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## **AfterSchool Works! New York**

*The Membership Association for Afterschool Professionals in New York State*

# **Afterschool Advocacy in New York State:**

## **A Guide for Afterschool Professionals**

**Advancing quality, promoting professionalism.**

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*Adapted by AfterSchool Works! New York for the benefit of afterschool professionals from the Winning Beginning NY Advocacy Handbook*

## **About Us**

***AfterSchool Works! New York***, formerly the New York State School-Age Care Coalition, is the official state affiliate of the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) and serves as the professional membership association for the afterschool workforce in New York State.

AfterSchool Works! New York provides information, training and support to afterschool professionals in order to cultivate high quality, sustainable afterschool programs that meet the needs of children, youth and their families.

*AfterSchool Works! New York* actively works to strengthen the afterschool system in New York State in partnership with local, regional, state and national organizations.

*AfterSchool Works! New York* recognizes that the most critical element of an effective system is an educated, informed and engaged workforce.

This guide was designed to help afterschool professionals share their experience and reinforce the importance of afterschool in their own neighborhood, community and region.

## **Making the Case**

Before you embark on your advocacy efforts, it is important to craft your message. What is the story you want to tell? Who is your target audience? What does the research say about the value of afterschool for children, youth and families?

There are a number of ways to make the most of your advocacy efforts. Find the one that works best for you. Don't forget that children, youth, parents and families can be your best partners in advocacy so seek out ways to engage them in the process.

And remember...you are the expert !

### **Here are 6 tips for getting the word out:**

1. Schedule a face-to-face meeting
2. Write a letter
3. Make a phone call
4. Send out an invitation
5. Reach out to the media
6. Send an email

## **Afterschool Matters**

*Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and support learning.*

- Afterschool programs provide a safe place for constructive activities during the hours of 3pm to 6pm, the *prime time* for juvenile crime to occur.
- Afterschool programs benefit working parents and families by providing a supervised place for their children so that they are able to be more productive, work more hours and move into better jobs.
- High-quality afterschool programs bolster academic achievement and, equally important, foster the development of critical social and emotional learning.

## **Tip #2**

### **Write a Letter**

As little as ten letters can be perceived as a significant public action campaign and can be effective in moving a legislator or local leader to take action.

Here are some tips to consider when writing a letter:

- Use your own words and experiences
- Make sure the letter is typed and legible
- Writing in response to proposed legislation? Let them know!
- Clearly convey what you are asking for
- Be courteous in thanking your recipient
- Include your return address in the letter

#### **Helpful Hint:**

**Write a letter in January to ask for funding for your program!**

## **Tip # 1**

### **Schedule an In-Person Meeting**

One of the most effective ways to influence local leaders, the business establishment and policy makers thinking about afterschool is to tell your story in a face-to-face meeting.

Here's how to ensure a successful visit in your congressional district and / or in Albany:

- Call ahead
- Gather your thoughts and anticipate likely questions

- Know the leader's background
- Be concise and make the most of a brief amount of time
- Don't be intimidated—you are the expert of your own community
- Leave something in writing behind
- Be respectful and gracious; follow up with a thank you note

**Helpful Hint:**  
**The ideal times to meet with your  
representatives are in November and March!**

### **Tip #3**

## **Make a Phone Call**

While writing a letter is a more preferred method of communicating with leaders and policy makers, a phone call can be effective - especially if calling to convey support for a distinct piece of legislation. Use the same guidelines for writing a letter when making a phone call. Make sure to identify yourself and be clear about what you are asking for.

Keep your notes handy and remember that you are the expert!

List Your State Assembly Member's Phone #:

List Your State Senator's Phone #:

**Helpful Hint:**  
**Make a phone call the first week of March  
to voice your support of funding for  
afterschool!**

## **Tip #4**

### **Send Out an Invitation**

Inviting leaders and policy makers to a special event or for a tour of your program can be an effective tool for gaining buy-in and support. Be sure to alert the media to your efforts and prepare the children, youth and families in your program to speak to their own experiences in afterschool.

