

# **New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool**

A Project of  
NJSACC: The Statewide Network for  
New Jersey's Afterschool Communities



**Volume 3**  
**September 2018**



New Jersey School Age Care Coalition:  
The Statewide Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities



# New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool

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# New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool

## Introduction

### What are the New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool?

New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool (NJQSA) – together with the Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form and the Self-Assessment Tool Rubric, are resources which afterschool and out-of-school time programs can use for self-evaluation. Utilization of the standards and accompanying tools should be a part of the process of continuous quality program improvement.

### About the NJQSA (3rd Edition):

- The NJQSA are organized into seven (7) categories:
  - Administration
  - Human Relationships
  - Safety and Environmental Health
  - Indoor and Outdoor Environment
  - Programming and Activities
  - Special Needs/The Whole Child
  - Healthy Behavior: Nutrition and Physical Activity
  
- The **Standards** for each category are numbered and in bold font. The **Standard Elements** are listed under the bold heading with letters (a, b, c, etc.). The standard elements will help you understand how to interpret the standard and important details to pay attention to.

The term "**afterschool program**," is being used here but these standards are appropriate for before-school programs, summer programs, out-of-school time programs and other ELOs.

**ELO** stands for "**Extended Learning Opportunity**" and refers to the wide range of programs that seek to expand the opportunities that youth have to learn outside the regular school day.



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The layout of each category is as follows:

## Safety and Environmental Health

7  
Categories

There are safeguards in place to protect youth from getting a major injury or illness while at the program and to provide for their basic comforts.

75  
Standards

- 5. The program is prepared for emergencies.
  - a. The program has a “go kit,” which contains essential information and items to take quickly in case of an emergency evacuation. The kit should be portable and reachable in the case of an evacuation.

228  
Standard  
Elements

- There may be areas where a topic fits into multiple categories. In these cases, the topic appears in detail in one (1) category, and the other categories include cross- references to assist in making the connections.

*For example:*

<b><u>Cross-References {Administration Category}</u></b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Standard Number</b>
Professional development in specific areas	Special Needs/The Whole Child	3
	Healthy Behavior: Physical Activity and Nutrition, Physical Activity	4
	Healthy Behavior: Physical Activity and Nutrition, Nutrition	5
	Programming and Activities	12

- The NJQSA is a companion to the New Jersey Licensing Regulations for Child Care, as developed by the Office of Licensing at the Department of Children and Families. The regulations outline the minimum requirements to operate legally in New Jersey, while the Quality Standards reflect best practices. Although public schools are exempt from licensing, they should follow the licensing regulations to ensure program quality. Within each category, cross-references have been included where the licensing regulations and the standards are related.



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### Other Documents Included in New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool

- The Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form: to assess programming in all seven (7) standards categories.
- Writing an Action Plan Based on Your Assessment: a sample action plan and guidance in the development of an action plan to improve program quality.
- Utilizing a Team Approach to Assess Your Program: guidance and the benefits to implementing a team approach when assessing your program.
- Glossary: defines terms in the Quality Standards that could have more than one understanding (*note: glossary terms are in blue throughout this packet. For example: "The administration effectively manages the procedures, policies, staff, and other elements of the program framework that enable a high level of program quality."*)
- Appendix: provides sample surveys and discussion guides.
- Resources: provides resources in a variety of topical areas.
- Self-Assessment Tool Rubric: a companion document to the Self-Assessment Tool providing detailed explanations of performance levels in each of the standards and elements. The Rubric should be used to provide clarification in the rating scores of the standards, particularly when utilized by multiple program stakeholders. The rubric can be found on the NJSACC website at: <http://www.njsacc.org/qualityStandards/assessmentRubric.php> .
- Afterschool Program Quality Checklist: the most recent resource added to the Quality Standards, identifies and prioritizes the Standards most critical to program start-up and starting a new afterschool program. The Checklist should be used alongside the Quality Standards, the Self-Assessment Tool and Rubric. The Quality Checklist can be downloaded at <http://www.njsacc.org/qualityStandards/pdfs/QSAQualityChecklistforNewProgramsFINAL.pdf> .

### How to Use the Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form:

The Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form provides ratings/scores for each standard element representing program performance levels ranging from 1 to 4.

