South Dakota

SOUTH DAKOTA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

Afterschool Program Quality Standards



What is Afterschool?

The term “Afterschool” is often used interchangeably with “Out-of-school” time (OST). Out-of-school time refers to youth development programming that occurs beyond the traditional school day, including before school, after school, holidays, weekends and summers. Programs are structured and offer a wide range of learning and enrichment activities that promote the academic, physical, emotional and social development of all children and youth.

What is the South Dakota Afterschool Network (SDAN)?

The South Dakota Afterschool Network works to better our state and its communities by connecting providers, parents and policymakers with proven tools and resources to increase the quality of and access to out-of-school time programming for K-12 children and youth. With a mission to support and sustain quality out of school time programs, South Dakota Afterschool Network envisions a state where all children have access to high-quality, safe and affordable programming that supports successful academic and positive social outcomes for students, parents, schools and communities.

South Dakota Afterschool Quality Committees

In 2023, the South Dakota Afterschool Network undertook the responsibility of developing a comprehensive set of quality areas and program self-assessment tools designed to support OST programs across the state. The original draft was developed by the Utah Afterschool Network. From there, Child & Family Resource Network adapted the language to align with South Dakota's local context. SDAN convened a Quality Committee and Stakeholder Quality Workgroup, which included youth development experts, educators, and others to review best practices and research-based guidelines, as well as reviewed the tools line by line to refine it further. It was subsequently piloted through the Path2Impact Leadership Pathway to gather field insights. After approximately 12 months of development and testing, this is the final version we see today.

A quality program provides a safe, healthy, and stimulating learning environment that promotes physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth and development for all youth. Activities allow for choice, discovery, and progression.



Purpose

The purpose of the South Dakota Afterschool Program Quality Standards is to outline the path and steps that lead to high quality afterschool and summer learning programs that take place outside the school day. The Afterschool Standards are based on national research and best practices in the youth development and education fields.

The South Dakota Afterschool Standards are voluntary statewide standards that may serve as:

- A framework of clear expectations for all stakeholders.
- A guide to inform statewide decision-making, for example, professional development focus areas, funding, support and advocacy.
- A guide for program providers to assess their own program site and organizations to help determine what they are doing well and what needs improvement.
- A guide for parents and youth to identify quality programming.
- A guide for school principals and district superintendents to reinforce and advance educational priorities.

Definitions

1. **Quality Element**
   Priority areas that helps organize all standards

2. **Domain**
   Broad researched-based best practices in quality out-of-school program

3. **Quality Standard**
   Specific and detailed descriptions of the standard or best practice in quality out-of-school programs

Quality Elements

The South Dakota Afterschool Program Quality Standards are organized into four quality elements. Each element contains domains and quality standards based on best practices and research.



Quality Element 1:
Health & Safety



Quality Element 2:
Relationships & Interactions



Quality Element 3:
Activities & Experiences



Quality Element 4:
Program Management

Quality Element 1

Health & Safety

This refers to the promotion of health, nutrition, physical activity, and safety of children, staff members and families. These include standards, procedures, and resources to support the cleanliness and safety of the facility which includes eliminating hazards, promoting hand washing, ensuring ongoing and daily sanitizing to prevent illness, snack/meal communication and sanitation, completion of safety checklists, etc.

Domain 1.1: All staff are professionally qualified to work with youth.

Quality Standards

- All staff meet minimum age requirements and position qualifications.
- Criminal background checks are conducted on all staff and volunteers who work alone with youth.
- All staff are required to read and sign an organization's "Code of Conduct" or similar document and adhere to confidentiality requirements.
- All staff are required to read and document their understanding of program policies and procedures.
- A minimum number of 10 hours of needs-based in-service training is made available to all staff annually based on state requirements.
- CPR certification and First Aid training are provided and documentation of both is maintained.
- Staff has knowledge of child abuse and neglect reporting requirements and procedures.
- Staff are familiar with Youth Suicide Warning Signs and have access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- A hierarchy of leadership is established within the program.



Quality Element 1

Health & Safety

(Continued)

Domain 1.2: Policies and procedures are implemented to ensure the health and safety of all youth.

