

Afterschool Programming as a Protective Factor for Youth

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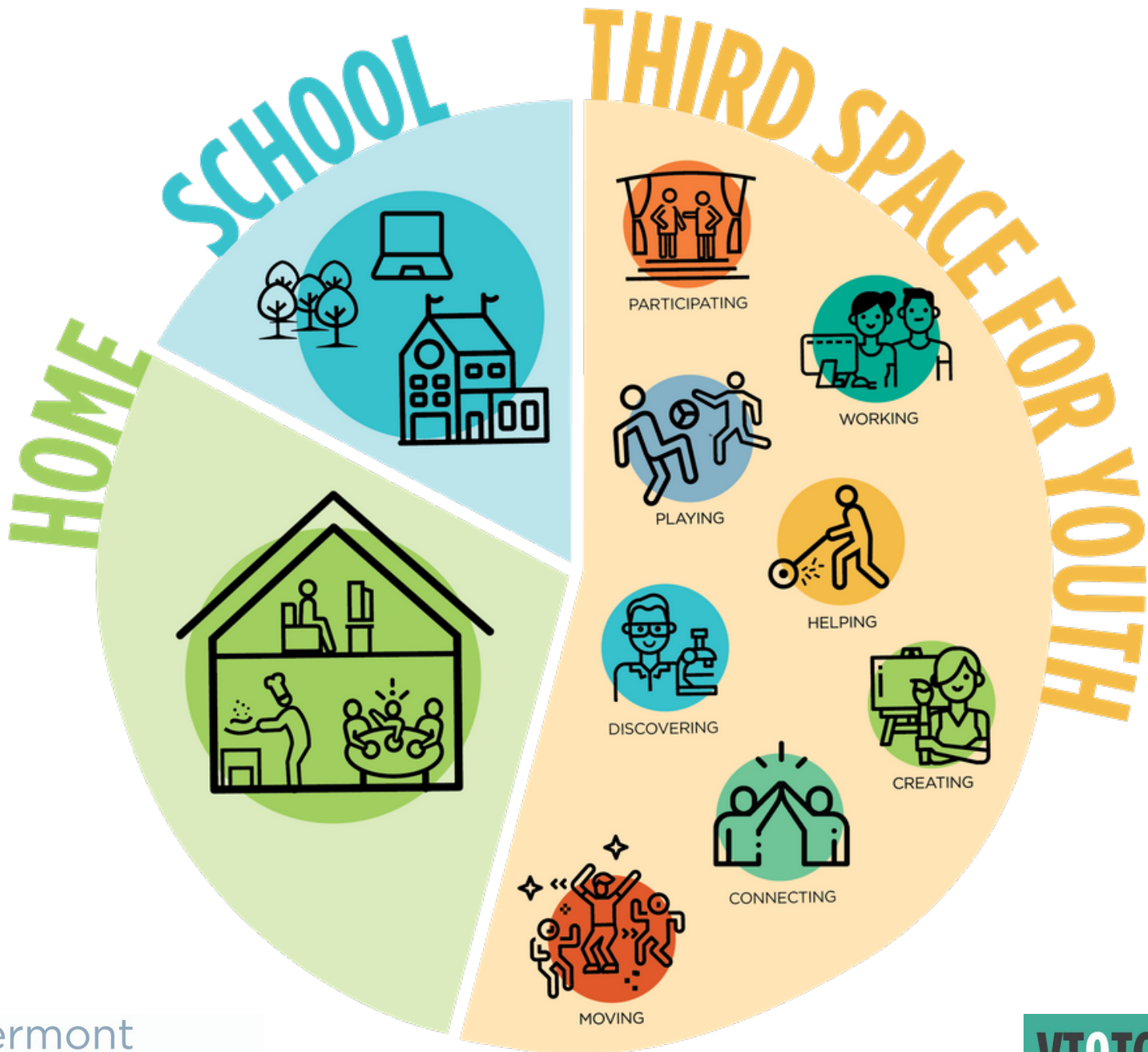


What We Believe

At Vermont Afterschool, we believe that young people make a better Vermont, and that all children and youth in Vermont have the right to opportunities that will help them grow into happy and healthy adults.

We believe that helping youth succeed is about making sure that they have opportunities to be **active, engaged, connected, and heard.**





Peak Hours

On school days, the hours between 3-6pm are the peak hours for youth to commit crimes, be in or cause an automobile accident, be victims of crime, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.



24% of Vermont kids are alone and **unsupervised from 3 to 6 pm**—the peak hours for kids to commit or become victims of crime



Connections to Prevention

- Research shows that youth who are not involved in constructive, supervised extracurricular activities are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as school failure, drug use, and delinquency.
- Teens who do not participate in structured activities after school are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school, experiment with drugs, and engage in sexual activity than teens who do participate.



