Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards

ACT NOW!
Afterschool for Children and Teens

CONTENTS

VALUE TO STUDENTS BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL DAY

Students who participate in afterschool programs have better school attendance, grades, standardized test scores, and behavior in school than those who do not go to afterschool programs.
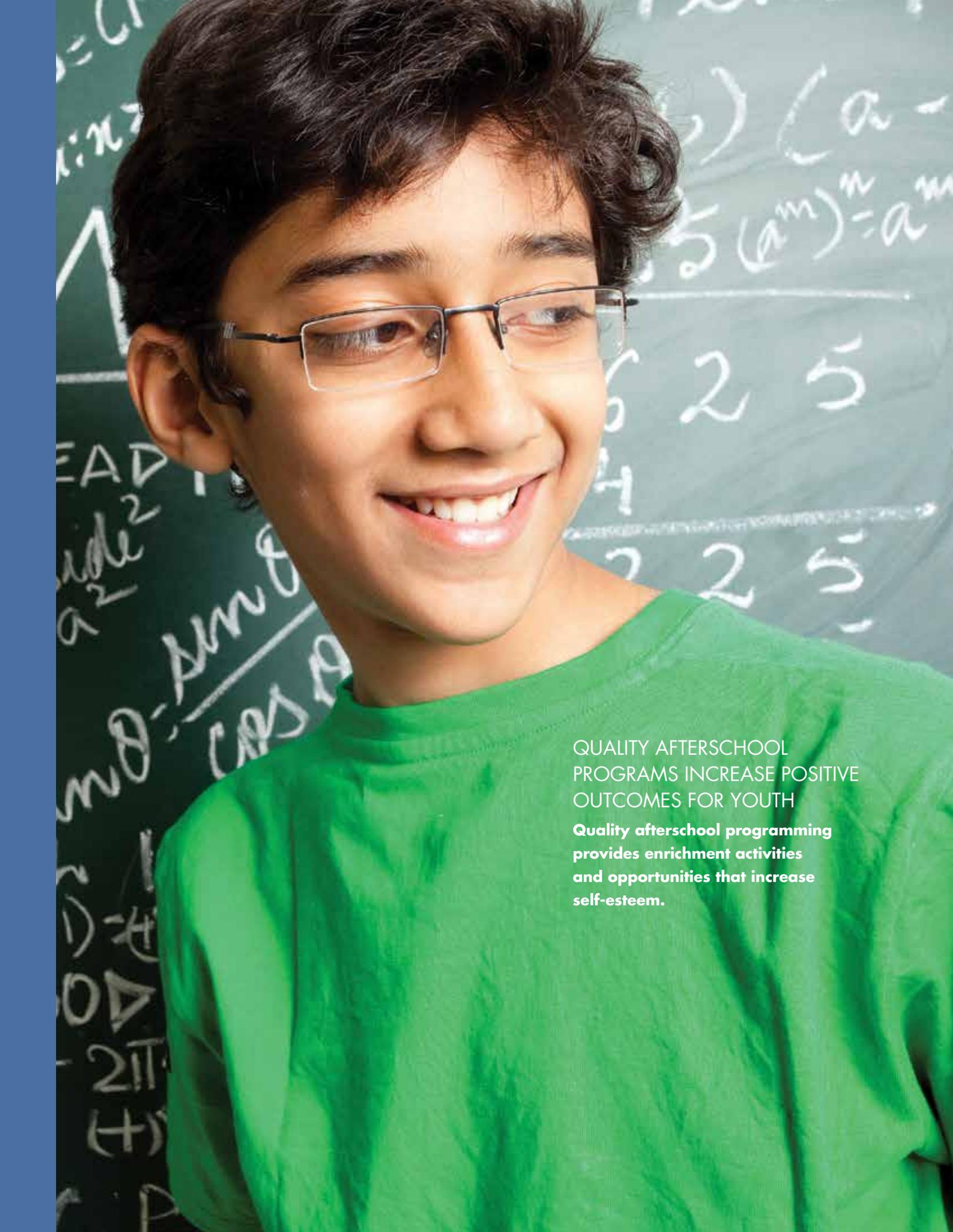
QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL
PROGRAMS INCREASE POSITIVE
OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

**Quality afterschool programming
provides enrichment activities
and opportunities that increase
self-esteem.**

Introduction

What Do We Mean by Afterschool? Why Is It Important?

Out of school time programs are academic, social and emotional, and physical health learning opportunities that take place before school, after school, and during summer breaks. Afterschool programs provide a variety of enrichment activities, such as homework help, hands-on science and engineering activities, and opportunities to participate in performance and fine art. The organizations that sponsor these activities range from schools to faith-based organizations, community organizations, or city or county sponsored groups.