Each standard rating indicates the following:

- 1: "Needs improvement"
- 2: "Some progress made/Approaching standard"
- 3: "Satisfactory/Meets standard", and
- 4: "Excellent/Exceeds standard."

**Note: We use the term "youth" throughout this packet to include all K-12 program youth from young children through teenagers.**



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"N/A" or Not-Applicable represents areas that may not apply to a program because the content in the standard is not offered.

- *For example: a program may not provide transportation or may not have computers and therefore does not implement policies to regulate computer use.*

"N/R" or Not-Rated represents situations where unforeseen circumstances prevent an activity that is provided by the program from being observed.

- *For example: outside play could not be observed due to inclement weather.*

- The next column encourages raters to provide examples or a rationale to support scores/ratings.
- When using the Self-Assessment Tool, rate each standard element separately. The standard elements will help provide comprehension of how to interpret each individual standard and important elements of each standard.
- Refer to "Utilizing a Team Approach" for tips on how to make the evaluation process collaborative. A collaborative effort may include a committee of program stakeholders (for example, staff, parents, youth) leading the process or conducting discussion groups and distributing surveys to stakeholders based on the standards before formally completing the Self-Assessment Tool.
- ***NEW!*** NJSACC now has a Survey Monkey version of the Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form. If your organization would like to use the survey as part of your assessment process, please contact Lee McDermott Schaefer at [lee@njsacc.org](mailto:lee@njsacc.org) and we will transfer a copy of the survey to your account. *NOTE: A premium Survey Monkey account is required.*

### How Did NJSACC Develop New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool?

- NJSACC (The Statewide Network for NJ's Afterschool Communities), with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the New Jersey Department of Education, convened a group of afterschool leaders to answer the question, "What does quality look like in an afterschool program?"
- Committee members represented public agencies and private organizations; large and small afterschool programs; programs from the north, central, and southern regions of the state; and programs in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Participants included representatives from the following agencies, organizations, and afterschool programs: The NJ Department of Education, The YMCA (State Alliance, Fanwood-Scotch Plains, and West Essex), The Salvation Army, Archway Programs – Just Kids, Haddonfield Child Care, Academic Works (Trenton), Office of Licensing at the NJ Department of Children and Families,



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Office of School Linked Services at the Department of Children and Families, Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), Mt. Olive Child Care & Learning Center, NJ Principals and Supervisors Association, Rutgers University-Camden Campus, DASH/Impact 21 (Rahway), Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen, and La Casa de Don Pedro.

- The committee met and communicated over the course of 18 months to discuss and define all aspects of quality afterschool programming. To do this, we relied heavily on the years of experience and the expertise of the committee members and the NJSACC staff. Additionally, they carefully reviewed Quality Standards developed by other states as well as those from national organizations, including the National Afterschool Association's National Afterschool Standards, the Council on Accreditation's After School Standards, and the NIOST Healthy Out-of-School Time Standards.
- Views of afterschool quality that the committee members brought to the table are reflected in a few key reports, research studies, and platforms. To find these, refer to the "Sources and Further Reading" section at the end of this introduction.
- A draft of NJQSA was posted on the NJSACC website during the summer of 2012 and opened it for feedback from all of the network members and partners across the state.
- The first edition of the Quality Standards was released in November 2012. In 2013, a diverse group of afterschool programs throughout the state utilized this resource and shared their experiences with NJSACC. After review, the feedback was incorporated and the Second (2<sup>nd</sup>) Edition of the Quality Standards was released in the Fall of 2013.

### Note for Parents/Guardians:

This tool was developed for use by programs. However, parents and guardians may use the standards to learn more about what to look for in an afterschool program. Ask your child's program staff if they use the NJ Quality Standards for Afterschool and Self-Assessment Tool.

### Sources and Further Reading:

- I. 40 Development Assets (for youth ages 3-18), Search Institute: <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/>
- II. Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, National Research Council, 2002: [www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=10022](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10022)
- III. Durlak JA, Weissberg RP, Pachan M. A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents, American Journal of Community Psychology, June 2010 (Often referred to as the "SAFE" study)



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- IV. National Afterschool Association (NAA) Platform: <https://naaweb.org/>
- V. Vandell DL, Reisner ER, Brown BB, Pierce KM, Dadisman K, Pechman EM, The Study of Promising After-School Programs: Descriptive Report of the Promising Programs, 2004:  
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