Quality Standards

- Program implements a regular schedule that is communicated to all staff, families, and participants.
- Participant registration information is accessible and includes emergency contact/release numbers, photo and social media releases, allergies, medications, and other needs.
- Special health needs of participants are documented and staff is informed, as appropriate.
- Procedures/policies are in place to address the administration of medication to youth.
- Youth with communicable diseases (symptoms that include a high fever) are not permitted in the program and participants' families are notified of SD DOH Reportable Diseases.
- Healthy practices and hand washing procedures are implemented especially after using the toilet or before handling food.
- Snacks (if provided) are served in accordance with Federal Nutrition guidelines. (If answering "no" or question is not applicable, please explain in the narrative).
- Drinking water is always accessible to program participants.
- Program implements a written computer use and internet safety policy. (If computer or electronic devices are available to use for youth)
- Families are notified regarding urgent issues that could impact the health and safety of participants.
- Program adheres to the school or organization's safety protocols and licensing standards.
- Program has a written policy to ensure secure facility access.

Domain 1.3: Youth are carefully supervised to maintain safety.

Quality Standards

- Staff supervise youth according to youths' ages and abilities.
- Staff increase supervision according to the level of need and or risk involved in an activity.
- Staff record when youth arrive, when they leave, and if picked up, with whom they leave.
- A written policy/procedure is in place to prevent unauthorized people from taking youth from the program.
- Program ensures safe arrival of all youth to the program site.
- A participant release policy/process is in place to ensure safe departure for all youth.
- A written policy/process is in place to address injuries, accidents, and incidents.
- Families are provided opportunities to be introduced and get to know the staff members in the program.

Domain 1.4: A transportation policy is in place and communicated to staff and families of participants. (If applicable)

Quality Standards

- Program complies with all legal requirements for vehicles and drivers.
- Program provides written policies and procedures to transport youth safely to and from off-site activities.

Quality Element 2:



Relationships & Interactions

Responsive teaching practices are key for all youth environments. They foster trust and emotional security; are communicative and enriching; and promote critical thinking and problem-solving. They also support social, emotional, behavioral, and language development; provide supportive feedback for learning; and motivate continued effort. Teaching practices and interactions are responsive to and build on each youth's pattern of development and learning. This also refers to the positive relationships and interactions between families and providers, and between members of the program team.

Domain 2.1: Staff know, respect, and support youth. Youth know and respect staff.

Quality Standards

- Staff promote a respectful and welcoming environment for all youth.
- Staff facilitate and participate in all program activities with youth.
- Staff model and facilitate positive interactions to promote healthy relationships.
- Staff respect, actively listen to, and appropriately respond to the needs and feelings of youth.
- Staff promote and demonstrate respect for all cultural backgrounds and ability levels.
- Staff communicate with each other during program hours about youth and program needs as they arise.
- Staff encourage and guide youth to resolve their own conflicts.
- Youth understand and actively participate in the creation and implementation of expectations regarding respect and support for other youth and staff.

Domain 2.2: Program staff and administration (Program) communicates and collaborates with schools and the community.

Quality Standards

- Program encourages family engagement and maintains ongoing outreach efforts with families.
- Program makes community resource information available to families.
- Staff interact with appropriate the family member(s) regarding matters concerning the well-being of their youth.
- Program communicates with families and families of potential program youth.

Quality Element 2:

Relationships & Interactions

(Continued)

Domain 2.3: Program staff and administration (Program) foster family engagement to support program goals.

Quality Standards

- Program encourages family engagement and maintains ongoing outreach efforts with families.
- Program makes community resource information available to families.
- Staff interact with appropriate the family member(s) regarding matters concerning the well-being of their youth.
- Program communicates with families and families of potential program youth.

Domain 2.4: Program staff and administration (Staff) implement a consistent and responsive behavior management plan.

Quality Standards

- Staff use positive and consistent techniques to guide the behavior of youth.
- Staff are aware of the individual behavioral needs of youth and respond appropriately.
- Staff training needs are assessed and relevant behavior management and well-being training and support are provided (developmentally appropriate activities, culturally responsive, positive behavior management, etc.).



Quality Element 3

Activities & Relationships

A high-quality, research-based curriculum (of activities and experiences) promotes measurable progress toward youth development. The content and learning outcomes of the activities and experiences align with state education standards which guide learning experiences and teaching practices. Content is drawn from current youth interests and ideas, including family input, and the values of the community. A curriculum also provides ways to create interactions and environments that foster trust and emotional security and support family engagement. Programs offer a space with accessible materials in which youth can feel safe and inspired by their surroundings.

Domain 3.1: Youth are actively engaged in learning activities that promote critical/creative thinking skills and build on individual interests/strengths.

Quality Standards

- Program offers a balance of intentionally designed academic and enrichment activities that are age and skill level appropriate.
- Program offers enrichment activities that allow youth to explore new ideas, build skills and demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of learning environments.

Domain 3.2: Academic support/interventions are aligned with school day content and address student learning needs.

