

Summary of the Health Impact Assessment of

California Ballot Proposition 49: After-School Programs

Partnership for Prevention/UCLA School of Public Health
Health Impact Assessment Project¹
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Official Title and Summary *(prepared by the State Attorney General)*

Before and After School Programs. State Grants. Initiative Statute.

- Increases state grant funds available for before/after school programs, providing tutoring, homework assistance, and educational enrichment.
- Makes every public elementary, middle/junior high school, including charter schools, eligible for after school grants ranging from \$50,000-\$75,000. Maintains local funding match requirement.
- Provides priority for additional funding to schools with predominantly low-income students.
- Requires that, beginning 2004-05, new funding for before/after school programs not be taken from education funding, guaranteed under Proposition 98. Gives priority to schools already receiving grants and requires increasing expenditures only if state revenues grow.

Legislative Analyst's Estimate of Net State and Local Government Fiscal Impact:

- Additional annual state costs for before and after school programs of up to \$455 million, beginning in 2004-05.

Summary of health impacts

After-school programs could theoretically produce significant health benefits by raising participants' socio-economic status, reducing criminal activity and decreasing rates of risky behavior. Our review of research on after-school and related programs suggests they may have a modest impact on health, however the potential benefits of the Initiative are likely to remain largely unrealized since these programs tend not to reach high-risk youth. The Proposition does not establish a new source of funding, therefore it could have significant negative health impacts if funds diverted for after-school programs result in cutbacks in other state programs in areas such as education, childcare and public health that make definite contributions to the health of California residents.

Health impacts examined

The health impacts of the Proposition were estimated by extrapolating from the outcomes of published evaluations of after-school programs. The assessment investigated six major pathways through which after-school programs could potentially affect health status:

- 1) increased educational achievement leading to changes in socio-economic status,
- 2) crime reduction,
- 3) substance abuse prevention,
- 4) increased physical activity,
- 5) improved mental health,
- 6) reduced child-bearing (i.e. teen pregnancy) and sexually transmitted diseases.

The analysis did not consider potentially significant impacts due to budgetary effects on other state programs.

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What is Proposition 49?

If passed state funding for after-school programs for elementary and junior high school age students would increase from the current level of \$117.5 million per year to \$550 million per year when Proposition 49 is fully implemented, as early as fiscal year 2004-2005. Only another ballot measure approved by a majority of voters could rescind or reduce the amount of funds allocated under this proposition.

Types of Programs

Under Proposition 49 eligibility for after-school program grants would be expanded to include any city, county or non-profit organization in partnership with a local educational agency. Previously, eligible programs were limited to those operated by local educational agencies on school property or in adjacent recreation areas. Programs eligible for Proposition 49 funds must include both an educational or literacy component

and an educational enrichment component, such as recreational, physical fitness or fine arts activities. The exact content of these activities or the proportion of time devoted to one or the other component is not specified. Presumably a wide-range of academic, youth development, sports and custodial care programs would all be eligible for after-school grant funds, as long as they included some of each of the two specified components.

Major findings

- **Significant benefits unlikely**
Proposition 49 programs are unlikely to significantly benefit participants' health through any of the six pathways examined, however some individuals may still benefit in some cases.
- **Limited participation of high-risk youth**
The effectiveness of after-school programs will be limited by the fact that high-risk youth tend not to join or stay in after-school programs. After-school program participants tend to be youth who are already succeeding in school and who are at low risk of involvement in criminal activities, substance abuse and other risk behavior. Typically, well under one-third of eligible low-income students participate in these programs.
- **Health benefits resulting from academic gains unlikely**
Although some after-school programs have been shown to boost academic performance, these increases are likely to be too small to significantly change participants' earnings and subsequent health status later in life.

- **Health benefits most likely from "youth development" programs**
To the extent that after-school programs do produce health benefits, approaches such as youth development programs that address the social and psychological precursors to risky behavior, are most likely to yield health benefits.
- **Few benefits from custodial care programs**
The effects of custodial care by itself, that is "getting kids off the street and into supervised settings," would be modest at best, since the younger elementary and junior high school children targeted by the Proposition are generally at low risk of involvement in juvenile crime, substance abuse, sexual activity or other risky behaviors. In certain cases, however, custodial care may deter early onset risk behaviors and keep young children out of danger in particularly dangerous neighborhoods. Again, these effects will occur only to the extent that high-risk youth are recruited and retained by after-school programs.

Why examine health impacts?

After-school programs have been proposed as a means to improve educational performance, reduce crime and reduce rates of other high-risk behaviors, including substance abuse and teenage sexual activity. Health issues are embedded in all of these outcomes, although they have received relatively little attention in debates about after-school programs. An examination of the ways in which after-school programs are likely to impact health status will help better inform decisions on whether to implement after-school programs and in selecting among different program models.

Limitations

Most evaluations of after school programs, especially large-scale programs, have been process evaluations assessing only program implementation and participant satisfaction. The few evaluations that have documented outcomes rely on mostly pre-/post- comparisons among participating students, leaving open the possibility that the observed effects could be due to factors other than the program being studied. This assessment deals only with the positive health effects of the Proposition. Cuts to other State programs would presumably need to be made to fund the additional \$330 million per year that is to be allocated to after-school programs. Depending on where these cuts are made, they could result in significant health impacts.