Ohio Afterschool Network

Ohio

Quality Guidelines For Ohio's Afterschool Programs

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Part 1

Introduction

Why Quality Matters in Afterschool Programs

Research consistently has shown that high quality afterschool programs support positive outcomes for children and youth.[1] In addition to keeping children and youth safe and well-supervised, high quality afterschool programs promote:

- Positive work habits;
- Persistence in completing tasks;
- Improved academic performance; and
- Better social skills in relating to peers.

Studies also have found that low quality afterschool programs have a negative impact on program participants.[2]

Parents, providers and funders of afterschool programs agree that quality is important, but identifying the characteristics of a program that define high quality has been more challenging. Recent research, however, has made the picture much clearer.

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[1] See "Part 3: Resources" on page 22 for references.

[2] Vandell, D. L., Pierce, K.M., & Dadisman, K. (2005). *Out-of-school settings as a developmental context for children and youth.* In R. V. Kail (Ed.), Advances in child development and behavior (Vol. 33, pp. 43-77). New York: Academic.

THE COST OF QUALITY

While not all of the quality elements defined in these Program Quality Guidelines add to the cost of operating a program, it is important to note that some of the quality elements do. These include:

- Hiring qualified staff;
- Maintaining an appropriate staff-to-participant ratio;
- Providing appropriate opportunities for staff to develop as professionals;
- Scheduling staff to work beyond the hours of program operation so they can plan intentional curricula and activities that meet the goals of the program and connect with schools, parents and other community resources;
- Conducting regular program evaluation and using data to develop a continuous improvement plan; and
- Having program leadership that is fiscally literate, with dedicated time to navigate multiple sources of funding to assure program sustainability.

As the research cited earlier in this document demonstrates, a low quality afterschool program is not necessarily better than no program at all. It is critical that programs budget for and secure funds that enable them to operate high quality programs. This document will serve to inform funders about essential components of quality programs as they make funding choices.

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Note: See "Part 3: Resources" on page 22 for a link to an online cost calculator.

About the Program Quality Guidelines

PURPOSE

The purpose of *Quality Guidelines for Ohio's Afterschool Programs* is to provide clarity and guidance to Ohio's afterschool community regarding quality, answering these questions:

- What does "quality" mean?
- What does quality look like in a program?
- How is quality achieved?

These Program Quality Guidelines are based on research about characteristics of programs that produce positive outcomes for children and youth and help them to grow and develop in healthy ways.

To translate current research findings into a clear, useful tool to help Ohio's afterschool programs achieve high quality, the Ohio Afterschool Network (OAN), with support from the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, undertook the task of creating *Quality Guidelines for Ohio's Afterschool Programs.*

The Program Quality Guidelines were designed to support the diverse array of afterschool program models and providers that serve kindergarten through high school children and youth during out-of-school-time hours. This includes programs that focus on positive youth development; academics; expanded learning opportunities; health, fitness and nutrition; enrichment; prevention; creative expression; workforce preparation or 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Providers include proprietary and nonprofit child care centers, nationally affiliated youth organizations, school districts, faith-based organizations, settlement houses, community recreation centers, health- and prevention-focused organizations, and others.

Because the Program Quality Guidelines have been developed based on current research and best practices in the field of youth development and programming, those who use them to develop and assess afterschool programs can feel confident that they are building and supporting afterschool experiences that further the healthy physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of program participants.

The writing team acknowledges the existing standards and regulations that apply to various systems within Ohio's afterschool field and suggest that the Program Quality Guidelines be used in conjunction with those standards and regulations.

STRUCTURE

The publication, *Quality Guidelines for Ohio's Afterschool Programs* follows a simple structure:

Part 1 – Introduction: This section contains foundational information about the document contents.

Part 2 – Quality Guidelines and Indicators: This section includes six identified, afterschool program practices:

- Programming and Curriculum
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Professionalism
- Program Environment
- Health and Safety
- Administrative Practices

Guidelines are listed for each of the program areas. Each guideline includes a general, descriptive sentence about an important aspect of quality within that area. Indicators for each guideline provide specific, observable practices that exemplify that quality.

Part 3 – Resources: This section provides additional information that can help in the implementation of the guidelines and indicators in a program, including a list of source documents and list of sources for further information.