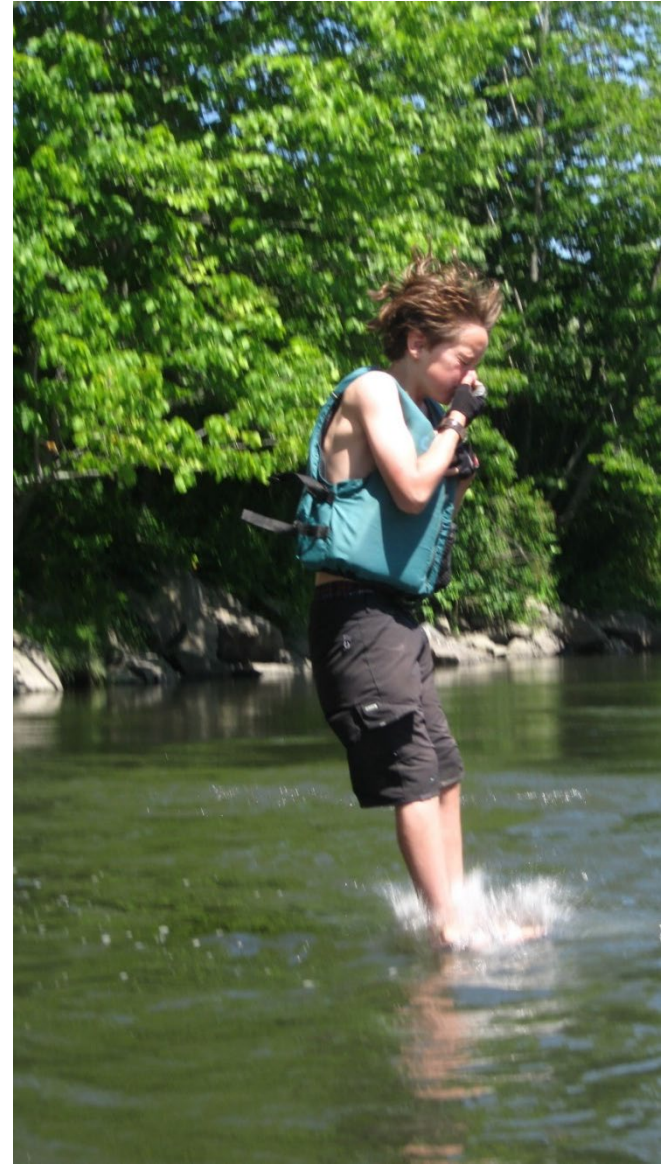
Protective Factors

- Afterschool programs reduce substance abuse through the development of protective or resiliency factors such as school connectedness, self-control, self-confidence, and quality peer relationships
- Quality afterschool programs also provide trauma-informed practices that offset the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Addressing the impact of ACEs in turn reduces development of substance use disorders and other future health concerns.

