



North Dakota  
**AFTERSCHOOL  
NETWORK**

# ND Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs

NORTH DAKOTA'S GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES  
FOR EFFECTIVE YOUTH PROGRAMS

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**This guide is designed to help your program be the best it can be.**

That might mean going through this book from start to finish, or it might mean focusing on one standard at a time for a deep dive. As part of a staff training, continuous improvement plan or even grant reporting requirements, use this content at any time, in any order, and repeat as needed to flex with your program's needs.



# Welcome

## **We all want North Dakota's young people to thrive.**

Afterschool programs play a critical role in helping youth succeed, keeping young people safe, and supporting working families. We work hard to provide youth with a safe, nurturing environment where they learn, grow, try new things — and ultimately thrive.

These quality standards are designed to acknowledge the work you do, help take your program to the next level, and guide discussions on improving program quality. They will provide timely and meaningful feedback on program quality and help you determine program priorities.

We dug into best practices from afterschool programs all across the country and years of research into what makes an effective afterschool program. We talked to a wide cross-section of programs across North Dakota - from those serving early childhood to high school youth, and from programs that are just getting started to those that are well established. We aligned the data on best practices with the specific needs of North Dakota's youth.

The resulting quality domains and indicators are markers for an effective afterschool program and provide us a shared language to talk about quality.

We hope that each indicator provides inspiration, reassurance, and connection to resources that will help strengthen your program in ways that inspire youth to be their best selves and achieve positive outcomes. As a community of afterschool professionals, together we're supporting North Dakota's young people today while strengthening our state's workforce of the future.

## **Afterschool is more than “just” after school.**

Afterschool programs — also called out-of-school time (OST) — take place before school, after school, summers, weekends and during school breaks. Programs provide PreK-12 students with regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured, supervised environment. You'll find afterschool programs in schools, school-age childcare centers, community-based organizations, universities, libraries, museums, camps and many other locations in our community.

# DOMAIN 1: Health & Safety

We've all heard the phrase "safety first." That applies to afterschool programs, too.

In order to learn, grow and thrive, youth need a space that is safe and promotes their well-being. Same goes for youth workers and program staff — we need to keep them safe, too.

|            | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                       | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Are we doing this?                                          |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HS1</b> | Our program space and equipment are safe, free of hazards, and appropriate for the ages and developmental stages of the youth we serve. All youth are able to access and use the space. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checklists are utilized for routine (daily, weekly, etc.) safety checks. Safety check assignments and duties are clearly defined and reporting procedures are established. Safety checks include, but are not limited to the following: dry/clean floors, cleaning supplies stored appropriately, furniture free from loose parts of anchored, playground equipment free from debris and damage, play areas blocked/fenced off from traffic, etc.</li> <li>Program space fits or can be modified to meet the needs of program/activities.</li> <li>Handicap accessibility is available at all programming and playground areas.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| <b>HS2</b> | Our program follows guidelines that identify appropriate youth-to-staff ratios to ensure safe and adequate supervision for activities.                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs keep the student/staff ratio to a maximum of 15:1. Program may be staffed by program coordinators, licensed teachers (as far as practical), youth development staff, paraprofessionals and volunteers who have cleared federal background checks.</li> <li>Program accommodates special needs as appropriate, necessary, and feasible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| <b>HS3</b> | Our space provides adequate facilities and supplies for handwashing.                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand washing stations clearly display steps to appropriate hand washing procedures.</li> <li>Hand washing stations have a sink (warm water), soap, and paper towels or hand dryer easily accessible to all.</li> <li>Hand sanitizer is available as needed; however, it is not the only source for cleaning hands.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| <b>HS4</b> | Our first aid kits are fully stocked and easily accessible at all times.                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First aid kits are available in all program areas.</li> <li>Supply lists for kits/emergency kits are included and regularly checked so kits are stocked and ready to go as needed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| <b>HS5</b> | Our program has a process for addressing potential health or safety concerns.                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and safety procedures and protocols are established and followed. These should include, but are not limited to the following: reporting a student or staff injury/accident, reporting broken or damaged equipment, disposal of expired snack items, requesting cleaning supplies or janitorial assistance, addressing behavioral issues/concerns, etc.</li> <li>Working conditions and program space are constantly monitored and hazards are reported, remedied, or removed as appropriate and as deemed necessary.</li> <li>Program participants clearly understand how they can help in keeping their environment safe (Ex. hang coat in a designated area rather than leaving it on the floor) and know how to report a hazard (Ex. medication left out in reach of youth).</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |

# Health & Safety

## CONTINUED

|      | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                          | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Are we doing this?                                          |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| HS6  | Required safety inspections for our facility are up to date.                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program staff is informed when health and building inspections take place. Status of safety inspection reports are also communicated.</li> <li>Program staff follow the expectations, guidelines, and procedures required by the State of North Dakota and implement any changes identified by the inspectors as necessary to establish and maintain satisfactory status for the facility.</li> <li>Program has up-to-date fire inspection reports in accordance with state and county guidelines.</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| HS7  | We have clear procedures in place for emergencies (fire, tornado, lockdowns, power outages, medical, and environmental emergencies, etc.). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chain of command and communication procedures are established for all protocols.</li> <li>Program has a written emergency plan.</li> <li>Emergency procedures are specific to the spaces and personnel overseeing the afterschool program.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| HS8  | Staff are aware of and practice emergency procedures.                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All program staff and volunteers are trained on emergency policies and procedures to ensure youth and staff safety. (Ex: how to operate a fire extinguisher, safe exit/assembly procedures, activating a fire alarm)</li> <li>Emergency procedures are practiced and documented regularly as per program requirements.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| HS9  | Emergency contact information for youth, staff, and emergency organizations are easily accessible.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency contact information is collected for staff upon hire and for youth during the enrollment process. This information is available to program staff.</li> <li>Program staff have access to contact information for facility and program administration.</li> <li>Staff receive training on emergency procedures which includes how to properly notify appropriate contacts (parents/guardians, custodial staff, building principal, program coordinator, etc.)</li> </ul>                              | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| HS10 | Our staff are trained in CPR and first aid. There's always at least one CPR and first aid certified staff member working with youth.       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All program staff and volunteers working directly with youth are trained in first aid and CPR. Opportunities to review protocols are available.</li> <li>CPR and First Aid certificates are maintained in program files.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| HS11 | We have clear procedures in place for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program staff understand they are mandated to report abuse and neglect. Staff complete mandated reporter training annually. Completion of course is maintained in program files.</li> <li>Access to Mandatory Reporting FAQ is provided to all program staff and any changes to policies or procedures are provided in a timely manner.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |

# Health & Safety

## CONTINUED

HS12

HS13

HS14

HS15

HS16

| Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Are we doing this?                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| We have clear, written policies on how youth, staff, parents/guardians and visitors enter and exit the program facilities. Youth, staff, parents/guardians, and visitors are aware of these policies and are following them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor policy and procedures for entering and exiting the program facility is provided to parents/guardians, program staff, and youth during the enrollment process.</li> <li>Policy ensures clear check-in/check-out procedures are in place for all youth, staff, guardians, and visitors who enter and exit the facility. Maps and signs indicate where to enter and exit program facilities.</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| We have procedures in place to ensure youth leave the program only with authorized adults. Our staff know what to do if an unauthorized person tries to remove a youth from the program.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A list of authorized adults for pickup is provided by parents/guardians during the program enrollment process and program staff have access to authorization lists and contact information for parents/guardians.</li> <li>Participants only leave the program with authorized adults 100% of the time.</li> <li>Unauthorized adults are prevented from leaving with youth 100% of the time.</li> </ul>      | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Our systems and routines mean that staff know where youth are at all times. We have practices in place that keep youth safe, especially when they move from one place to another or use the restroom.                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily program check-in (arrival) and check-out (dismissal) procedures are clearly defined and followed.</li> <li>Procedures for recording or tracking transitions and placement in or around program facilities and any offsite activities are clearly defined and followed (Ex: youth may need to write their name on a checkout board when going to use the restroom).</li> </ul>                          | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| We have clearly stated expectations about when it's okay for staff and youth to use personal electronic devices. Staff keep their attention focused on the youth.                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs have electronic usage policy/agreement/guidelines that are reviewed with staff and youth.</li> <li>Program staff understand the importance of maintaining their attention on youth.</li> <li>Consequences for misuse are clearly defined and enforced as necessary.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| Drinking water is available and easily accessible to all youth.                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water easily accessible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |



# Health & Safety

## CONTINUED

**HS17**

### Quality Indicator

### Examples

### Are we doing this?

Our program serves food and we have specific guidelines and policies for serving food.