DEVELOPMENT

The Ohio Afterschool Network's Standards and Quality Committee recruited a diverse pool of afterschool providers and stakeholders to serve on writing teams. More than 25 writing team members met over the course of four months to craft the Program Quality Guidelines. The committee took care to recruit individuals representing a wide range of perspectives in the afterschool field, including programs that serve children and youth of elementary, middle and high school age.

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Consultants from the Afterschool Investments Project (AIP) and the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC) provided technical assistance. A private contractor with extensive experience in child development, and systems that support child development, facilitated the process. The Ohio Department of Education provided funding, with additional support from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Once guidelines were drafted, OAN members provided feedback. Feedback also was solicited from additional providers and stakeholders who were recruited to provide multiple perspectives and expertise in various areas. This feedback was used in making final revisions.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT WORDING

A common understanding of a few key words and phrases used in the Program Quality Guidelines will be helpful to readers:

- **Afterschool Program** – This term encompasses programs that operate before and after school, as well as programs that operate during school vacations and calamity days. It is intended to include a broad array of programs serving children and youth during out-of-school time.

- **Guidelines** – These quality benchmarks are voluntary, so the term "guidelines" is used rather than "standards."

- **Children/youth** – Because this document addresses programs serving all ages from elementary through high school, the term children/youth, along with the term "program participant," is used to represent those enrolled in a program.

- **Programming and Curriculum** – In afterschool settings, program and curriculum refers to the planned activities and experiences intended to support program participants in the achievement of identified outcomes. Outcomes for participants will differ between programs, based on each program's mission.

- **Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)** – Defined by the National Conference of State Legislatures as "an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of initiatives to provide students structured opportunities for academic support and enrichment; extra-curricular activities; mentoring; recreation; character education; and other developmental activities." [3]

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[3] www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/Education/AfterschoolOverviewofAfterschoolsummerlearn/tabid/12875/Default.aspx

USE OF THE GUIDELINES

This document was designed for multiple audiences, including:

Audience	Intended Use of Guidelines
Providers	Providers self-assess program quality, identify areas for improvement, create plan for improving quality.
Parents and youth	Guide selection of appropriate afterschool programming.
Funders	Invest in quality programs and support programs that are working to achieve quality.
Schools	Use in developing and assessing school-based afterschool programs; provide a tool for communication between schools and afterschool programs regarding quality.
Entities considering providing afterschool programs	Use as a blueprint for creating a quality program.
Policy developers	Create and/or support policy that ensures operation of high quality programs throughout the state.
Technical assistance and professional development providers	Inform the development and delivery of trainings and provide technical assistance to help programs achieve quality.
Child and youth advocates	Advocate for safe and enriching afterschool programs and systems that support their operation and expansion.

Acknowledgements

The Ohio Afterschool Network acknowledges the following contributors:

ADDITIONAL THANKS

- The Ohio Department of Education for supporting the development and publication of this document.

- The Ohio Afterschool Network's Standards and Quality Committee for its leadership in the creation of these Program Quality Guidelines.

- The Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association and its member agencies for their work to strengthen afterschool programs in Ohio through technical assistance, program assessments and professional development for providers, and for serving as the fiscal and management agent for OAN.

- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for its support of statewide afterschool networks, including the Ohio Afterschool Network.

- Bob LaVallee, Afterschool Investments Project; and Susan Rohrbough, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center; for providing technical assistance and sharing a national perspective.

- Kathy Reschke, ChildWise Resources, for her facilitation and writing skills.

- The afterschool programs at Whitehall City Schools and Worthington Kindercare for opening their doors and allowing us photograph their wonderful programs in action.

Part 2

Quality Guidelines and Indicators

Area 1: Programming and Curriculum

At the heart of every afterschool program are the experiences and activities that are intentionally designed to support the program's goals for children and youth. Briefly put, it's how program participants spend their time. High quality programs ensure that time is productive and enriching. The program's curriculum encompasses all of the intentionally planned activities in which children and youth can participate that have an intended objective related to participants' well-being, development and/or learning. The curriculum can have a wide variety of child/youth outcomes as goals, depending on the mission of the program and the population it serves. Regardless of intended outcomes, an excellent curriculum will be carefully designed, implemented and assessed to ensure that those outcomes are being attained. Programming is a broader term that goes beyond curricular activities to include aspects of daily experience in the program such as routines, expectations or schedules that combine to shape each child's or youth's whole experience while in the program. These program structures also must be intentionally designed to promote the program mission and goals for children/youth.