According to America After 3PM, **433,390 children in Illinois are left alone and unsupervised between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.**[1] Currently, only 18 percent of children in Illinois participate in afterschool programs.[2] However, 41 percent of children in Illinois would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them.[3] Young people only spend about 20 percent of their time in school, and how they spend the other 80 percent of their time has large implications for their well-being and future.[4]

Afterschool programs provide many benefits to youth and communities. Studies show that on the whole students who go to afterschool programs have better school attendance, grades, standardized test scores, and behavior in school than students who do not participate in afterschool programs.[5] Afterschool programs also keep children safe and dissuade them from choosing to involve themselves in crime. Studies have found that participants in afterschool programs are 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities.[6] When young people become engaged in the community through enrichment activities, volunteer work, or teams and clubs, they grow up to become adults who are committed to the community, which builds strong communities for the long term. Afterschool programs also provide necessary childcare for many working families.

ACT Now and the Quality Standards

ACT Now is a statewide coalition that works to ensure that young people in Illinois have access to quality, affordable afterschool and youth development programs. ACT Now is a diverse coalition supported by Illinois families, educators, business leaders, afterschool providers, community advocates, youth organizations, and policymakers across the state. ACT Now's work is split between its three standing committees:

- *Policy and Advocacy Committee*
- *Professional Development Committee*
- *Quality Assurance, Outcomes, and Evaluation Committee*

ACT Now's Quality Assurance, Outcomes, and Evaluation Committee has undertaken an initiative to develop quality standards in order to improve afterschool programming around the state. Our Quality Standards capture the practices that have been demonstrated, through research, to lead to quality programs and positive outcomes for children.

These Standards apply to programs that work with children and youth in out-of-school time settings, such as afterschool and summer programming. Some examples of programs that can use these standards are 21st Century Community Learning Centers, youth development programs, childcare programs, and recreation programs.

The Quality Standards provide afterschool programs with a common language for describing quality, as well as a "high bar" for individual programs to hold themselves accountable. The Standards are not intended to dictate policy and practices, but instead are intended to suggest and encourage a strong baseline of quality. Standards can be used by programs and local communities to stimulate conversation about quality, what it looks like, and why it matters. They also provide guidance for professional development focus areas.

The Importance of Quality in Afterschool Programming

Research shows that quality afterschool programs increase positive outcomes for youth.[7] Quality afterschool programming provides enrichment activities, opportunities that increase self-esteem and prevent risky behaviors, time for recreational activities that promote healthy physical development and team building, and a chance to build on school day learning by explaining academic concepts through hands-on activities.

It is not enough for communities to just have access to afterschool programs. Communities need access to consistent and high-quality programs that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically. Positive outcomes for youth are more likely to occur when evidence-based methods are used in afterschool programming.[8] The David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality's 2012 study found dedication to continuous improvement strategies led to an increased quality of staff instructional practices.[9]

Defining what quality looks like is an essential first step to ensuring that all children and young adults have access to high-quality afterschool programs. Standards for afterschool programming are often created at the state level to accommodate the priorities of state agencies and to include providers as integral participants in the process of developing and implementing standards.

Development of the Standards

The Illinois Afterschool Quality Standards were developed through a two-year-long process involving key stakeholders from seven sectors—afterschool, child care, philanthropy, education, research, mental health, and state agencies—with a vested interest in the afterschool field in Illinois.

The stakeholders came together to develop the Standards in three phases:

WRITING. The Writing Committee reviewed existing Illinois standards and research on afterschool standards nationwide to develop research-based quality guidelines for the state of Illinois. All members of the Writing Committee utilized their relevant content knowledge and experience in the field to contribute to the creation of Illinois' Quality Standards for afterschool. The Writing Committee was driven by the following general principles:

- *the Standards would be voluntary*
- *the Standards would be general and applicable to diverse programs that seek positive outcomes for school-age youth*
- *the Standards tools would be affordable to ensure buy-in and use*

The following organizations participated in the Writing Committee:

WRITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

After School Matters	*Illinois State Board of Education*
American Institutes for Research	*Loyola University Chicago*
Chaddock	*Outreach Community Ministries*
Chicago Public Schools	*Reaching for Kids and Youth of Massac County*
Chicago Youth Centers	*Regional Office of Education #47*
Erie Neighborhood House	*Tanglewood Research*
Forefront	*Tazwell County Health Department*
Gary Comer Youth Center	*United Way of Metropolitan Chicago*
Illinois Action for Children	*Urbana School District #116*
Illinois Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs	*YMCA of Metro Chicago*
Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies	