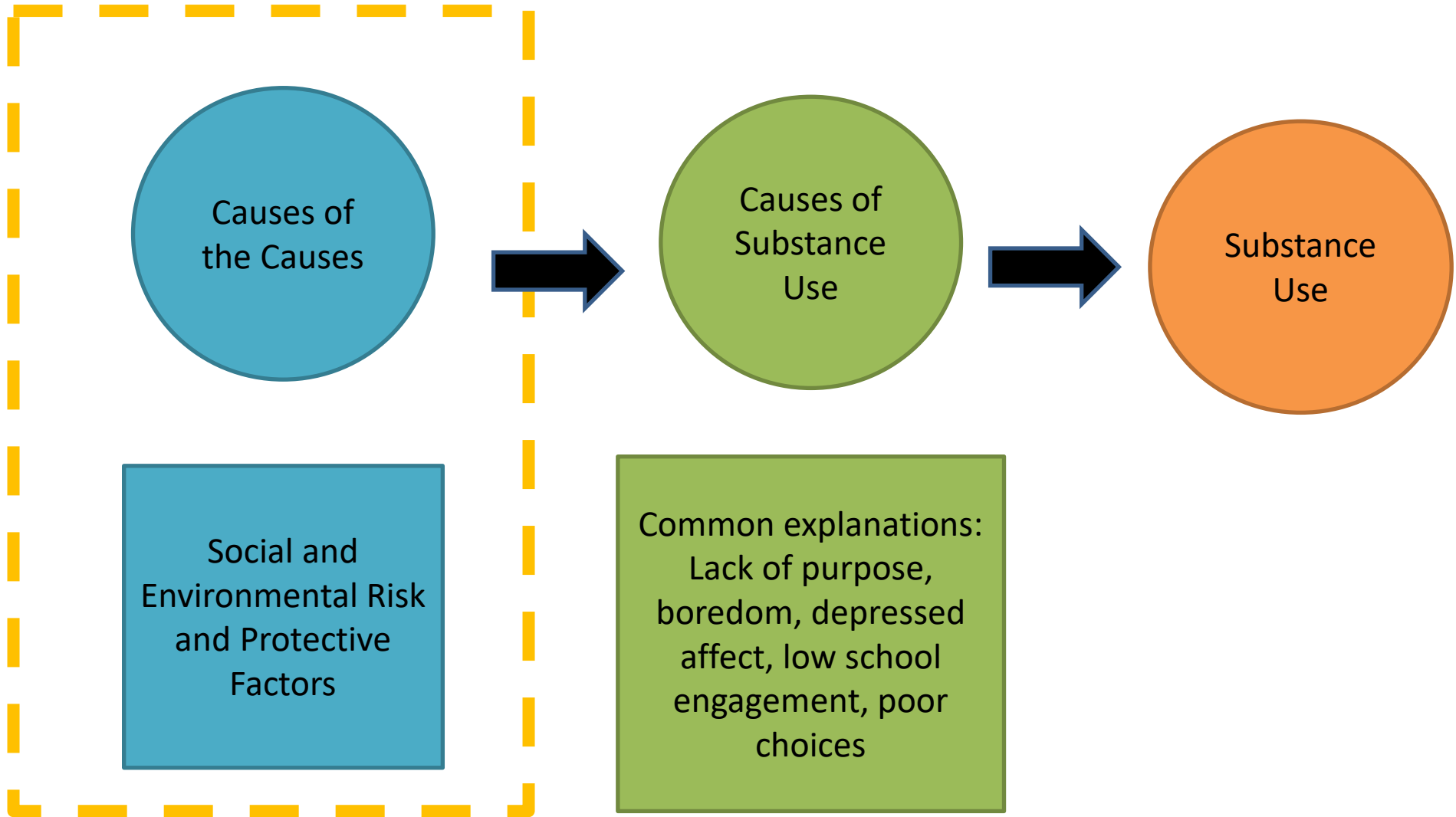


Vermont Data

- Vermont students who participate in up to 19 hours of extracurricular activities each week are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana than those who do not participate in any activities.
- Two out of three Vermont parents agree that afterschool programs make it less likely youth will engage in risky behaviors.
- Over 70% of teens who take part in afterschool activities for at least 10 hours per week say they feel like they matter to the people in their community, compared to 47% who do not participate in afterschool activities.

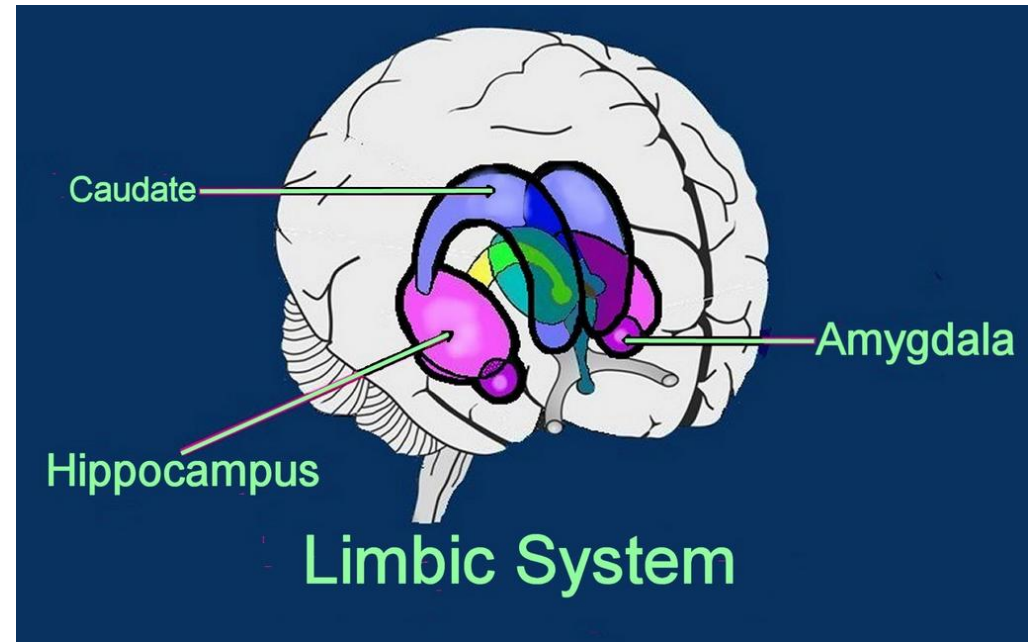


Where to Focus Prevention Efforts?