GUIDELINE 1.1

Programming/curriculum is child/youth-centered.

Indicators

1.1.1 Program staff members consider all children/youth's ages, interests, needs, learning styles and abilities in planning the program/curriculum and designing the environment.

1.1.2 Staff members engage children/youth in program/curriculum planning and decision making and provide children/youth regular opportunities for feedback.

1.1.3 Staff members and children/youth work together to define and communicate program expectations and guidelines.

1.1.4 All children/youth are provided opportunities to learn and practice skills in personal responsibility, independence, group process, conflict management and leadership.

1.1.5 Activities and experiences that promote youth leadership are incorporated into program components.

GUIDELINE 1.2

Programming/curriculum is developed to meet the unique needs of all children and youth.

Indicators

1.2.1 Programming/curriculum offers high quality, challenging activities for children/youth in one or more of these expanded learning opportunities (ELOs): community service and/or service learning, technology, creative expression, visual and performing arts, fitness, health and/or nutrition, workforce development, life skills, career exploration, personal growth and development and academic support.

1.2.2 Programming/curriculum supports the development of the whole child/youth by addressing individual physical, cognitive, social, emotional and language needs.

1.2.3 Programming/curriculum incorporates the diversity of all children/youth, families and communities.

1.2.4 Programming/curriculum supports school day instruction to bolster student success and supports state and local academic guidelines and benchmarks, as appropriate.

1.2.5 A flexible schedule allows participants and staff the security of predictability as well as the freedom to adapt to unanticipated needs or opportunities.

Area 1: Programming and Curriculum

GUIDELINE 1.3

Staff members are intentional about planning rich and meaningful experiences to enhance learning.

Indicators

1.3.1   The curriculum incorporates evidence-based and recommended practices and strategies.

1.3.2   Opportunities exist for individual, small-group and large-group activities.

1.3.3   Staff members adapt curriculum to accommodate the interests, abilities, and engagement and developmental levels of individual children/youth.

1.3.4   Activities are thoughtfully sequenced to enhance learning and are focused on defined objectives.

1.3.5   Opportunities are provided for children/youth to collaboratively create solutions to problems of concern to them and/or to engage in meaningful and authentic projects.

1.3.6   Staff members intentionally implement strategies for smooth transitions and routines and provide stability without rigidity.

1.3.7   Staff members seek community resources and partners to extend and enhance the curriculum.

GUIDELINE 1.4

Curriculum planning is informed by ongoing, appropriate assessment.

Indicators

1.4.1   Staff members use a variety of authentic assessment strategies and tools (e.g., observation notes) to gauge the effectiveness of curriculum activities in meeting objectives for children/youth.

1.4.2   Staff members are trained in the selection and appropriate use of informal and formal tools for assessing individual children/youth, the learning environment and materials, and individual curricular activities.

1.4.3   Staff members routinely incorporate assessment information into curriculum planning and decision making to ensure that program activities reflect current knowledge about each child/youth.

1.4.4   The gathering, storage, sharing and disposal of assessment documentation follow written procedures that ensure ethical standards of confidentiality.

Area 2: Interpersonal Relationships

Relationships are key to successful afterschool programs. Even the best-designed curriculum and programming must be balanced with equal intentionality regarding the quality and substance of relationships. The relationships between staff and program participants are of great importance in carrying out the mission and goals of a program. However, other relationships also must be supported and strengthened with equal intentionality: relationships between staff and families; relationships among program participants; relationships among staff; and relationships with schools and community partners.

GUIDELINE 2.1

Program staff members engage children/youth in positive ways and intentionally build individual relationships.

Indicators

2.1.1 Staff members respect and accept the languages, cultures and family structures of all children/youth.

2.1.2 Staff members intentionally create a physical and emotional environment that nurtures a sense of belonging in children/youth.