REVIEW. The Review Committee consulted with the Writing Committee throughout the writing process to provide guidance on content, structure, and ease of understanding by various audiences. The Review Committee provided ongoing feedback by reviewing individual sections upon their initial completion, as well as a review of the entire completed draft. All members of the Review Committee utilized their relevant content knowledge, experience with standards development, and familiarity with diverse programs to provide expert guidance. Together, the work of the Writing and Review Committees, in coordination with the larger ACT Now Quality and Outcomes Committee, provided documents suitable for public distribution and feedback from afterschool providers state-wide. The Review Committee members came from the following organizations and agencies:

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

American Institutes for Research	*Illinois State Board of Education*
Illinois Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs	*Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies*
Illinois Department of Human Services	

ROADSHOW. The Roadshow Committee developed a concrete engagement plan for stakeholders statewide. This Committee helped plan a strategy for taking the Standards "on the road" to get feedback and buy-in from afterschool providers and stakeholders from around the state. The Roadshow Committee began by identifying key participants that we needed to reach and engage, including providers, community- and faith-based organizations, funders, educators, and youth and parents, for involvement and backing. The Roadshow Committee helped plan and execute meetings and events across the state to engage and inform stakeholders. ACT Now held 20 focus groups with 175 participants across the state to obtain feedback on our Draft Quality Standards. We then carefully analyzed the feedback data and incorporated it into a revised version of the Standards. The Committee consisted of partners from:

ROADSHOW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

After School Matters	*Illinois Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs*
America SCORES	*Illinois Collaboration on Youth*
American Institutes for Research	*Illinois Department of Human Services*
Chicago Lights	*Illinois Mentoring Partnership*
Chicago Pre-College Science & Engineering Program	*Illinois State Board of Education*
Children's Home and Aid	*Illinois YMCA*
Christopher House	*Northern Illinois University*
Columbia College Chicago	*RYE Consulting*
Communities in Schools of Chicago	*SGA Youth & Family Services*
Federation for Community Schools	*Thrive Chicago*
Field Museum	*YMCA of Metro Chicago*
High Jump	*Youth Guidance*
Illinois AfterSchool Network	*Youtopia*

Standards, Core Areas, and Further Resources

The Illinois Afterschool Quality Standards are intentionally broad and inclusive applying to a wide variety of afterschool and youth programs serving youth ages five through young adult, regardless of program content or location. This document offers a voluntary set of benchmarks that are not intended to be a regulatory checklist but rather a definition of quality that programs can use to pursue continuous improvement. The Standards are broken into seven overarching categories or **Core Areas** that represent the key areas of quality for programs. Each Core Area is framed with a guiding principle that introduces the category. The Core Areas are each broken into **Program Standards** which delineate the important components of that Core Area. Program Standards are in turn broken down into **Quality Indicators** which provide specific actions or initiatives programs can take to meet that Quality Standard and ways to measure growth for Quality Standards. While most Standards will apply to all programs, some are specific to particular program settings and service delivery models and may not be as generally applicable.

THE SEVEN CORE AREAS:

1 *Indoor and Outdoor Environments*
2 *Safety, Health, and Nutrition*
3 *Administration*
4 *Professional Development and Qualifications*
5 *Family and Community Partnerships*
6 *Youth Development, Programming, and Activities*
7 *Partnerships with Schools*

After the Standards, you will find a glossary which provides definitions of key terms used throughout this tool. At the end of this booklet there is also an abbreviated Resource Guide to help providers implement the Standards. The Resource Guide breaks resources down by each Core Area to give providers greater clarity as to what the Standards should look like in practice and ways to implement the Standards in their programs.

Using the Standards

The Illinois Afterschool Quality Standards are recommended, voluntary guidelines for afterschool providers. The Standards are aspirational in nature and are intentionally broad so programs can tailor them to their specific context and strive to be a quality program. It is important to remember that while Quality Standards provide a shared framework for community collaborations and encourage programs to involve young people in meaningful ways, Standards alone cannot change the quality of programs or the skills of program staff and volunteers. The Standards provide a research-based framework for providers to understand and measure program quality and to plan for improvement.

The Standards are linked to what research shows makes a quality afterschool program and improves outcomes for children and young adults. By implementing these Standards and creating a plan to constantly improve in these core areas, providers will improve the quality of their programs and, simultaneously, the outcomes for youth.