Quality Standards

- Program offers needs-based academic support and access to tutoring and/or homework help.
- Program establishes communication with school day administration and staff regarding academic and behavioral progress of youth.



Quality Element 3

Activities & Relationships

(Continued)

Domain 3.3: Program offers a variety of life skill activities and needs-based support that promote personal growth and responsible behaviors toward self and others.

Quality Standards

- Program provides opportunities for youth to develop the skills needed to make positive choices and promote self-responsibility.
- Program provides opportunities for youth to develop the interpersonal skills needed to interact appropriately with others.
- Program offers evidence-based prevention/intervention education to build skills and knowledge that promote social success of youth.
- Program staff and administration address the needs of youth requiring individualized attention and support.

Domain 3.4: Practices are in place to ensure that youth have opportunities to practice, participate in, and learn about healthy eating and physical activity.

Quality Standards

- Program offers developmentally appropriate, inclusive physical activities, games, and sports that provide youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to enjoy being physically active throughout their lives.
- Staff plan and provide time for physical activity.
- Program offers a variety of physical activities aimed at engaging youth in fun aerobic and cardio-respiratory and age-appropriate fitness activities.
- Digital devices are used for homework, research, or digital learning that is active rather than passive.
- All staff members participate in ongoing professional development on healthy eating and physical activity.



Quality Element 4

Program Management

This refers to written and implemented policies in the school age program, including policies on healthy eating and physical activity, staff professional development, and communication with youth, families and community. Strong program management policies ensure the sustainability of the program. These practices include Human Resources Development, Personnel Cost and allocation, Center Operations, Child Assessment, Fiscal Management, Program Planning and Evaluation, Family Partnerships, Marketing and Public Relationships, Technology, and Staff Qualifications.

Domain 4.1: Program has a plan for increasing capacity, ensuring program quality, and promoting sustainability.

Quality Standards

- Program has developed a clear mission statement and goals that promote youth success.
- Program involves key stakeholders (staff, families, youth, community organizations, etc.) in long-term planning, decision-making, and evaluation.
- Program engages in intentional school and community collaborations and partnerships that support its mission and goals and promote program quality.
- Program fosters relationships with community leaders and stakeholders to build advocacy and program support.
- Program utilizes multiple funding and in-kind resources to promote sustainability.
- Program administration participates in periodic program evaluation, assessment, and ongoing improvement.
- Program utilizes multiple data sources for program design, enhancement, and evaluation.
- Program reports progress, impacts, and achievements to the community at large (families, local businesses, schools, etc.) and community partners/boards.
- Program develops and implements a marketing plan to increase awareness, involvement, and support and revises strategies as needed.

Domain 4.2: Program operates under clearly defined policies and procedures.

Quality Standards

- Program makes written organizational policies and procedures accessible to staff, families, and the community for review.
- Program utilizes an employee handbook outlining staff expectations and policies and procedures.
- Program provides a parent handbook that includes information about program policies, procedures, and expectations for youth, families and staff.
- Program administration maintains staff files.
- Program provides for a written youth and parent/guardian grievance process.
- Program volunteers must be defined and communicated with properly.
- Program has a clearly defined student attendance policy.
- Program is aware of and complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. (moved from "The administration provides sound fiscal management of the program" section)

Quality Element 4

Program Management

(Continued)

Domain 4.3: Administration provides sound fiscal management of the program.

Quality Standards

- Program expenditures are aligned with the program budget and reflect the mission and goals
- Program administration implements financial procedures in accordance with the organization's financial policies and generally accepted accounting practices.
- Program meets state and other reporting fiscal requirements.

Domain 4.4: Program recruits, hires, and trains qualified staff members to value and nurture all youth.

Quality Standards

- Program implements a standard hiring process that ensures all staff have the ability to learn needed skills, and professional qualifications appropriate for their position.
- Program recruits, hires and develops staff who reflect the diversity, languages, and cultures of the community served.
- Program provides an orientation for all staff (including volunteers).
- Staff participate in regularly scheduled staff meetings.
- Program administration sets aside time for staff communication and planning around youth and program needs.
- Responsibilities and duties are shared among staff so that activities are effectively implemented and potential problems are handled smoothly.
- Program staff receive regular supervision and support and at least one annual formal performance review as well as ongoing informal reviews.



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Resources

- Mott Foundation 50-State Network
- Utah Afterschool Network
- Indiana Afterschool Network
- Connecticut Afterschool Network
- Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
- Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance
- Afterschool Alliance
- Child & Family Resource - (Brookings ECE)