2.1.3 Staff members use positive techniques to redirect inappropriate choices.

2.1.4 Staff members implement strategies to encourage children/youth to accept responsibility for their actions and to identify or negotiate positive solutions to conflict.

2.1.5 Staff members engage with, listen to and respond to all children/youth in a warm, supportive and caring manner using specific, non-evaluative language.

2.1.6 Staff members recognize their potential for influence on the children/youth with whom they work and act as responsible and appropriate role models and mentors.

2.1.7 Staff members maintain physical, emotional and social boundaries appropriate to the age, gender, culture and preferences of each child/youth and are mindful of other factors that would dictate appropriate boundaries, such as individual history and program protocols.

2.1.8 Staff members actively supervise and engage with children/youth throughout the program day.

2.1.9 Staff members respect the perspective of each child/youth and invite the contributions of children/youth in planning activities, setting behavioral expectations and consequences, and solving conflicts.

GUIDELINE 2.2

Opportunities are provided for children/youth to learn, practice and strengthen appropriate social skills and to build a sense of community.

Indicators

2.2.1 Staff members plan a variety of opportunities for children/youth to learn and practice cooperation and negotiation with others.

2.2.2 Staff members support children/youth in making informed, responsible choices that result in positive outcomes.

2.2.3 Staff members guide and encourage children/youth to respect the diversity of all people.

2.2.4 Staff members cultivate, model and support positive peer relationships among children/youth.

Area 2: Interpersonal Relationships

GUIDELINE 2.3

Positive relationships are expected and supported among all people involved with the program to meet the needs of the children/youth.

Indicators

2.3.1 Effective communication is modeled and encouraged among children/youth, program staff, families and stakeholders.

2.3.2 Positive relationships are established and maintained through mutual respect, cooperation and effective conflict resolution.

2.3.3 Diversity of perspectives, abilities, experiences and preferences is acknowledged, accepted and valued.

2.3.4 Effective collaboration among all stakeholders is recognized and pursued as being necessary to achieving the program's vision and goals for children/youth.

2.3.5 Staff members communicate with families concerning their children/youth with sensitivity, respect and confidentiality.

GUIDELINE 2.4

The program consistently and globally reflects a high value for positive relationships.

Indicators

2.4.1 The program encourages and facilitates the development of positive relationships among staff and children/youth.

2.4.2 The program encourages and facilitates the development of positive relationships among families and staff by offering a wide variety of opportunities for meaningful family involvement that take into account diversity among families.

2.4.3 The program encourages and facilitates the development of positive relationships between program staff and school staff by initiating and maintaining multiple avenues of communication and, where applicable, collaboration.

2.4.4 The program encourages and facilitates the development of positive relationships among all stakeholders by encouraging and acknowledging each one's contribution to the development, implementation and evaluation of the program.

2.4.5 The program respects and supports the important role of the family in each child/youth's life; encourages positive relationships between children/youth and their families; and provides support for building positive family relationships by connecting families to community resources and services when appropriate.

Area 3: Professionalism

A key to educating families, communities, policymakers and the public about the value and importance of high quality afterschool programs is to promote professionalism. When a program sets high expectations for professionalism among its staff, everyone benefits. Staff members see the value of their contributions to the healthy development of children and youth; families raise their expectations for quality in afterschool programs; communities and the public grow in appreciation of the contribution that excellent afterschool programs make in supporting the development of healthy, happy, productive citizens; and policymakers gain confidence in the wisdom and necessity of supporting afterschool programs with public dollars.

GUIDELINE 3.1

Program practices guarantee that staff members and volunteers are highly qualified.

Indicators

3.1.1   Staff members are hired based on their competence to perform assigned duties.

3.1.2   Staff members and volunteers are required to participate in orientation sessions that address the program goals, the developmental and individual needs of children/youth, and appropriate strategies for supporting all program participants.

3.1.3   The performance of staff members and volunteers is assessed on a regular basis, ongoing supervisory feedback is integrated into daily work, and participation in training is required and facilitated as appropriate.

3.1.4   Staff members are supported in identifying professional development goals and in pursuing opportunities that support attainment of those goals.

GUIDELINE 3.2

The program engages staff members as active partners.

Indicators

3.2.1   Staff members are treated as professionals and are provided opportunities for meaningful engagement in decision making, planning and evaluation of all aspects of the program.