STRIVING TOWARD EXCELLENCE

Not all indicators are applicable to all afterschool programs and some programs may hit roadblocks in implementing the Standards, such as lack of resources, a lack of cooperation from external organizations or stakeholders, a lack of control over certain programmatic features, or issues with altering their physical space. The Standards are meant to act as a guidepost towards which programs should work. Programs may not have the ability to implement the Standards all at once, but instead should develop a plan so that one day their program will have aspects of all of the Standards. Quality is an ongoing process, and it is not anticipated that any program will have mastered all of the items included in the Standards but rather will use the Standards to help keep the program focused on striving toward excellence.

FIRST STEPS FOR PROGRAMS

Building capacity to use the Standards in programs across Illinois will take time. Critical first steps for program leaders include sharing the Standards with staff to ensure understanding, and identifying an individual or team to lead the process of creating a comprehensive plan to achieve the Standards. A program plan should incorporate realistic and achievable goals so that programs can work toward meeting the Standards gradually and systematically through tangible steps. Providers should consider integrating existing quality measures like the Youth Program Quality Assessment[10] as well as available professional development opportunities. Program directors should also keep the Standards in mind when planning out budgets in order to allocate resources to areas where the program wants to target growth.

WHAT IF I ALREADY USE A QUALITY TOOL?

Many programs also already use some sort of quality tool. As the Standards were developed, our committees reviewed many other types of tools used around the state and gathered feedback from programs that already have some sort of quality resource. These Standards were designed to be broad so that they would be able to work in tandem with other quality tools. Further, due to our thorough review process incorporating feedback from across the state, our Standards align with many quality tools around the state and provide programs a pathway to build upon and complement already existing quality tools. If programs already have quality tools that they are using, we suggest that you start by identifying which parts of the Standards overlap with the tool and finding ways to incorporate parts of the Standards that are not already encompassed in the current quality tool into the program.

HOW OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CAN USE THE STANDARDS

Beyond program leaders, other afterschool and youth development stakeholders may find the Standards useful in the following ways:

Parents and Families. These Standards help parents and families to understand the key elements of a high-quality program and to be able to advocate for quality programs in their own communities. The Standards also help families to identify quality programming for their children. Parents and families can use the Standards to find ways to collaborate with programs in order to have a greater impact on youth outcomes.

Funders and Policymakers. The Standards help funders and policymakers to link funding to research-based practices that lead to measurable outcomes. Funders should look to see that programs are using the Standards to evaluate and improve their programs. This process of evaluation and improvement is what funders should value and not use the Standards as a measurement tool to withhold funding or cut programs. The Standards help funders and policymakers establish clear expectations for all stakeholders and a common language to assist in policy development.

K–12 Educators. The Quality Standards help K–12 educators to understand the key elements of high-quality programs and provide a common language for partnership. These Standards provide principals and superintendents a guide to reinforce and advance key priorities. Quality afterschool programs drive student achievement, and school leaders can incorporate quality afterschool programming into plans to improve academic outcomes.

Higher Education. The Quality Standards can assist higher education and training institutions in designing content for courses related to youth development providers and in choosing strategic partners for research initiatives.

Next Steps

ACT Now and its partners anticipate developing additional supports and resources over time as stakeholders share their feedback. The Standards are just the first step in the process of helping provide resources to the afterschool community in order to increase quality and improve outcomes. Although the Resource Guide at the back of this document will help providers to take a first step into understanding and implementing the Standards, it is not an exhaustive list of tools and does not provide exact methods for how to implement every Indicator. In the coming year, we will release a more thorough Resource Guide, which will provide a much more in depth tool to assist providers in implementing the Standards. You will be able to find the completed guide on our website: www.actnowillinois.org.

ACT Now is also in the process of developing an Assessment Tool to pair with Standards. This Assessment Tool will allow programs to gauge their progress in implementing the Standards, help programs to determine their strengths and weaknesses, help programs to prioritize areas for improvement, and assist programs in forming a long-term plan to create a quality program that achieves positive outcomes.

QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL
PROGRAMS INCREASE
POSITIVE OUTCOMES

**Quality afterschool programming
provides a chance to build on
school day learning by explaining
academic concepts through
hands-on activities.**

Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards[1] Core Areas

1   INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

The physical environment in which a program operates is a foundation for the youth's experience in a program. Indoor and outdoor environments should be able to adequately accommodate all program activities.

Program Standard 1

The program's indoor environment meets the needs of all youth and staff.

