



## New Jersey Quality Standards for Afterschool Section II: The Standards



### Indoor and Outdoor Environment

The program's indoor and outdoor environments are set up to facilitate youth development, play, and learning, as well as general program success.

#### **Indoor Environment:**

##### **1. The indoor space is welcoming and [youth-centered](#).**

- a. The space is clean and organized.
- b. The space is well-lit.
- c. Equipment is appropriate for the size of the youth in the program.
- d. The space reflects the interests of the youth.  
*(Note: This may not be possible, depending on the degree of control the program has over this.)*
- e. The space displays the work of the youth.  
*(Note: This may not be possible, depending on the degree of control the program has over this.)*
- f. Youth can safely access materials, such as books and games, independently.

##### **2. There is adequate indoor space for activities.**

- a. Space is large enough to accommodate all youth and activities.
- b. There are appropriate spaces for the different kinds of activities offered and single multi-purpose rooms are divided into defined spaces. For example, there is a large space for sports or dance, a quiet and well-lit space for homework, and relaxing [soft space](#).

##### **3. There is adequate space for storage.**

- a. Storage space is lockable.
- b. There is space for program materials and equipment.
- c. There is space for staff to store personal items.
- d. There is space for youth to leave jackets and backpacks.

##### **4. There is a written contingency plan.**

The administration has a written contingency plan to implement as many of these standards as possible, in the case that the program is temporarily displaced.

#### **Outdoor Environment:**

##### **1. Youth spend adequate program time outdoors.**

Youth have an opportunity to spend at least 30 minutes outdoors for every 3-hour block of time.

*(Note: Exceptions may be necessary due to the weather, the special health needs of an individual youth, or circumstances that make the program unable to provide safe outdoor space. Programs should find other ways to access the outdoors in these situations. For*



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*example, the program may provide safe group transport to, and supervision at, a local public park.)*

- 2. There is a variety of outdoor spaces, equipment, and materials.**
  - a. There is access to a variety of outdoor spaces. For example, there is access to open space to run and protected space for quiet play and socializing.
  - b. There is access to a variety of outdoor equipment and materials.
  - c. Small and large equipment and/or materials for outdoor play are age appropriate and developmentally appropriate.
  
- 3. Storage for outdoor equipment and materials is convenient for children and youth.**
  - a. Youth can access equipment and materials easily.
  - b. Storage for outside equipment and materials is close to the outdoor play area or readily accessible.
  
- 4. Staff are actively engaged with children playing outdoors.**
  - a. There are both [staff-directed](#) and [youth-directed](#) outdoor activities.
  - b. Staff encourage youth engagement outdoors using a variety of strategies, including [peer support](#) and non-verbal communication such as with objects, actions, and pictures.
  - c. Staff maintain [adequate supervision](#) of youth while outdoors.
  
- 5. The program enhances an appreciation for nature and the outdoors.**
  - a. There are opportunities for children and youth to discover nature.
  - b. The program links outdoor play to experiential learning. For example, programs may incorporate gardening, nature journaling, and outdoor STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) activities.
  - c. Staff occasionally move traditional indoor activities outside, weather-permitting. Examples are snack, arts and crafts, and reading/stories.
  - d. The program brings the outdoors indoors, especially when outdoor play is impossible. Examples are bringing in a bird's nest or shells, tending to a plant, and opening windows.

| <b><u>Cross-References</u></b>                             |                                 |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Subject</b>                                             | <b>Category</b>                 | <b>Standard Number</b> |
| Safety and health in the indoor and outdoor environment    | Safety and Environmental Health | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 |
| Physical space accessibility for people with special needs | Special Needs/The Whole Child   | 7                      |



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| <b><u>Licensing</u></b>           |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Subject</b>                    | <b>NJ Licensing Section</b> |
| Playground equipment requirements | 10:122-5.2 (b) 7            |