☐ YES  
☐ NO

**NOTE: The indicators below only need to be answered if the answer to HS17 is "YES"**

**HS17a**

Our program serves healthy and nutritious foods. The amount, type of food, and schedule of snacks/meals is appropriate for the ages and cultures of youth we serve and the length of time spent in the program.

- Program provides a snack and/or meal to all youth that falls within the nutritional guidelines by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Snack/meal menu is made available to all parents and guardians.

☐ YES  
☐ NO

**HS17b**

Food allergy information is posted where food is prepared and/or served - both what foods contain allergens as well as any youth in the program with food allergies/sensitivities. We have an action plan in place to address any allergic reactions to food.

- Parents/guardians provide food allergy information during the enrollment process. All program staff are made aware of special needs required.
- When appropriate, staff are trained on using rescue medications (Ex: EpiPen) or devices and have easy access to these if necessary.
- Program staff follow all health and allergy plans and understand their role in these plans.

☐ YES  
☐ NO

**HS17c**

Our program follows appropriate food safety guidelines for preparation and storage.

- Programs have designated areas for snack/meal preparation, storage, and serving with guidelines posted for appropriate preparation and storage.

☐ YES  
☐ NO

## DOMAIN 2:

# Relationships & Interactions

### 1 – Experiencing challenges

Our program is just beginning to work in this area. A better understanding, more information, and/or more support is needed to fully meet this indicator.

### 2 – Making progress

Our program has done some work in this area but may need targeted support to move to the next level. Our program is making progress but can improve further. This is implemented inconsistently or only with guidance. It is partially met. With more practice or support, this could be fully met.

### 3 – Right on track

Our program has achieved a level of proficiency in this area. Our program is very good at this practice. We have data to support that our program is meeting the needs of youth, staff, and families on this indicator.

### 4 – Excelling

Our program is exceptionally proficient in this practice. This is an area where we can serve as an example for others. Evidence of excelling is clearly observable. This is always in place and consistently implemented.

|     | Quality Indicator                                                                             | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | How are we doing? |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| RI1 | We use a friendly tone of voice and greet all youth by name.                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every child is greeted by name upon arrival to the program.</li> <li>Friendly and positive tones of voice are used in conversations with students indicating they are known and welcome.</li> <li>Youth names are used during program activities and operation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 2 3 4           |
| RI2 | We acknowledge and greet parents/guardians using positive language.                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every family is greeted upon arrival to the program.</li> <li>Friendly and positive tones of voice are used during conversations with parents or other adult caregivers indicating they are known and welcome.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1 2 3 4           |
| RI3 | Interactions between staff and students are affirming, supportive, and culturally responsive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth/staff boundaries are intact.</li> <li>Youth and staff use positive language, encouragement, and avoid sarcasm.</li> <li>Staff model appropriate language, behavior, and actions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1 2 3 4           |
| RI4 | Peer-to-peer interactions between youth are positive.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff explicitly instruct and model positive interactions and relationships.</li> <li>Staff coach, encourage, and moderate when necessary.</li> <li>Behavior expectations are communicated at the beginning of and throughout the program.</li> <li>Program integrates partnerships with older youth to mentor and positively interact with younger youth.</li> <li>Redirections/corrections that are needed are done respectfully.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |

# Relationships & Interactions CONTINUED

|            | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                   | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | How are we doing? |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>RI5</b> | We establish trusting, supportive relationships with youth.                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every youth has at least one adult in the program they trust and are able to talk to.</li> <li>• Staff treat all youth with respect, listen to what they have to say, and show genuine interest in them.</li> <li>• Staff do not discuss youth issues in front of other youth or families. Confidentiality is maintained.</li> <li>• Staff display eagerness and willingness to engage with youth.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 1 2 3 4           |
| <b>RI6</b> | Rules, expectations, and consequences for behavior are clearly defined in our program policies.                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/guardians, youth, and staff have access to and understand program policies.</li> <li>• Staff model expected behaviors.</li> <li>• Consequences are logical and utilize models that allow youth to be accountable to their behavior and accept responsibility by taking actions to repair harm done (Ex: Restorative Justice).</li> <li>• Rules and expectations for programs located in a school setting are aligned with those in youth's regular school or day setting.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 2 3 4           |
| <b>RI7</b> | We set appropriate limits with youth and enforce the same rules in a consistent and predictable manner.                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations and procedures are clearly communicated to youth and adults in the program.</li> <li>• Youth are involved in the process of setting program rules, expectations, and consequences.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1 2 3 4           |
| <b>RI8</b> | We handle challenging situations with a calm demeanor, use positive behavior management tools, and address inappropriate behavior as a side conversation, when possible.            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth are respected. Dignity and confidentiality are maintained while addressing inappropriate behaviors. Expectations are revisited, and the "root of the problem" is explored and determined.</li> <li>• Staff are dispersed throughout program space to minimize opportunity for youth behavior concerns.</li> <li>• Safety plans are in place and practiced to ensure behavioral situations are handled appropriately. Training is provided for any interventions as necessary (Ex: CPI).</li> <li>• Program has a system of procedures/expectations in place to communicate with families in the event of a behavioral situation.</li> </ul>                            | 1 2 3 4           |
| <b>RI9</b> | We're proactive about intervening or redirecting when youth are engaged in inappropriate behavior, and support and encourage youth to resolve their own conflicts when appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff proactively discuss expectations and procedures before transitions to minimize inappropriate or undesired behaviors.</li> <li>• Staff model appropriate conflict resolution. Staff encourage and coach appropriate conflict resolution strategies.</li> <li>• Staff interact and engage with youth to prevent off-task behaviors.</li> <li>• Staff do not engage in power struggles and remain calm and positive while intervening or redirecting.</li> <li>• Staff are provided with a "toolkit" of strategies to teach/encourage appropriate behavior and redirect if necessary (this may include suggestions from classroom teacher or parent/guardian).</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |

# Relationships & Interactions

## CONTINUED

**RI10**

**RI11**

**RI12**

**RI13**

| Quality Indicator                                                                                                   | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | How are we doing? |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| We have ongoing and meaningful relationships with families in our program.                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families have multiple opportunities to engage with the program.</li> <li>Program has a Parent Advisory Team in place that meets at least once annually. Families are encouraged to participate.</li> <li>Staff are friendly and allow time for conversation with families during drop-off and pick-up.</li> <li>Interest inventories are provided to families at the start of the program to determine where/how they are interested in being involved (Ex: donating materials, leading an activity, supervising field trip, etc.).</li> <li>Program shares opportunities for parent/guardian and youth engagement at home or in the community.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1 2 3 4           |
| We have ongoing, collaborative, and meaningful relationships with schools, community partners, and stakeholders.    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community partnerships, guest speakers, field trips, and outside learning opportunities are encouraged.</li> <li>Program has a positive reputation in the school/community.</li> <li>Partnerships enhance essential skill development (critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, communication, collaboration, perseverance, and adaptability) and engagement opportunities are offered in-person and virtually.</li> <li>Program utilizes social media, newsletters, and other means of communication to share activities with the community.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 1 2 3 4           |
| We provide opportunities for families to communicate and provide feedback.                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from families and youth is collected and used to guide the program.</li> <li>Options for information and communication are provided to families at the start of operation (Ex: website address, emails, phone numbers, access to calendars, steps to join notification apps, etc.).</li> <li>Expectations for response are communicated to staff and families (Ex: "Will respond within 24 hours") and followed consistently.</li> <li>Surveys are administered as needed and at the end of the program. Results and feedback are used to guide programming.</li> <li>Suggestions/concerns/feedback dropbox or digital form is always available for families to provide communication discreetly if they prefer to remain anonymous.</li> <li>Communication tools are used to provide information to families and are updated frequently.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |
| We share information for community resources with youth, staff, and families that may benefit them, as appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program establishes community partnerships and provides information on how families can access these (Ex: public health, etc.).</li> <li>Program provides information to families about school programs, resources, and services that may benefit them (Ex: Title 1, Free &amp; Reduced Meals, MTSS, etc.).</li> <li>Program adapts, adjusts, evolves, and actively seeks resources as needed to meet the needs of youth and families.</li> <li>Staff build and maintain positive relationships with youth and families throughout the program to support responsiveness to suggested resources.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1 2 3 4           |

## DOMAIN 3:

# Youth-Centered Program Design

### 1 – Experiencing challenges

Our program is just beginning to work in this area. A better understanding, more information, and/or more support is needed to fully meet this indicator.