QUALITY INDICATORS

1.1   The environment can safely and comfortably accommodate the various activities offered and/or can be re-arranged to meet the various needs of the program (e.g., spaces for physical games, creative arts, individual/quiet work, and eating/socializing).[2, 3, 4, 5]

1.2   The program provides adequate and convenient storage space for equipment, materials, and personal possessions of youth and staff.[6]

1.3   The building adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessibility or there is a plan to ensure the program is accessible for individuals with disabilities when the building is not ADA accessible.

1.4   The program includes a visibly designated area for staff to hold private or sensitive conversations with youth and parents/guardians without interruptions.

1.5   The environment is designed to promote youth work and interests, allowing youth to take initiative and ownership of their activities.[7]

Program Standard 2

The program's outdoor environment is safe and meets the needs of all youth.
(If applicable, as some facilities may not have access to outdoor space.)

QUALITY INDICATORS

2.1   The outdoor environment is suitable for a wide variety of activities, including physical activity, group games, and individual play (see endnotes 1 and 2).[8]

2.2   The program has an alternative plan if an outdoor environment is inaccessible due to inclement weather or other external factors.

2.3   The outdoor equipment (both permanent and temporary) is safe and well-maintained. There is a procedure in place for regularly documenting the safety and maintenance of equipment.

2.4   The outdoor spaces are designed to engage youth in physical activity and to broaden youth exposure to play experiences.

2   SAFETY, HEALTH, AND NUTRITION

Ensuring the physical safety and security of youth and staff is a necessary foundation for all programs. The Standards in this section outline the minimum requirements for safe physical environments and adequate staff supervision, as well as Standards for promoting healthy environments.

Program Standard 3

The program protects the health and safety of all youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

3.1   Indoor and outdoor facilities are clean, and there are no observable safety or health hazards.[9]

3.2   The environment meets or exceeds local and state health and safety codes.[10]

3.3   Heat, ventilation, noise level, and light in the indoor environment are kept at comfortable levels and can be adjusted.[11]

3.4   The program has a written policy in place for regularly checking the safety and maintenance of the indoor and outdoor program environment and equipment.

3.5   The program provides adequate supplies and facilities for hand washing.[12]

3.6   First aid kits are stocked and available at all times.[13]

3.7   The program is located in a safe place, and a process is in place regarding how youth enter and exit the program's facilities.[14]

3.8   The program has clearly outlined procedures to ensure the safety of youth and adults in an outdoor environment during program hours.

Program Standard 4

Youth are carefully supervised to maintain safety, and there are clear protocols for responding to emergency situations.

QUALITY INDICATORS

4.1   The program has clearly outlined procedures for emergencies including, but not limited to fire, natural disasters, and lockdowns. Staff and youth are trained in emergency procedures.[15, 16]

4.2   The program has clearly outlined procedures for staff if youth are injured or become ill during a program, including notification of parents/guardians as appropriate *(see endnote 9)*.

4.3   Systems are in place to protect youth from harm. Staff provide appropriate supervision for youth according to youth ages, abilities, needs, and the level of risk involved in activities *(see endnote 18)*.

4.4   Staff have a system for knowing where youth are at all times, especially when they move from one place to another or use the restroom.

4.5   Staff note when youth arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave as appropriate. There is a system in place to keep unauthorized individuals from taking youth from the program.

4.6   Staff notify families regarding issues that could impact the health and safety of the youth in the program *(see endnote 18)*.

Program Standard 5

Staff work to protect the health of all youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

5.1   Staff protect youth from potential hazards including but not limited to the following: caustic or toxic art materials and cleaning agents, medications, hot liquids, and overexposure to heat or cold.

5.2   Staff are trained in CPR and first aid prior to working with youth.

5.3   Staff model, teach, and promote health and hygiene practices, including hand washing, especially after using the toilet or before preparing food.[17]

5.4   Staff are made aware in a systemized way of the individual health needs of youth (e.g., allergies or chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes) and modify activities or meals to accommodate health needs.[18]

5.5   If the provider dispenses medication, staff should ensure the following:

- *Medications are secured in locked cabinets out of the reach of youth.*
- *Medication dispensation is recorded daily as to dose, time, and by whom administered.*
- *Records are kept current and easily accessible to staff.*
- *Directions for dispensing medication are current and on file.*
- *Consent forms are on file permitting staff to administer medications.*

5.6   The program provides current documentation showing that the program has met the state and/or local health guidelines and/or regulations.

5.7   No use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs is allowed in the program.

Program Standard 6

If the program serves food, it meets the following indicators.

QUALITY INDICATORS

6.1   The program serves healthy and nutritious foods.[19]

6.2   Drinking water is readily available at all times.[20]

6.3   The amount, type of food, and schedule of snacks/meals are appropriate for the ages and sizes of youth.

6.4   Food preparation and storage adheres to local, state, and federal regulations for food safety. All food is kept in sealed containers and stored in closed cabinets or storage closets.