Adolescent Brain Development

- Cortex and frontal lobe still developing (finishes around 25 years old)
- Behavior is primarily mediated by the limbic area (fight, flight or freeze area of the brain)
 - Emotionally reactive
 - Pleasure and thrill seeking
 - Experiment with risky behavior
 - Oriented to the 'immediate'
 - Not consistently thinking of consequences or long-term implications



Youth Thrive: Protective and Promotive Factors for
Healthy Development

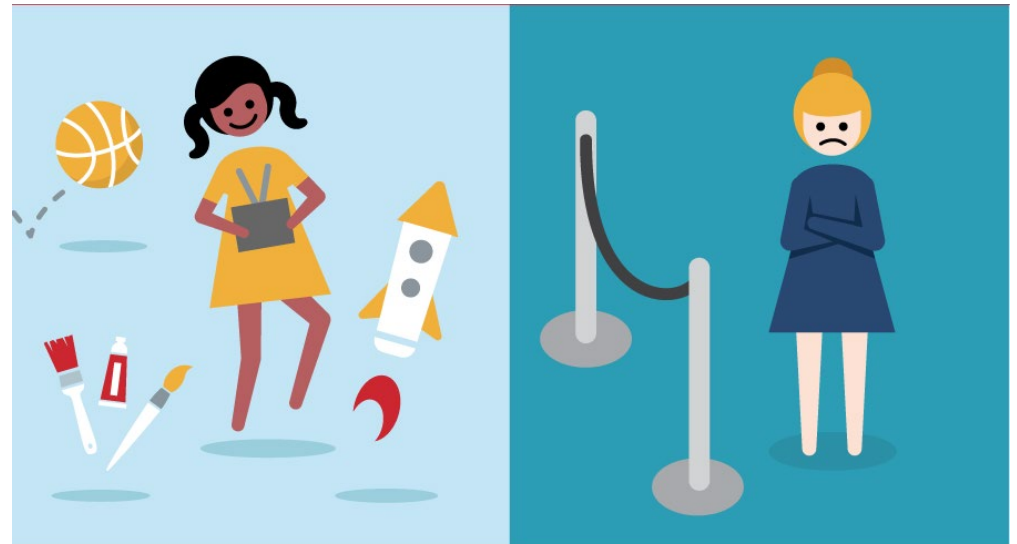
Critical Period of Youth Development

- Brain wires itself (creates connections between neurons) based on its experience of the environment
- This causes a unique brain to develop created specifically in response to the environment
- So regardless of an individual's learning style all youth are experiential Learners and neural connection-making machines
- They try different identities and interests through their relationships, to see which ones fit and which ones should be left behind, as they work to become their own person



Vermont's Opportunity Gap

- Wide disparity when it comes to availability, accessibility, and affordability
- What youth have access to in the Third Space depends on where they live and what resources their family has
- Youth speak of being lonely, isolated, bored
- The Opportunity Gap in Vermont is also a Prevention Gap



More than 21,000 Vermont kids are enrolled in afterschool, but 26,000 are waiting for an available program

Vermont Policy Developments

- Major State Reports (Opioid Coordination Council and VT Marijuana Commission) included access to afterschool in recommendations (2019)
- Governor Scott's State of the State Address (January 2020) featured Universal Afterschool Access as the major education initiative that year
- Legislature passes bill (2020) to create Universal Afterschool Task Force and includes funding for afterschool in marijuana commercialization bill
- Summer Matters Initiative as a key Component of VT's COVID recovery



Vermont Communities are Ready

Vermont's Afterschool for All Grant Program

- \$600k from the Tobacco Settlement Funds
- \$300,000/year for two years in available funds
- Over \$3 million in requests for Year 1 alone; \$5.5 million in requests for two years

Summer Matters 2021 Grants

- \$4.0m from federal recovery dollars
- Over \$7.3 million in requests



Lessons Learned

- Focus on all youth, not just some youth or “at risk” youth
- Promote the idea that all young people have the right to grow up substance free
- Change the community around the youth rather than try to encourage youth to make different decisions
- Protect the adolescent brain and delay the onset of use
- Avoid binary thinking of only school and home as the two places where youth are influenced and supported
- Build out community-wide collaborative measures and norm setting
- Recognize that parent/family co-collaboration can be as important as parent/family engagement



Recommendations

Third Space Programs

- Invest in program availability, accessibility, quality, and affordability

Advertising and retail

- Avoid locations not only near schools but in other places where youth gather and that they move through
- Place youth at the center and make decisions outward from there

Education programs

- Understanding of the adolescent brain and how this time in a human's life is so important to development and well-being
- Promote parent/family co-collaboration
- Promote community-wide norms