3.2.2   Staff members are encouraged to share their knowledge and skill with other staff members and/or with the larger afterschool professional community, as appropriate.

GUIDELINE 3.3

Staff members support and fulfill the mission and goals of the program.

Indicators

3.3.1   Staff members are aware of the mission and goals of the program and can identify their roles in fulfilling them.

3.3.2   Staff members articulate the characteristics and impact of high quality afterschool programming to children/youth, families, other afterschool professionals and the greater community.

GUIDELINE 3.4

The program reflects professional respect for staff.

Indicators

3.4.1   The program clearly identifies staff members as professionals to families, volunteers and program visitors.

3.4.2   The program fairly compensates and publicly recognizes staff members for their contributions and achievements.

3.4.3   The program space reflects a professional attitude toward the staff (e.g., separate, designated workspace and restroom for staff members; adult-sized furnishings; storage for personal belongings).

3.4.4   The program makes resources and equipment readily available for staff members to carry out their professional responsibilities (e.g., current curriculum resources and professional periodicals; access to functioning office equipment).

GUIDELINE 3.5

The program encourages and supports staff participation in a professional community.

Indicators

3.5.1   The program makes information about and from professional associations readily available to staff.

3.5.2   The program supports staff members in their participation in professional activities such as advocacy events in the community, professional association meetings and collaborative projects that support the field (e.g., paid time off, paid registration fees).

3.5.3   The program encourages and supports staff members in attending professional conferences; those who attend are encouraged to share the knowledge and resources they gained with other staff members.

3.5.4   The program includes in its budget planning sufficient financial resources to support staff participation in professional activities.

Area 4: Program Environment

Area 4: Program Environment

The environment in which afterschool programming takes place affects children and youth, as well as the kind of programming and the program staff. Space, equipment and materials are among the tools that programs use to achieve high quality programming. When programs thoughtfully design and budget for afterschool environments that align with positive outcomes for children and youth, program participants will have the tools they need to be engaged in meaningful activities, and staff will have the tools they need to support them. Also, when environments are welcoming to all, each family is more likely to feel comfortable with and become involved in the program.

GUIDELINE 4.1

The program environment, space and equipment are designed to meet the development of and learning goals for children/youth.

Indicators

4.1.1 The environment is emotionally and physically welcoming to children/youth and reflects the diversity of the population served.

4.1.2 The environment showcases individual children's/youth's work, frequently changing displays to offer multiple opportunities for each participant to have his or her work exhibited.

4.1.3 Space, equipment and materials are sufficient to support a variety of concurrent individual and collaborative pursuits and are arranged in a way that facilitates individual ownership and respect for the activities and work of others.

4.1.4 Equipment and materials are intentionally selected and incorporated into the curriculum based on their utility in supporting the objectives and goals set for program participants. For example, equipment is selected that facilitates cooperation and collaboration, active participation and a sense of community; encourages and supports extended exploration and creativity; and facilitates independence and personal responsibility appropriate to the age of the participants.

4.1.5 Equipment and materials foster many types and levels of skills and interests to accommodate the current skills and interests of participants, as well as anticipated growth and change.

GUIDELINE 4.2

The program environment reflects respect for families.

Indicators

4.2.1 The program facilities are welcoming to families and are designed to encourage positive interactions among families and program staff members.

4.2.2 The program environment reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of families.

4.2.3 A private, comfortable meeting area is available for meetings between families and staff members.

GUIDELINE 4.3

The program environment provides for individual and personal needs.

Indicators

4.3.1   The expectation is clearly and consistently communicated that each person is responsible for contributing to and maintaining a clean, safe and pleasant environment.

4.3.2   Storage for supplies and materials is sufficient and designed for ease of use.

4.3.3   Staff members and children/youth have access to adequate personal storage and bathrooms and sinks.

4.3.4   When space is shared with another program or user, staff members and children/youth are expected and encouraged to show courtesy and respect in maintaining the environment, particularly at the end of the program day.