6.5   Food allergy information is posted and readily available to staff along with action steps to address food allergy reactions.

3   ADMINISTRATION

The program has sound administrative practices supported by well-defined and documented policies and procedures that meet the needs of staff and youth.

Program Standard 7

Program policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of all youth and families in the community.

QUALITY INDICATORS

7.1   A written mission statement sets forth the program's philosophy and goals and is available to all stakeholders.[21]

7.2   The program makes itself affordable to all families by using community resources.

7.3   The program's hours of operation are based on families' needs and the agency's capacity.

Program Standard 8

The administration provides sound management of the program.

QUALITY INDICATORS

8.1   Financial management of the program supports the program's goals.

8.2   Financial management of the program supports professional development (PD) opportunities for staff.[22]

8.3   Administration oversees the recruitment and retention of program staff.

8.4   Systems are in place for the director to involve the staff and board in long-term planning.

8.5   Systems are in place for the director to involve staff, youth, and families in decision making.[23]

8.6   Administrators include staff, youth, and families in ongoing evaluation activities, aiming for continuous improvement in all areas of the program.

Program Standard 9

The program develops and implements a system for promoting continuous quality improvement.

QUALITY INDICATORS

9.1   The program creates and maintains a culture that promotes excellence and continuous quality improvement and focuses on achieving positive program outcomes.[24]

9.2   The program has goals and outcomes that are aligned with its mission and conducts ongoing monitoring.[25, 26, 27]

9.3   The program works with key stakeholders, including staff, youth, families, and the community, to collect and analyze data relevant to desired goals and outcomes.[28, 29]

9.4   The program communicates goals and outcomes to key audiences and stakeholders, including staff, youth, families, and the community, and works to make any needed improvements.[30]

Program Standard 10

Program policies and procedures are in place to protect the safety of all youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

10.1 Staff, youth, and families know what to do in case of emergencies.

10.2 The program has established policies to transport youth safely; the program complies with all legal requirements for vehicles and drivers.

10.3 Staff plan for different levels of supervision according to the level of risk involved in an activity.

10.4 Written polices exist, and regular drills are scheduled and implemented to prepare for potential accidents and emergencies.

10.5 Weapons are prohibited on the program site, and there is a policy/procedure in place to handle incidents involving weapons brought to the site.

Program Standard 11

Staff receive appropriate support to make their work experience positive.

QUALITY INDICATORS

11.1 The program has a plan in place to offer the best possible wages and working conditions in an effort to retain quality staff.

11.2 Staff receive benefits, including health insurance and other benefits in accordance with state law.

11.3 Staff are given ample time to discuss their concerns regarding the program with the appropriate supervisor(s).

11.4 Staff receive continuous supervision and feedback that promote personal development and positive outcomes, including written performance reviews on a regular basis.

Program Standard 12

The program maintains personnel records of all staff.

QUALITY INDICATORS

12.1 Personnel records are kept up to date and contain hiring documents, results of background checks, emergency contact information, job descriptions, records of training and certification(s), performance evaluations, and when applicable, health information.

12.2 Access to personnel records is limited to authorized staff on a need-to-know basis, and personnel records remain confidential.

12.3 Staff may review, add, and correct information contained in their records, in accordance with applicable law.

12.4 Personnel files are maintained and disposed of in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Program Standard 13

Files of youth contain accurate and sufficient information and are properly maintained.

QUALITY INDICATORS

13.1 Authorized program staff maintain and keep files for all youth in the program.

13.2 Files of youth comply with all legal requirements and contain essential information, including registration forms; emergency contact information; information about special needs, including medical needs; copies of all signed permission or consent forms; authorizations for pick up; accident report forms; and, if applicable, medication permission forms.

13.3 Files of youth are maintained and disposed of in a manner that protects privacy and confidentiality.

13.4 Access to confidential files meets legal requirements in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Program Standard 14

Staff/youth ratios and group sizes permit the staff to meet the needs of youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

14.1 Staff/youth ratios vary according to the ages and abilities of youth.[31]

14.2 The program provides a plan to provide adequate staff coverage in case of emergencies.

14.3 Substitute staff are used to maintain ratios when regular staff are absent.

14.4 Volunteers must complete the appropriate training and orientation to be considered in the staff to student ratio.

4   PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

The program recruits and retains high quality staff and volunteers who are focused on creating a positive learning environment, and provide ongoing professional development based on assessed staff needs.

