A Unified
Vision
to **Serve**
Georgia's
Youth

Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development
Standards

*A collaboration between GSAN & GUIDE, Inc.*

Introduction

Georgia's afterschool and youth development programs provide thousands of youth—from kindergarten through high school—with safe and enriching environments in their time outside of the home and school contexts. High quality afterschool and youth development programs can make important contributions to young people's development and well being. To ensure that Georgia's young people are equipped to thrive and succeed in the multiple domains of their lives, our afterschool and youth development programs must provide environments and experiences that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically.

The Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development (ASYD) Quality Standards is a collaborate project that is funded and endorses by the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Governor's Office for Children and Families. The development of the Standards was also informed and supported by an array of experts in the fields of education, youth development, public health and juvenile justice.

Georgia's Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards are grounded in the widely held and well-established understanding that children, youth, and families benefit when programs increase their capacity to realize their mission by providing high quality programming. Most importantly, the ASYD Quality Standards are informed by research in a variety of disciplines including education, child development and psychology, organizational psychology, business management and public health. The Standards were carefully crafted to ensure that each standard and the supporting indicators are evidence-based, reflect current best practice and correlate with positive intermediary and long-term outcomes in youth. External peer review was provided by Dr. Gabriel Kuperminc, Chair of the Community Psychology Doctoral Program with the Department of Psychology at Georgia State University, Dr. Melissa Landers-Potts with the Department of Human Development and Family Science at the University of Georgia, and Dr. Cynthia Suveg with the Department of Psychology at the University of Georgia.
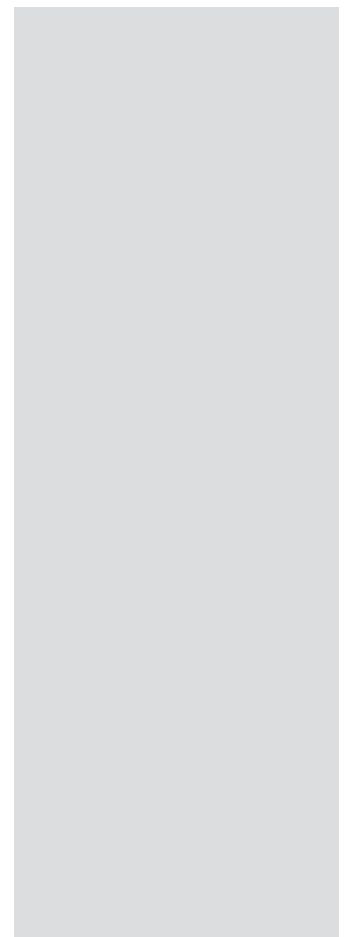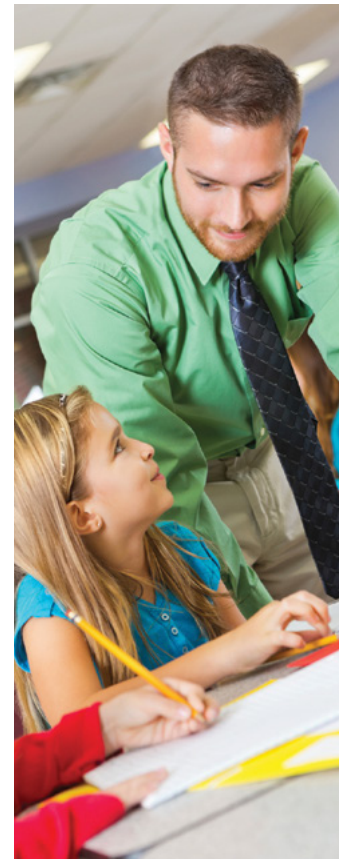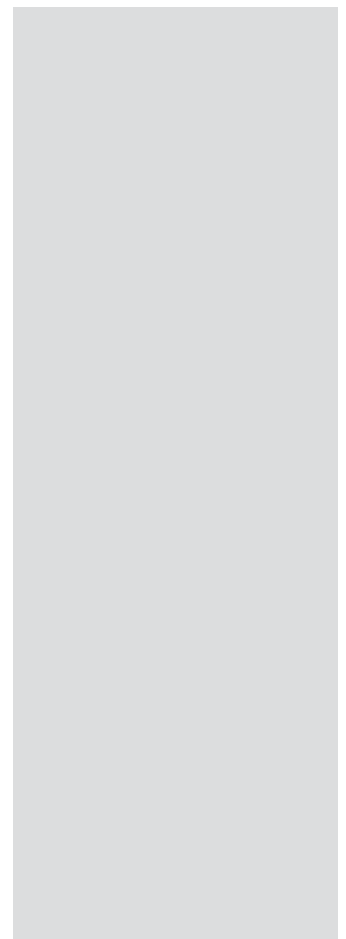
What is an "Afterschool" and/or "Youth Development" Program?

This document uses the terms "afterschool" and "youth development" to fully describe programs that serve youth any age between five and 18 during any of the following array of timeframes--before school, after school, during times and days when there is no school, during vacations, and summer. Comprehensive programs provide safe places for children and youth when their parents are not available, as well as academic support, enrichment activities, and youth development opportunities. While some stand-alone, single-purpose programs may serve youth who do not need comprehensive services, some of the same guidelines and safeguards should be available.

What are the Georgia ASYD Standards?

The Georgia ASYD Quality Standards are research-based best practice guidelines that delineate the critical components of high-quality youth development programs. These guidelines are organized by nine distinct categories, entitled quality elements. Each of these nine quality elements includes a series of related standards. The Standards are supported by a set of practice-based indicators that help to illuminate what each standard looks like in the context of a program.