Area 5: Health and Safety

These guidelines assume that programs are meeting the minimal health and safety standards, if any, by which they are regulated. Excellent afterschool programs go well beyond the minimum when considering the physical and emotional well-being of each participant. Program administrators and staff members understand that until children and youth have their physical and emotional needs met they are not likely to succeed in activities that require concentration, memory or higher-level thinking skills. Vigilance in addressing risks that may harm participants is an important aspect of quality afterschool programming.

GUIDELINE 5.1

Program policy and staff practices support wellness and the prevention of disease and harm.

Indicators

5.1.1 The program promotes and encourages habits among staff members and children/youth that foster health (e.g., ensuring that clean drinking water is available at all times; teaching and encouraging recommended hand-washing procedures; and encouraging and modeling physical activity).

5.1.2 Snacks and meals are provided for children/youth in sufficient quality and quantity to meet recommended guidelines and in a manner that encourages and models healthy eating habits.

5.1.3 Staff members are aware of the physical safety of the environment and take measures to maintain safety for every child/youth (e.g., providing supervision according to participants' ages, abilities, needs and activities; frequently scanning the environment for hazards).

5.1.4 Relevant medical and health information about each child/youth is updated regularly and is shared with program staff in a manner that maintains ethical standards of confidentiality and ensures that staff members have the information needed to reduce the risk of illness or harm.

GUIDELINE 5.2

Program policy and staff practices ensure an effective and timely response to health or safety concerns.

Indicators

5.2.1 Staff members are aware of common signs of mental, emotional and physical illness or abuse among children and youth and respond according to program policies and procedures that protect privacy and ensure that children/youth and families are connected to community service providers, if necessary.

5.2.2 The administration and storage of medications follows recommended practice and written policy.

5.2.3 Staff members are aware of and follow a procedure for contacting parents, guardians or designated alternative adults in case of illness, accident or emergency.

5.2.4 An emergency preparedness and response plan is written, communicated to families, and regularly rehearsed by program staff and participants.

5.2.5 Adequate medical supplies and equipment are available for emergency use.

GUIDELINE 5.3

Health and wellness practices are sensitive to the diversity of children and families.

Indicators

5.3.1   Health and nutrition information, including program policies, is provided to children/youth and families in a variety of ways, with consideration given to overcoming communication barriers.

5.3.2   Staff and administrators work with families to accommodate the individual health needs and practices of children/youth and families (e.g., food preferences or allergies, cultural dietary or health practices).

5.3.3   Accommodations are made for children/youth with disabilities and special needs, including mental, developmental and physical health concerns.

Area 6: Administrative Practices

High quality cannot be achieved and sustained in an afterschool program unless a solid infrastructure of effective administrative practices is in place. From promoting the big picture to laying out the detailed processes, program administrators provide the roadmap to achieving high quality and the leadership to get there. Administrators stand at the hub of the program, forging positive relationships with program participants, families, staff, community partners, board members and other stakeholders. Effective, knowledge-based administrative practices are the necessary foundation for sustaining high quality programs over time.

GUIDELINE 6.1

The program is guided by a coherent vision/mission and a strategic plan.

Indicators

6.1.1 The program has a written statement of mission and goals that is intentionally embedded in all aspects of the program (e.g., staff orientation, curriculum development, financial planning).

6.1.2 Participants, families, staff and board members are involved in long-term decision making and strategic planning efforts.

6.1.3 A comprehensive, effective marketing strategy is used to promote the agency, its programs, and its value to youth and the community.

GUIDELINE 6.2

Administrative practices reflect that competent staff members are highly valued.

Indicators

6.2.1 A plan for recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified staff is part of the program's overall strategic plan and guides all decision making regarding staffing.

6.2.2 Adequate resources are devoted to supporting ongoing knowledge and skill development of staff and volunteers.

6.2.3 Staff members are provided with professional working conditions and appropriate supervision, support and feedback.

6.2.4 Regular staff meetings are held and staff input is valued, including staff members' assessments of the effectiveness of staff meetings.

6.2.5 A system is in place for assessing staff performance that is unbiased and respectful; includes input from the individual being assessed; identifies strengths as well as areas for improvement; and results in a plan for acquiring focused professional development.

6.2.6 Excellence among staff is recognized and rewarded in meaningful ways.

6.2.7 Staff discipline, grievance and dismissal policies and procedures are fair, consistently applied and clearly communicated to staff.