### 2 – Making progress

Our program has done some work in this area but may need targeted support to move to the next level. Our program is making progress but can improve further. This is implemented inconsistently or only with guidance. It is partially met. With more practice or support, this could be fully met.

### 3 – Right on track

Our program has achieved a level of proficiency in this area. Our program is very good at this practice. We have data to support that our program is meeting the needs of youth, staff, and families on this indicator.

### 4 – Excelling

Our program is exceptionally proficient in this practice. This is an area where we can serve as an example for others. Evidence of excelling is clearly observable. This is always in place and consistently implemented.

|     | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | How are we doing? |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| PD1 | Youth are included in program design. We encourage and provide meaningful opportunities for youth voice, choice, and leadership. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth complete an interest inventory at the start of the program.</li> <li>Program offers opportunities for youth to engage in activities that compliment their interest and desired focus.</li> <li>Program incorporates opportunities for youth to be leaders (Ex: learning buddies, teacher helpers, assigned lead roles, leading activities, etc.).</li> <li>Staff encourage and support youth-led projects.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                            | 1 2 3 4           |
| PD2 | We encourage youth to share their ideas and we listen with respect to their contributions and feedback.                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs implement a consistent sharing/meeting time for youth to communicate ideas that contribute to the overall success of the program. Norms are in place to allow for a safe sharing environment.</li> <li>Youth are offered ways to provide feedback.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 2 3 4           |
| PD3 | We ask open-ended questions to extend learning, encourage youth to solve problems, and think creatively.                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff use guiding and open-ended questions with youth during activities to extend learning.</li> <li>Opportunities for youth to extend their ideas are provided consistently and regularly (Ex: journaling, small group discussions, etc.) and appropriate wait/completion time is provided for youth.</li> <li>Youth have ample opportunity to solve real-world problems creatively and collaboratively (Ex: STEAM activities, small group work, project-based learning, etc.).</li> <li>Program supports a growth mindset and resiliency.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |

# Youth-Centered Program Design

## CONTINUED

**PD4**

**PD5**

**PD6**

**PD7**

**PD8**

| Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                   | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | How are we doing? |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| We're intentional about creating a positive environment that keeps youth safe physically and emotionally where youth can be their authentic selves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If program is held in a school, expectations are consistent from school-day to before/after school.</li> <li>Policies and expectations are in place for emotional or physically aggressive behavior, bullying, etc.</li> <li>Youth have an available area intended to be a "safe space" or "calming corner" for needed breaks.</li> <li>Social emotional learning is intentionally incorporated throughout the program and skills are modeled by staff.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 1 2 3 4           |
| Our program is equitable regardless of ability, cultural background, gender identity, race, ethnicity, or income.                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All youth have access and opportunity to participate in program and program activities.</li> <li>Activities are not designed for homogenous grouping.</li> <li>Lesson materials, literature, videos, etc. are chosen carefully to ensure representation, inclusiveness, and diversity.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 2 3 4           |
| Our program is culturally responsive. Our activities reflect, incorporate, and value the cultures of the youth they serve.                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lessons include activities that extend learning about various cultural backgrounds.</li> <li>Youth have the opportunity to showcase and share about their unique cultural backgrounds and values.</li> <li>Staff reflect the cultures of youth served in the program. Staff proactively learn about cultural norms representative of youth in the program.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 1 2 3 4           |
| Our daily schedule provides structure while allowing enough time to complete activities, ensure smooth transitions, and have flexibility.           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program develops and maintains a daily schedule of program activities that provide staff, youth, and volunteers with clear expectations for each day of the program.</li> <li>Program schedule demonstrates the following characteristics: consideration of ND K-12 State Academic Content Standards, non-academic enrichment activities that promote essential skills and whole-child development, variety of strategies and/or activities that address various learning interests, grade levels, and abilities, transition time between activities, and family engagement activities when appropriate.</li> <li>Program consistently carries out expectations and goals and can easily adapt and modify when changes must occur.</li> <li>Youth are able to work through activities at their own pace and are given options to complete activities if enough time was not available.</li> <li>Program incorporates routine procedures to ensure transitions are smooth and youth know the expectations of completion of tasks.</li> <li>Lesson plans and execution align with attainable and appropriate timeframes.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |
| We offer a variety of opportunities for youth to engage in activities - either as individuals or in groups.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff monitor and adjust activities to ensure youth engage in a variety of settings such as whole group, small group, collaborative work, centers, stations, clubs, with a work buddy, etc.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1 2 3 4           |

# Youth-Centered Program Design

## CONTINUED



**PD9**

### Quality Indicator

We're ready for the day. We start with a plan of activities and have all the information, tools, and supplies needed for successful completion.

