

Using a Team Approach to Assess Your Program

A. Intro:

This guide will help you use a team approach to assess your program.

Why is a team approach helpful?

- It should give you a better picture of how your program is really doing.
- It should help people who give input feel welcome and a part of the program.

If your program has more than one site, you can take on this process site by site or as a whole.

This process may seem daunting, but this guide should help you take it on step by step and have success!

The ideas in this guide are suggestions. You should feel free to adjust the process to make it work for your program.

B. Putting together an Assessment Team:

Your first step is to recruit Assessment Team members. Think about having reps from these groups:

- program administrative staff
- non-administrative staff
- parents/guardians
- program youth, if they are in middle school or high school
- board members, if this applies to your program
- school principals/staff or other partners, if this applies to your program

People should see the reps as real representatives of their group. The input of the reps should reflect the ideas of the people they represent and not just their own ideas.

When putting together your Assessment Team, you'll have to think about a few questions:

- Will there be a max number of team members or reps from each group?
- Will everyone who wants to serve on the team be allowed? Can anyone be turned away?
- Who will choose or appoint the team members?

Once your Assessment Team is set, it's a good idea to hold an intro meeting. Make sure all team members are clear on how to use the Assessment Tool and what the role of the Assessment Team is.

(See part D in this guide for more about the role of the Assessment Team.)

Feel free to add team members as you go through the rest of the process.

C. Getting Input from Others:

You will have the best sense of what people think about your program if you devote time and care to finding out.

This includes youth, families, staff, and partners.

The more people from each group you reach, the better your sense will be of how that group as a whole feels -- and the more they will feel a part of the program.

Appendix Parts A, B, and C provide sample surveys and discussion guides.

This collection of tools offers three levels of engagement with the NJ Quality Standards and the assessment process:

1. The very basic survey and discussion guide in Appendix Parts A and B ask questions that relate to the standards, but they do not present the actual standards.
 - Use these to get a sense of people's thoughts about relationships, safety and health, activities, and physical space at the program.
 - The basic discussion guide may be good to use with youth or parents/guardians.
 - The basic survey may be good for parents/guardians who have limited time. It also may be good for youth at a high enough reading level who are shy about sharing thoughts in a group.
2. Appendix Part C has a tool that can be either a survey or a discussion guide. It uses the actual standards but leaves out most of the explanation or elements in each.
 - These may be good for parents/guardians who are at a high reading level or are very engaged in the program. They also may be good for older youth who are at a high reading level or for staff who struggle with the full Assessment Tool.
 - When holding a discussion using the bolded standards, you may want to:
 - Have the full NJ Quality Standards (and glossary) on hand in case people want more details about one of the standards.
 - Offer the full Assessment Tool to people who want to fill it out on their own after the discussion.
3. The Assessment Tool uses the whole of the standards, including the full explanation or all the elements in each.
 - Give out the full Assessment Tool for people to fill out on their own.
 - This may be a good option for program staff or board members. It also may be good for parents/guardians who are at a very high reading level and are very engaged in the program. And it may be good for staff from the school(s) or other partners you work with, if this applies.
 - You may want to gather people to discuss or use the full Assessment Tool as a group. If you do this, you may want to tackle one or two categories at a time.

You'll have to decide what method you think is best for getting input from each group of people.

Also consider reaching out one-on-one to some people. For example, you could reach out to:

- youth who are shy about sharing thoughts in a group but not able to fully express their thoughts in writing.
- youth with special needs or their family members to make sure you get their input.
- parents/guardians, staff, or others you know had a problem with something in the program.
- the principal at the school where your program is, if this applies.

A few ideas about logistics:

- Remind parents/guardians that you welcome “drop-in” visits to observe the program.
- Remind people who don’t spend a lot of time at the program that they should observe different parts of the program and different days or times to get a fuller picture. Help people such as school staff or other partners set up multiple visits.
- Consider running group walk-throughs of the program before giving out surveys or starting a discussion.
- If you hold discussions with parents, set up a few times so people with different schedules can take part.

D. Making Sense of the Findings

If a lot of people have given input, then making sense of the findings is the main role of the team. The end goal is a single set of ratings on the Assessment Tool that best captures all the input.

Think about taking these steps:

- Review discussion or survey results and choose an overall rating for the standards on the Assessment Tool. For example, did people's input suggest a rating of 1, 4, or something in between for each standard?
- Review the results of any Assessment Tools that people filled out. You could average the ratings for each standard, or you could give more weight to the input of one group of people for a particular standard. An example is the input of staff on professional development opportunities.
- Find points where people didn't agree. Are there any points where people who gave input had very different ideas from each other about how the program is doing?
- Discuss the points where people didn't agree. Why do you think people didn't agree? Does one group have more knowledge of the topic than the other? Were people maybe reading the standard in different ways or looking at different parts of it? Why might different people have very different experiences with parts of the program? After you discuss these questions, make your best judgment as a team about the rating that seems best.
- Come up with a single set of ratings on the Assessment Tool. It should be the Assessment Team's best attempt to capture the findings from all the input. This is the set of ratings that the program should use when starting its action plan.

Check out the Action Plan guide in this booklet for tips on writing an action plan based on your assessment!