Here's a sample agenda for a scheduled visit:

- 3:00 p.m. - Policy maker arrives at the program and is greeted by the program director outside
- 3:05 p.m. - Lead the policy maker on a tour of the facilities. Let them see what activities the youth are engaged in.
- 3:15 p.m. - Afterschool snack time! Let the policy maker enjoy a snack and talk with the children about their favorite parts of the program.  
Ask the children where they would be if they did not attend afterschool.
- 3:30 p.m. - After the snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and policy makers. Ask the parents to explain how the afterschool program helps their families.
- 3:45 p.m. - Ask the principal to talk about school-wide improvement attributable to the afterschool program. For example, ask the principal to show the policy maker the school's improved assessment scores.
- 4:00 p.m. - Thank you and goodbye!

## **Tip #5**

### **Reach Out to Local Media**

Often times, the local media can serve as powerful allies in your effort to raise awareness of afterschool. This includes daily and weekly newspapers, radio and TV.

When developing relationships with local media, be sure to:

- Be concise in your message
- Stress your personal, first hand experience
- Connect them to the families you serve

- Be sure that they know how to contact you

It is always wise to check to see what your employer's protocol is for media relations in advance of your efforts.

**Helpful Hint:  
Media relationships should be cultivated  
year-round with emphasis on  
special events!**

## **Tip # 6 Send an E-Mail**

Similar to making a phone call, writing a personal letter is most effective - however, in situations where time is limited, email can be an effective communication tool.

Many afterschool advocacy organizations offer email list serves that allow you to respond with the click of your mouse!

If you do decide to send email, remember to resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with email communications.

**Helpful Hint:  
Send an email in February and follow it up with a phone call in March!**

## **The Legislative Session in New York State**

The legislative session in New York State runs from January to June.

## **Your State Representatives**

New York State government is represented by two houses - the Senate and the Assembly. As such, every resident in New York State has at least two members representing them.

Depending on the geographic area that your center serves, you may have families in your afterschool program from as many as five legislative districts!

To identify your elected officials go to: [www.assembly.state.ny.us](http://www.assembly.state.ny.us)  
[www.senate.state.ny.us](http://www.senate.state.ny.us).

## **The Budget Timeline in New York State**

**July:** Division of Budget (DOB) develops Budget Request Manual

**August:** State agencies are informed by DOB of budget guidelines and submission deadline

**September:** State agencies submit their budget requests

**October:** The Fiscal Planning Unit develops base budget, revenue projections are analyzed and budget requests reviewed

**November and December:** Hearings on budget requests are held

**January:** The Governor delivers the State of the State address and releases budget briefing for legislative leaders

**February:** Legislature convenes public hearings on proposed budget items, budget forums occur in home districts, legislature and governor begin negotiations, DOB, Senate Finance staff and the Ways and Means Committee meet to negotiate budget bills

**April:** The state's fiscal year begins and the budget deadline for passage is April 1<sup>st</sup>

**May, June and July:** State budget is adopted

## **Afterschool Advocacy Resources**

Afterschool advocacy can be a quick and simple process. There are a number of advocacy organizations that can provide you with easy-to-use letter and email templates.

In addition, many have email list serves that allow you to speak your mind with the click of a mouse!

Here are a few of our favorites:

The National Afterschool Association  
**[www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org)**

The Afterschool Alliance  
**[www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)**

The National Institute of  
Out-of-School Time  
**[www.niost.org](http://www.niost.org)**

The New York State  
Afterschool Network  
**[www.nysan.org](http://www.nysan.org)**

Fight Crime Invest in Kids New York  
**[www.fightcrime.org/ny](http://www.fightcrime.org/ny)**

Coalition for After-School Funding  
**[www.casf-nys.org](http://www.casf-nys.org)**

The After-School Corporation  
**[www.tascorp.org](http://www.tascorp.org)**

## **The Benefits of Membership!**

Members of *AfterSchool Works! New York* make up the largest group of professionals (16,000 and growing!) dedicated to quality afterschool programs in New York State.

Membership in *AfterSchool Works! New York* includes membership in our national organization, the National Afterschool Association (NAA).

For a nominal fee, our members enjoy the following benefits:

- *AfterSchool Works! New York* voting privileges
- Access to NAA's virtual membership community
- Access to select regional, state and national conferences, trainings and networking opportunities at reduced prices including the NAA National Conference
- NAA's professional journal, the *AfterSchool Review*— 2 issues per year
- Bi-monthly electronic newsletter, the NAA Voice
- Access to comprehensive insurance benefits
  - Valuable vendor discounts

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**Join AfterSchool Works! New York**

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