### Example of Rating 3

- Staff are confident in their plans for the day. They have access to materials, well planned lessons, materials, supplies, etc.
- Staff are prepared for activities prior to program start time.
- Tables, furniture, chairs, etc. are the appropriate size for completing an activity/task successfully.
- Program and lesson materials, devices, and supplies are placed in designated areas that provide quick/easy access and return.
- Staff adapt lessons and activities to fit youth needs and/or interest levels.
- Staff allow youth to guide activities and follow their lead, as appropriate.

### How are we doing?

1 2 3 4

**PD10**

Our program curriculum is research or evidence based and our day-to-day activities are informed by best practices in the field of youth development.

- Program curriculum, lessons, strategies, and interventions are research or evidence based and intentionally incorporate social emotional learning/essential skills (critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, communication, collaboration, perseverance, and adaptability).

1 2 3 4

**PD11**

We take seriously our role in supporting and nurturing young people's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs.

- Program is well-rounded by offering activities and opportunities which support and nurture the whole child, including Cognitive (ND K-12 state academic content standards), Physical (playground/gym activities, movement and brain breaks), and Social and Emotional (essential skills lessons).

1 2 3 4

**PD12**

We regularly connected with schools, communities, and families to make sure our program offerings align with and respond to other aspects of youths' lives.

- Program maintains consistent communication with the school(s) youth attend to ensure program activities support and reinforce learning that takes place during the school day.
- Staff regularly communicate with families to ensure appropriate response to needs of youth.
- Communications/alert apps, notes, social media, and family engagement events are in place to enhance connections with schools, programs, and families.
- Advisory and community meetings take place to allow for review and discussion of program alignment to youth needs.

1 2 3 4

**PD13**

We provide activities that build upon youths' interests, talents, and skills to prepare them for success in life (Ex: higher education, workforce, or the military).

- Program opportunities focus on essential skills, age appropriate college and career readiness, and choice readiness.
- Program schedules guests/speakers and outings/field trips related to interests, talents, and skills (Ex: a youth may be interested in becoming a welder, so a local welder is asked to be a guest and share about their job).
- Age appropriate opportunities to interact with colleges, workforce, and military are present.

1 2 3 4

# Youth-Centered Program Design

## CONTINUED

PD14

### Quality Indicator

Our program focuses on 21st century life skills like critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, communication, collaboration, perseverance, and adaptability.

### Example of Rating 3

- Program utilizes available resources to enhance essential skills.
- Activities offered during programming intentionally incorporate 21st century life skills for all ages of youth served.

### How are we doing?

1 2 3 4

PD15

We cultivate partnerships and mutually-beneficial collaborations with colleges, employers, or other professionals in our community to help youth envision themselves in a wide variety of potential career pathways.

- Program actively seeks partnerships to enhance program goals and youth experiences for all ages of youth served.

1 2 3 4

PD16

We use a variety of approaches when leading activities (direct instruction, modeling, visual aids, etc.) to meet a variety of youth learning styles.

- Staff have been trained in differentiation and implementation of multi-level groups (Ex: direct instruction, modeling, visual aids, etc.).
- Program staff use technology as appropriate and necessary.
- Program has tools and equipment to provide a variety of instructional strategies that meet different learning styles.

1 2 3 4

PD17

We clearly explain the goals and objectives for each activity and encourage youth to make connections to previous learning or concepts.

- Staff communicate learning objective for lessons/activities. This is common practice.
- Program activities build off and activate prior knowledge.

1 2 3 4

PD18

We use developmentally appropriate language when speaking with youth and confirm they understand what's being communicated.

- Staff understand the importance of and consistently use developmentally appropriate language when communicating with youth.
- Staff check for understanding.

1 2 3 4

We help youth connect program activities to real-world applications that are meaningful and relevant to them.

- Program partners with community to apply real-world learning concepts.
- Program activities provide opportunities to focus on problem-based learning and include speakers, virtual and in-person field trips, projects, etc.

