

Afterschool Supports Safer Communities

Adolescence (ages 10 – 19) is a vital time in building cognitive, social, and emotional skills.¹ Marked by:



Opportunity for positive growth



Possibility of recovery from negative childhood experiences



Increased sensitivity to their environment²

In 2019, more than **10,615 Georgia youth** were under the supervision of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and approximately **1,357** of these youth were confined.³

- Georgia is **1 of only 3 states** that processes 17 year olds through the adult system regardless of offense
- High cost of youth confinement at **\$91,000 per bed per year**⁴
- **50% of screened youth** referred for a more thorough mental health assessment⁵
- Disproportionate responses to misbehaviors in schools and in public safety for similar offenses



Black youth are more than **5.6 times as likely** to be detained or committed to youth facilities compared to White youth.⁶



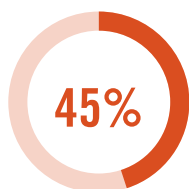
Youth from low income families are **4 times as likely** to be disciplined compared to their peers.⁷

Implicit biases related to race, gender, ethnicity, geography, and income have pushed countless youth into the juvenile justice system, and increased their likelihood of involvement with the justice system as an adult.⁸

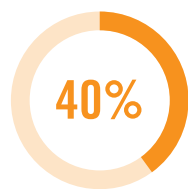
Georgia Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2013

In 2013, the Juvenile Justice Reform Act was passed with the aim to improve public safety, decrease costs, and preserve and strengthen family relationships to allow youth to live in safety and security. Strategies implemented include increased use of evidence-based programs, treating youth in the community rather than in secure facilities, and utilizing the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant Program to decrease recidivism.

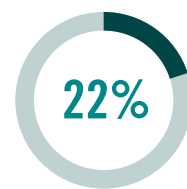
GEORGIA 2013 – 2018 STRATEGY RESULTS



Reduction in short-term secure confinement



Reduction in secure detention



Reduction in overall commitment to DJJ⁹

More than **10,000 youth** have received evidence based treatment programming in their home communities.¹⁰

Impact of Afterschool

All high quality afterschool and summer learning programs can serve as prevention programs and those that use evidence-based and trauma-informed practices can also support intervention and diversion.



Afterschool provides:

- Safe and supervised environments
- Enrichment activities
- Opportunities to build positive decision-making and social-emotional skills
- Meaningful relationships with caring adults and peers¹¹
- Protective factors that contribute to positive developmental experiences
- Mitigation of the effects of risk factors^{12,13}

Regular participation leads to:

- Reduction in crime and juvenile delinquency¹⁴
- Decreased reports of misconduct in school and disciplinary incidents
- Reduction in risky behaviors such as substance use and misuse^{15,16}
- Self-control and self-awareness
- Increased school attendance
- Improved work habits and classroom behaviors
- Gains in reading and math
- Increased graduation rates^{17,18}

Recommendations

Afterschool and summer learning programs keep youth safe, provide necessary developmental supports, build protective factors, and provide opportunities for positive relationships thereby decreasing a young person's chances of interacting with the juvenile justice system. To ensure these supports are available to all young people GSAN makes the following recommendations:



Create incentive grants for afterschool programs to use trauma-informed practices and evidence-based programs to build protective factors.



Expand state funding to afterschool and summer learning programs to increase access and ensure affordability.



Expand trauma-informed training to afterschool and youth development professionals.



Strengthen partnerships at all levels between community-based afterschool programs, mentoring programs, school districts, juvenile courts, and other community partners to align services for young people.



Increase funding and accessibility of evidence based wraparound models to keep youth in their homes, placements, and communities.



Expand trauma awareness and implicit bias training for public safety officers and law enforcement personnel that engage with children in any way.



Expand the jurisdiction of juvenile courts to encompass children under 18 and eliminate provisions that automatically transfer (without juvenile court approval) certain youth to adult courts.



Increase funding and accessibility of behavior aide services and extend them to afterschool and youth development professionals, in addition to families and classroom teachers, so they can help youth learn behavior modification techniques, supervise behaviors, and de-escalate situations.

For more information on afterschool in Georgia, go to www.afterschoolga.org.
For references, go to www.afterschoolga.org/afterschool-issues.