Program Standard 15

Staff are professionally qualified to work with all youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

15.1 All staff, subcontractors, and volunteers have undergone appropriate background checks and child abuse clearances in accordance with program policies.[32]

15.2 Staff have the appropriate education and experience to work with school-age youth.[33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38]

15.3 Education, training, and experience of key program staff are appropriate to the level of responsibility assigned.[39]

15.4 Staff are trained to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.[40]

Program Standard 16

Staff are given an orientation to the job before working with youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

16.1 A written job description that outlines responsibility to youth, families, and the program is reviewed with each staff member.

16.2 Written program policies and procedures, including emergency procedures and confidentiality policies, are reviewed with staff.[41]

16.3 New staff are given a comprehensive orientation to the program philosophy, routines, and practices *(see endnote 40)*.

Program Standard 17

The training needs of the staff are assessed, and training is relevant to assigned responsibilities as provided.

QUALITY INDICATORS

17.1 The agency provides ongoing training and professional development.[42, 43, 44, 45]

17.2 The agency conducts an informal assessment of staff training needs.

17.3 Staff receive training appropriate to their positions and responsibilities regarding working with families and relating to youth in ways that promote positive development.[46]

17.4 Administrators receive training in program management and staff supervision.[47]

17.5 Staff receive training in arranging the program environment and designing and implementing activities to support program goals.[48, 49]

17.6 Staff receive training in the promotion of safety, health, and nutrition to youth *(see endnote 9)*.

17.7 Administrators and staff receive training in cultural competency *(see endnote 9)*.

17.8 Staff receive training and certifications required by all funding sources.

5   FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Meaningful family and community engagement are based on the premise that families, program staff, and community members share responsibility for the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development of youth. Family and community engagement occurs when there is an ongoing, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership. Family and community partnerships are fostered through a deliberate process that is embraced throughout the program and beyond.

Standard 18

The program has a systemic approach and structure for family and community engagement.

QUALITY INDICATORS

18.1 A jointly developed vision for family and community engagement is shared and integrated into the program policies and practices.[50]

18.2 The program develops and implements an effective family and community engagement system on an ongoing basis that is mindful of diverse school-communities and responsive to youth and family needs and assets.[51]

18.3 The program monitors, evaluates, and shares community and family engagement outcomes through an ongoing data collection system. This includes but is not limited to staff requesting feedback and participation from families regarding program planning.[52]

18.4 Program partners and staff build their capacity to support youth learning and healthy development by leveraging partnerships with families to improve youth outcomes, engaging with parent organizations, and regarding families as valuable sources of knowledge and information to enhance curriculum and instruction.[53]

18.5 The program develops partnerships and professional relationships with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community that further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of the youth and families they serve.

18.6 The program connects families with specific community resources to assist in meeting the needs of youth and families *(see endnote 9)*.

Standard 19

The program builds a welcoming environment that is responsive to youth and family needs.

QUALITY INDICATORS

19.1 Staff have developed trusting relationships with families and community members.[54]

19.2 Staff share student accomplishments with his / her family.

Standard 20

Staff engage in ongoing and meaningful two-way communication with families to support youth learning and healthy development.

QUALITY INDICATORS

20.1 The program and staff serve as liaisons among schools, families, and community stakeholders.[55]

20.2 Program staff maintain an ongoing relationship with school staff and community stakeholders.[56]

20.3 The program works to increase family, staff, and youth knowledge of community resources.

20.4 The program promotes civic engagement opportunities for families and youth in the community.

Standard 21

A quality program develops, nurtures, and maintains strong relationships with community organizations to fully support youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

21.1 Program staff maintain an ongoing relationship with community stakeholders.[57]

21.2 The program promotes civic engagement opportunities for families and youth in the community.

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6   YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAMMING, AND ACTIVITIES

The program staff acts in partnership with youth to create a high-quality learning environment and implements age-appropriate curricula and program activities that adhere to the typical benchmarks of growth and development and meets the multiple developmental needs of children and youth.

Program Standard 22

Staff encourages all youth to make thoughtful and responsible decisions.