1 2 3 4

# DOMAIN 4:

# Leadership & Management

## 1 – Experiencing challenges

Our program is just beginning to work in this area. A better understanding, more information, and/or more support is needed to fully meet this indicator.

## 2 – Making progress

Our program has done some work in this area but may need targeted support to move to the next level. Our program is making progress but can improve further. This is implemented inconsistently or only with guidance. It is partially met. With more practice or support, this could be fully met.

## 3 – Right on track

Our program has achieved a level of proficiency in this area. Our program is very good at this practice. We have data to support that our program is meeting the needs of youth, staff, and families on this indicator.

## 4 – Excelling

Our program is exceptionally proficient in this practice. This is an area where we can serve as an example for others. Evidence of excelling is clearly observable. This is always in place and consistently implemented.

LM1

### Quality Indicator

**Our program has goals that are aligned with our mission.**

### Example of Rating 3

- **Goals aligned with mission are visible and regularly communicated with staff, youth, families, and stakeholders.**

### How are we doing?

**1 2 3 4**

LM2

**We review goals against progress at least annually, and are flexible enough to recalibrate as needed.**

- **Goals regularly reviewed by advisory council, leadership, and program staff. Continuous quality improvement model used to determine what is to be accomplished, changes that need to be made, and progress toward goals.**

**1 2 3 4**

LM3

**We have strong financial management that supports our program's goals.**

- **Program leadership develop and maintain budgets aligned with program activities and goals.**
- **Program is financially sound.**

**1 2 3 4**

LM4

**We have a plan for long-term financial sustainability.**

- **Program follows a fund development plan and has diverse funding sources.**
- **There are adequate funds to sustain program.**

**1 2 3 4**

# Leadership & Management

## CONTINUED

|      | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                      | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | How are we doing? |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| LM5  | We share information at least annually about our goals and outcomes to key stakeholders including youth, staff, families, schools, and the broader community.                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program releases a regular newsletter, social media, or newspaper article to families and stakeholders.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM6  | We collect data about our program on an ongoing basis. This information is reviewed regularly to look for areas of improvement. We make changes and adjust our program based on what the data reveals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program identifies and uses a model or structure for continuous quality improvement.</li> <li>Families and youth are surveyed regularly and feedback is applied to continuous program improvement.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM7  | We collect, review, and respond to feedback from youth, families, staff, and other stakeholders.                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback is respected, confidential, and focused on enhancing the overall success of the program.</li> <li>Program consistently follows a process for collecting, reviewing, and responding to feedback in a timely manner.</li> </ul>                                                                                           | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM8  | We have an advisory team or similar consultative body that includes perspectives from staff, parents, and youth.                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program has advisory team consisting of youth, parents/guardians, and/or other stakeholders such as teachers/school administrators, community partners, etc.</li> <li>Advisory team has opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the program.</li> </ul>                                                                      | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM9  | Our staff follow a code of conduct. We're clear about our expectations for staff behavior and have well-defined disciplinary measures in place if the code of conduct is broken.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff handbook includes a code of conduct and is reviewed at staff training at least annually.</li> <li>Staff sign agreement committing to code of conduct.</li> <li>Staff have full understanding of expectations and disciplinary measures.</li> <li>Disciplinary measures are consistently followed, as necessary.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM10 | We provide orientation and onboarding before staff begin interacting with youth.                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program has onboarding process and provides training prior to staff working with youth.</li> <li>Staff receive training in relevant program components.</li> <li>Onboarding checklist is completed and retained on file.</li> </ul>                                                                                              | 1 2 3 4           |

# Leadership & Management

## CONTINUED

|      | Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | How are we doing? |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| LM11 | We conduct ongoing staff trainings that include current research and best practices in youth development so we can better understand, nurture, and support staff.                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing training specific to current needs, best practices, and afterschool programming is available to all staff.</li> <li>Staff engage in professional development opportunities on a regular basis.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM12 | We make professional development a priority. Our staff participate in relevant professional development opportunities and we have a budget to fund ongoing learning.                                                                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff attend training, conferences, meetings, and learning opportunities.</li> <li>Fiscal oversight ensures the program budget includes ongoing professional development for all staff.</li> </ul>                | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM13 | Our staff and volunteers have passed criminal background checks. This information is kept on file with human resources documents including hiring documents, job descriptions, performance evaluations, emergency contact information, training certifications, and other key records. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and volunteer background checks are cleared prior to working with youth.</li> <li>Staff and volunteer background checks are stored in designated area.</li> </ul>                                           | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM14 | Staff in supervisory roles receive training and support in program management and/or staff supervision.                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional professional opportunities specific to supervisory duties are provided to staff in these roles.</li> </ul>                                                                                             | 1 2 3 4           |
| LM15 | As part of our efforts to retain quality staff, we regularly recognize and demonstrate appreciation for their work.                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are recognized with a designated appreciation day/week.</li> <li>Program has system in place to ensure fair wages and cost of living and/or performance increases for all staff.</li> </ul>                 | 1 2 3 4           |

