

summer activity guide

Using Family & Youth
Feedback to Improve
Summer Programming

QUICK
GUIDE



About the Summer Activity Guides

Summers are for fun and engaged learning. In 2020 as the impact of the pandemic is widely felt, summer opportunities will be different for young people, families, and afterschool and summer program staff. The Summer Activity Guides were developed to help engage youth with supportive adults in a range of places.

The activities and resources in the Summer Activity Guides are intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in driving consistent engagement and providing ongoing opportunities for youth skill-building and emotional well-being. In addition to the activities for youth, supplemental materials will be available to support professional development and enhance family engagement.

The Guides include 150 original activities and challenges organized by four different age groups (5-9) (10-12) (13-15) (16-18). The activities are adaptable for in-person and virtual instruction, or a hybrid of both, as well as sent as take-home packets.

All activities should be safely executed and aligned with state and local health guidelines.



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Quick Guide: Using family & youth feedback to improve summer programming

INTRODUCTION

We all want our youth to be able to participate fully and benefit from our summer programming. In order to make sure that we are implementing high-quality programming that is accessible to the youth we serve, we have to consistently seek out their input, and then be able to act on it. The purpose of this resource is to provide programs with actionable steps you can take based on feedback from youth and their families and caregivers.

This guide is a supplement to the [Summer Activity Guide](#), which is a suite of activities and resources intentionally designed to support youth-serving summer programs in delivering programming through multiple approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For ideas on survey questions you can ask youth and families/ caregivers, check out the [Sample Questions for Teens/ Families and Caregivers](#).

TIPS FOR PROGRAMS

CHALLENGES WITH ACCESS

Below are common challenges youth may experience this summer related to access, as well as suggested actions programs can take to reduce barriers to youth and encourage engagement in the program and activities.

CHALLENGE: Youth do not have reliable internet access for virtual programming

- Provide support to families in applying to programs that offer free or reduced service for eligible households. Many cable providers, such as Comcast and Spectrum, are offering free or reduced cost internet access to low income families. Take a look at [Internet Essentials](#) program provided through Comcast, or [Kajeet](#), which provides mobile hotspots to K-12 students.
- Create take-home packets with the activities and kits with the supplies. Check-in with your youth frequently to answer any questions about the activities or have a conversation about what they have completed and learned.

CHALLENGE: Youth do not have access to a computer or other device to use for virtual programming

- Partner with schools to borrow and provide loaner devices to youth. Allow families and caregivers to sign out these devices as needed.
- Provide access to your program's computer lab (if applicable) to support youth engagement with social distancing guidelines in place.
- Help families identify a local library or other resource center with a computer lab.
- If your youth need access to a phone, check out the [Lifeline Program](#), which offers discounted phone service for low-income families.

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CHALLENGE: Youth do not have access to materials and supplies to complete the activities

- Create kits with the supplies for the next 2 weeks of activities. Coordinate options for sending kits home or organize family pick-up options. If you are providing meals or other services, coordinate drop off or pick up with the meals.
- Create a shopping list for families. Identify the stores where the items are available and try to minimize the number of stops (e.g., make sure everything can be purchased at Walmart). Offer the shopping list in multiple forms. For example, offer an online shopping list from Amazon with links to all supplies as well as an in-person shopping list at Walmart. Be sure to get shopping lists to parents at least 2 weeks in advance of activities.

CHALLENGE: Youth do not have reliable transportation to attend the program

- During COVID-19, carpooling is a safer alternative to public transit because it gives families more control over who they share space with. Programs can use companies like [SignUpGenius](#) to allow families and caregivers to create, search and sign up for carpools that work for them. Families should take certain precautions when carpooling to keep themselves safe, such as limiting the number of passengers in the vehicle, wearing a mask and wiping down car seats, door handles and seatbelts with disinfectant.
- Organize groups of youth that are walking or biking to your program from the same neighborhood. Not only will this provide a more safe experience for your youth and allow for physical distancing, but it will also keep them accountable.

CHALLENGE: Families and caregivers do not have the information needed to participate

- Do not assume that if you push out communication at the start of the summer it will reach all families. Continuously send the logistics and schedule to families throughout the summer and through different communication mechanisms like email, mail, text and phone calls.
- Follow-up with families to ensure they received the information and to answer any questions they may have about how the program works and expectations for their children.
- If your program serves youth that speak other languages in the home, make key program resources available in their native language.

CHALLENGES WITH PARTICIPATION

Below are common challenges youth may experience this summer related to participation, as well as suggested actions programs can take to reduce barriers to youth and encourage full participation in the program and activities.

CHALLENGE: Youth forget to log-in to virtual programming sessions

- Use a text-based service like [Remind](#). Remind is a two-way messaging system designed for educators to connect with students to send reminders, updates or instructions.
- Send home a weekly or monthly schedule that families can hang on their fridge.