GUIDELINE 6.3

Well-developed systems for program operation support program goals for children/youth.

Indicators

6.3.1 Program policies/procedures are clearly defined in handbooks for staff, volunteers, families and board members (if applicable), and are regularly reviewed and updated with input from all stakeholders.

6.3.2 Recruitment of program participants is strategically designed to attract children/youth that are most likely to benefit from high quality programming.

6.3.3 Required documentation for program operation (e.g., health certificate, security clearance, insurance) is maintained, where applicable.

6.3.4 A system for collecting and monitoring participant attendance data is in operation.

6.3.5 Complete and current enrollment, registration and medical documentation for all participants is maintained and accessible to authorized individuals.

6.3.6 A well-defined and effective system of communication with all stakeholders is in operation.

6.3.7 Guidelines for family and community involvement are developed, reviewed and regularly updated.

6.3.8 Policies and procedures ensure that only appropriate, qualified staff and volunteers are responsible for program participants.

6.3.9 Written guidelines are in place regarding use and maintenance of facility, including agreements for shared use between the host and the program, when applicable.

GUIDELINE 6.4

Sound fiscal management systems enable the program to meet its goals and fulfill its vision for children/youth.

Indicators

6.4.1 An approved budget that is sufficient to meet the needs of quality programming is adhered to and regularly reviewed and revised.

6.4.2 A system is in place for accurate inventory of supplies and materials and for timely replenishment.

6.4.3 Adequate capacity for the financial management of the program is addressed in the program's business and strategic plans.

6.4.4 The program's strategic plan addresses the need for long-term financial sustainability.

GUIDELINE 6.5

The program has a system for accountability and continuous improvement.

Indicators

6.5.1   Measurable program goals and objectives have been developed that align with the organizational mission and identified needs of the community and the children/youth and families served.

6.5.2   Objective data are used to measure participants' progress toward identified goals.

6.5.3   Evaluation summaries are available to stakeholders.

6.5.4   Promising practices within the program are identified and shared internally and externally.

6.5.5   Procedures for program evaluation are implemented that include gathering both qualitative and quantitative data to be used for continuous program improvement.

GUIDELINE 6.6

Partnerships are sought and maintained to support program goals.

Indicators

6.6.1   Positive relationships and effective, regular communication between program staff/administrators and school faculty/administrators are encouraged and facilitated with the goal of supporting positive outcomes for children/youth.

6.6.2   Program staff members and leaders collaborate with community partners to: expand learning opportunities for children/youth; increase organizational capacity; maximize limited resources and support sustainability; and advocate for increased quality and availability of afterschool programming.

6.6.3   Community and business leaders are recruited to contribute to strategic planning and program decision making (e.g., board or advisory council member).

Part 3

Resources

Source Documents and Resources

NATIONAL PROGRAM STANDARDS

Council on Accreditation (2008). COA's After school standards.
www.coaafterschool.org/standards.php

OTHER STANDARDS/GUIDELINES

Groups within the afterschool community in many other parts of the country also have been involved in delineating guidelines of program quality, and we appreciated being able to draw from their hard work. The following documents were useful in developing of the Quality Guidelines for Ohio's Afterschool Programs:

- *Missouri Afterschool Program Guidelines*
- *Guidelines for Baltimore After-School Opportunities in Youth Places Workbook*
- *Quality Guidelines of Care for After School Programs (Grand Rapids, MI)*
- *Florida Guidelines for Quality Afterschool Programs*
- *New York State Afterschool Network Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool*
- *Youth Program Quality Assessment (High Scope)*
- *Guide to Afterschool Quality Standards (Providence, RI)*
- *Indiana Afterschool Standards*

RESEARCH

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HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Afterschool Alliance – www.afterschoolalliance.org
- Afterschool Investments Project – www.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm
- Center for Program Quality – www.highscope.org
- The Finance Project – www.financeproject.org
- Harvard Family Research Project – www.hfrp.org
- Mott Foundation – www.afterschoolprofessional.info
- National Center for Quality Afterschool – www.sedl.org/afterschool
- National Institute for Out-of-School-Time (NIOST) – www.niost.org
- National Summer Learning Association – www.summerlearning.org

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