# Leadership & Management

## CONTINUED

LM16

LM17

LM18

LM19

LM20

| Quality Indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Example of Rating 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | How are we doing? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| We conduct yearly performance reviews for all staff, including our director or CEO, which includes reflection on skills specific to youth work (ex: interactions with youth, fostering youth voice, etc.).                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance evaluations are completed at least annually for all staff with timely feedback and goal setting.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1 2 3 4           |
| We have a process for recruiting staff and strive to attract and retain quality staff who are representative of the youth we serve.                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff recruitment attempts to match potential staff with positions that align with their strengths.</li> <li>Program holds regular staff meetings to discuss program impact, program improvement, and progress toward goals; ensure staff have access to materials and resources to inform their work; provide staff continual formal and informal feedback to improve their practice; and offer regular professional development opportunities throughout the program.</li> </ul> | 1 2 3 4           |
| We have clearly written policies that provide guidance for all aspects of our program (Common policies include hiring, personnel, staff roles and responsibilities, data collection, technology, fiscal management, etc.). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All policies are up to date and available to stakeholders.</li> <li>Program/parent and staff handbooks are up to date and easily accessible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1 2 3 4           |
| We have a program handbook that is easily available (in print form or online, possibly in multiple languages). It is shared with families at the time of enrollment and annually.                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program/parent handbook is provided to parents/guardians and is readily available.</li> <li>Policies are referenced with families as needed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 1 2 3 4           |
| We regularly review and update our policies and handbook. When updates are made, we communicate them to staff and families.                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies and handbooks are updated annually with input from advisory board, staff, youth, and families.</li> <li>Changes to policies and handbooks are communicated in a timely manner.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 2 3 4           |



# Thank You

We are grateful to the many partners who contributed their time, knowledge and insights to the creation of *North Dakota's Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs*

## **North Dakota's Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs was informed and inspired by publications and research across the field of afterschool:**

- ACT Now!, *Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards*
- American Institutes for Research, *50 State Afterschool Network: Scan of Quality Systems*
- Bright and Early North Dakota, *Steps to Quality*
- Ignite Afterschool, *Believe It. Build It. Minnesota's Guide to Effective Afterschool Practices*
- National Afterschool Association, *Core Knowledge and Competencies*
- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, *Choice Ready* framework and *North Dakota Early Learning Standards: Birth to Kindergarten*
- North Dakota Essential Skills Learning Continuum
- North Dakota's Portrait of a Graduate
- Teachstone, *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*

## **We recognize the following organizations and individuals for providing feedback and input:**

- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Red River Valley: Amber Carlsrud, Elise Pforr
- Child Care Aware of ND: Lindy Caro, Sarah Myers
- Grand Forks Public Schools - ENCORE: Kayla Erickson
- North Central Education Cooperative (NCEC): Aimee Erdman
- North Dakota Council on the Arts
- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
- North Dakota Department of Human Services - Early Childhood Division
- North Dakota State University
- Northeast Education Services Cooperative (NESC): Jennifer Carlson, Cortney Shuley
- North Valley Career and Technology Center: Lori Zahradka
- South East Education Cooperative (SEEC)
- United Way of Cass and Clay
- YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties: Ann Holmes, Tania Zerr

**Most importantly, we are thankful for the dedicated OST program staff who work hard every day to provide quality programming that helps young people learn, grow and realize their full potential.**



North Dakota  
**AFTERSCHOOL  
NETWORK**

# Inspiring learning. Keeping kids safe. Supporting parents.

We believe that every youth deserves access to high-quality, safe and affordable afterschool programming. Through technical support, professional development and advocacy, we're strengthening the programs that are key to helping North Dakota's youth succeed.



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