CHALLENGE: Youth are struggling emotionally and do not want to participate

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- During Covid-19, your youth are experiencing a range of emotions, and some may not feel emotionally ready to participate. **Programs should create an emotionally safe and supportive environment for your youth.**
 - Youth may struggle to find words to describe how they are feeling. As a first step, help them to label their feelings. You can start your sessions with an emotional check-in with youth. As an example, if you are leading a virtual session, you could have youth select an emoji to represent how they are feeling today.
 - Always allow the option to pass on sharing their feelings. It can take time for some youth to feel safe, and youth may not feel like they can express their emotions in front of a group of peers or to an adult.
 - Validate youth and reassure them. It may be tempting to solve the problem or downplay negative emotions, but it's more important that you listen and show you understand. Reflect back what you hear them saying (ex. What I hear you saying is...) and ask clarifying questions.
 - Conduct [targeted outreach to youth and families that are in need](#). For example, if your program is delivering take-home materials, make sure to check-in with them about how they are doing during these visits. Offer remote options for staying in touch with families (e.g., texting or video conferencing).
- Programs should consider adjusting policies related to discipline and the consequences for emotional outbursts, or other negative behaviors. Some youth may have been removed from a structured environment for months, and we should expect a slide in social and relationship skills for youth who have not been able to interact with others during the pandemic.
- It can be exhausting, frustrating, and challenging for staff to have to navigate more intense emotions and interpersonal conflicts among youth. Check-in with staff frequently about their emotional wellness. For example, supervisors can have a bi-weekly 1:1 meeting with staff to discuss challenges and to help brainstorm solutions.

CHALLENGE: Youth do not enjoy virtual or at-home programming and do not want to participate

- Engaging youth from their homes is not easy, and many youth may be struggling to stay on task or to participate in the same ways as they would in-person. **Programs should create a fun and engaging experience for youth.**
 - Use polls, games and other fun online tools to get and sustain youth's attention. If you are using Zoom, you can use the whiteboard feature to draw together, play games or create a group schedule together. You can also use other online tools like Polleverywhere or Kahoot.
 - Encourage peer-to-peer connection. Most online platforms allow users to connect with each other through a chat box during a virtual meeting and use meeting rooms on the platform for group work. Create time for your youth to connect and discuss their activities, share their thoughts and feelings, or discuss poll results. For example, encourage 3-4 youth to use a meeting room to share the outcome of an activity they have been doing, like an art activity.
 - Use small groups to keep things personal and shorter time frames to keep things moving. Group sizes should be appropriate for the targeted age range. For example, if you are engaging youth that are younger, you should keep the group sizes to less than 8 to ensure that all youth can share and participate fully. The length of the session will also depend on the targeted age range, and should be kept shorter than in-person programming. A suggested timeframe is 30 minutes for younger participants (5-12) and 30 to 45 minutes for older participants (13+).
- [Practice makes perfect](#). Something that works in-person, may not translate well to the virtual world. Before you engage your youth online, practice your virtual facilitation with another staff member, including introducing the topic and debriefing the activity at the end.

The 50 State Afterschool Network



The Summer Activity Guide has been developed for the 50 State Afterschool Network with leadership from the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network to engage and support children and youth nationwide.

In each state, the afterschool network is broadening opportunities for youth. Seeking equitable outcomes for underserved children to succeed in school and future jobs, a statewide afterschool network brings together cross-sector leaders with a common vision and coordinated strategy to advance quality afterschool and summer learning programs

Alabama Afterschool Community Network
Alaska Afterschool Network
Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
Arkansas Out of School Network
California AfterSchool Network
Colorado Afterschool Partnership
Connecticut After School Network
Delaware Afterschool Network
Florida Afterschool Network
Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance
Idaho Afterschool Network
Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) Coalition (IL)
Indiana Afterschool Network
Iowa Afterschool Alliance
Kansas Enrichment Network
Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance
Louisiana Center for Afterschool Learning
Maine Afterschool Network
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
Michigan After-School Partnership
Ignite Afterschool (MN)
Missouri AfterSchool Network
Mississippi Statewide Afterschool Network
Montana Afterschool Alliance
Beyond School Bells (NE)

Nevada Afterschool Network
New Hampshire Afterschool Network
New Jersey School- Age Care Coalition
NMOST (New Mexico Out of School Time) Network
New York State Network for Youth Success
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
North Dakota Afterschool Network
Ohio Afterschool Network
Oklahoma Partnership for Expanded Learning Opportunities
OregonASK
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network
Rhode Island Afterschool Network
South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
South Dakota Afterschool Network
Tennessee Afterschool Network
Texas Partnership for Out of School Time
Utah Afterschool Network
Vermont Afterschool, Inc.
Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time
Washington Expanded Learning Opportunities Network
West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network
Wisconsin Afterschool Network
Wyoming Afterschool Alliance