QUALITY INDICATORS

22.1 Staff assist youth without taking control and encourage them to take leadership roles.[58]

22.2 Staff encourage youth to think through their options and weigh the pros and cons before arriving at a decision.

22.3 Staff empower youth to exercise their voice.[59]

22.4 Staff encourage youth input through structured opportunities to influence the format or content of the program based on their interest, preference, and or satisfaction.[60]

Program Standard 23

Programs provide flexible and supportive activities for all youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

23.1 The daily schedule is flexible and provides structure.[61, 62, 63]

23.2 The program allows enough time to complete activities to ensure smooth transitions.

23.3 The program allows opportunities for youth to engage in a combination of individual and group tasks, usually at their own pace.[64]

23.4 The program provides the right amount of support and challenge to meet the cognitive, physical, and emotional needs of the youth.[65, 66]

Program Standard 24

The program is intentional about creating a positive afterschool climate that is emotionally and physically safe and that supports and accelerates student academic, social, and emotional learning.

QUALITY INDICATORS

24.1 The program makes connections to school-day learning and is aligned with relevant standards to promote academic, social, and emotional learning.[67]

24.2 The program establishes connections with schools and families about youth academic, social, and emotional needs and learning goals *(see endnotes 9, 51, and 66)*.[68, 69, 70]

24.3 The program makes connections between learning activities and real-life applications that are relevant and clear to the participants, families, and staff.[71]

24.4 The program provides tools and resources for families to reinforce and/or expand on the academic, social, and emotional learning opportunities provided by the program.[72]

24.5 The program communicates with families about any academic, physical, social, emotional, or behavioral concerns in a timely manner.

24.6 The program has scheduled times and provides quiet places for academic support and social and emotional learning.

24.7 The program uses active, meaningful, and engaging learning methods (including, for example, service learning) that promote collaboration amongst youth.[73]

24.8 The program expands youth horizons by building on interests, talents, and skills that are unique to each youth.

24.9 The program helps inspire and prepare youth for success in school, higher education, and careers.[74, 75]

24.10 The program's goals are linked to learning skills that prepare youth for the 21st century.[76]

Program Standard 25

Staff relate to all youth in positive ways.

QUALITY INDICATORS

25.1 Staff treat youth with respect and listen to what they have to say.[77]

25.2 Staff create a welcoming, emotionally safe, and comfortable environment for youth.[78]

25.3 Staff respond to youth with respect and without bias.[79]

25.4 Staff engage with all youth.[80]

25.5 Staff encourage youth to establish rules for maintaining an environment that is free from bias and is respectful *(see endnote 65)*.[81, 82, 83, 84, 85]

Program Standard 26

There are sufficient materials to support program activities.

QUALITY INDICATORS

26.1 Materials are complete and in good condition.[86, 87]

26.2 There are enough materials for the number of youth in the program *(see endnote 86)*.[88]

26.3 Materials are developmentally appropriate for the age range of the youth in the program.[89]

Program Standard 27

Program activities and curricula integrate a variety of areas (e.g., recreation and fitness, fine arts, academic support, life skills, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and personal growth and development), ensuring that the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and creative domains are addressed in a comprehensive manner.

QUALITY INDICATORS

27.1 Activities and the curricula are in line with the authentic and individual learning styles, abilities, and interests of youth in the program *(see endnote 88)*.[90]

27.2 Activities and curricula are well suited to the age range of youth in the program.[91, 92]

27.3 Activities and curricula serve diverse youth and their families with cultural competence *(see endnote 9)*.

27.4 Activities and curricula reflect best practices in the field of youth development, 21st century skills, and are research-based.[93]

7   PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

Quality afterschool programs create structures for formal and ongoing communication, collaboration, and information sharing with school staff to strengthen continuity around student learning. A program has its staff work closely with school staff to ensure academic components and activities are aligned with and complement school standards, curricula, and the continuous school improvement planning process.

Program Standard 28

The program maintains two-way/reciprocal communication with school-day staff to monitor academic and behavioral progress of youth.

QUALITY INDICATORS

28.1 Program staff maintain communication with school-day educators and administration to identify youth needs and monitor progress.[94]

28.2 Program staff build partnerships with school staff *(see endnotes 55 and 66)*.

Program Standard 29

School-day and afterschool programs collaborate on curriculum planning and development to strengthen continuity around student learning and development.

QUALITY INDICATORS

29.1 Program staff actively pursue opportunities to collaborate with and support the school's improvement processes.

29.2 Program staff incorporate programming that integrates and complements school-day activities *(see endnote 66)*.

29.3 Program staff understand school-day curriculum and what youth are doing during regular school-day hours *(see endnote 66)*.

Program Standard 30

The program staff coordinates effective use of services and programs toward aligned goals.

QUALITY INDICATORS

30.1 The program staff maintain communication with the school principal and administration to align youth/school goals with program goals.

30.2 The program staff actively pursue an ongoing commitment of resources (e.g., classroom environment, bulletin boards, storage space, computer facilities, and site coordinator's office) from school principal and classroom teachers.[95]