This document highlights the nine quality elements and corresponding standards. The ASYD Quality Standards Assessment tool can be downloaded at www.georgiaasyd.org

How Can the ASYD Quality Standards and Assessment Tool be Used?

The Georgia ASYD Quality Standards, when adopted by afterschool and youth development programs, can be used as a framework for the design and implementation of high quality programs for youth from elementary through high school. Employed as an assessment tool, the Standards can help assist programs facilitate a process of continual improvement through an examination of what they are doing well and where to make improvements. In this regard, the Standards are a vehicle for engaging staff and stakeholder teams in ongoing data-driven collaborative decision-making processes. The assessment tool is intended to support a reflective process in which program staff and stakeholders explore their own programs and work collaboratively to develop strategies to enhance policies, procedures, and practices.

In addition to helping programs enhance their capacity to achieve their mission and validate their impact, the Standards are designed as an instrument by which funders and stakeholders can ensure that the programs they support will deliver high quality services. The Standards also serve as a practical tool for families in that they provide a lens through which families and youth can assess their expectations of programs. More broadly, adoption of the Standards exemplifies a commitment made by the state, as well as by youth development communities of practice, to provide young people with enriching out-of-school environments and engaging experiences that will help them to succeed and thrive in many arenas. Applied on multiple levels, the Standards can serve as a mechanism for educating the youth development community and its partners, as a whole, about what high quality programming looks like and how it can be achieved.
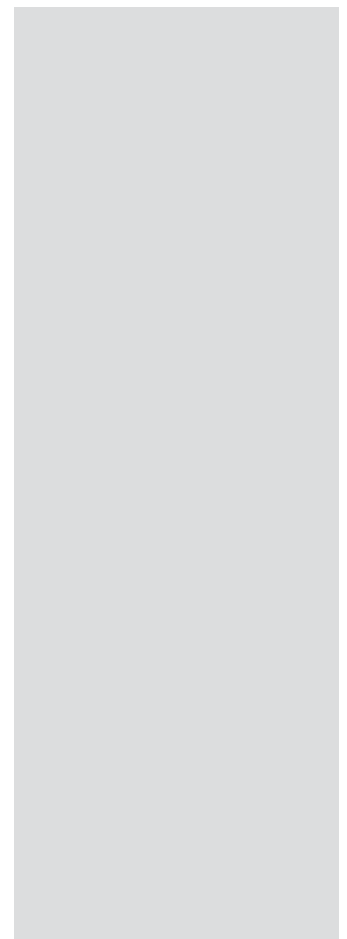
Overview of the ASYD Quality Standards

The ASYD Quality Assessment Tool is organized into nine quality elements identified through a review of current research.

Quality Element 1 / Programming & Youth Development

Quality Element 2 / Linkages with the School Day

Quality Element 3 / Environment & Climate

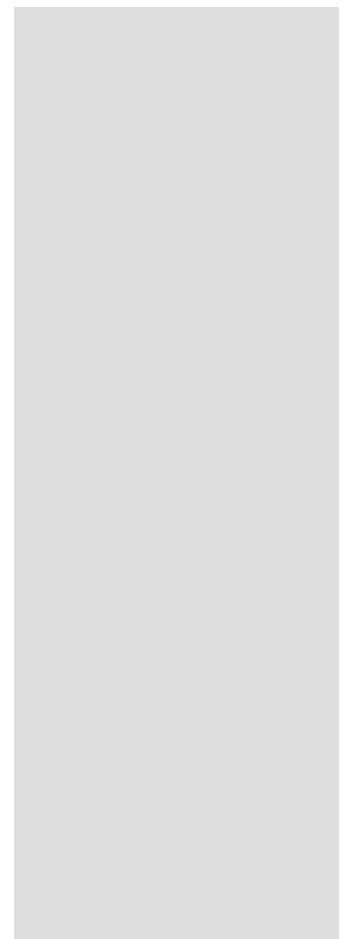Quality Element 4 / Relationships

Quality Element 5 / Health & Well Being

Quality Element 6 / Staffing & Professional Development

Quality Element 7 / Organizational Practices

Quality Element 8 / Evaluation & Outcomes

Quality Element 9 / Family & Community Partnerships

PROGRAMMING & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program designs and implements a flexible, well-rounded daily schedule that supports the physical, social, and cognitive development of all youth by providing programming and activities that are well-organized, developmentally appropriate, and offer opportunities to gain new knowledge and skill

1.1 Promotes a strength-based approach to programming that fosters the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that youth need to thrive

1.2 Offers project-based, experiential and hands-on activities

1.3 Ensures that youth experience a balance of group sizes across the program day

1.4 Provides activities that feature an array of instructional approaches

1.5 Offers access to materials that effectively support program activities and meets staff and youth needs

1.6 Solicits and incorporates youth voice in the planning, development & implementation of programming

1.7 Integrates opportunities that foster responsibility, autonomy and leadership throughout the program

1.8 Includes opportunities for reflection and promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills

1.9 Includes opportunities for youth to build life skills

1.10 Promotes self-competence and teaches youth responsible decision-making

1.11 Incorporates opportunities for youth to gain competency in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) and music

1.12 Ensures that programming is culturally appropriate and linguistically sensitive

1.13 Provides opportunities for college, career readiness, vocational preparation, and workforce development

1.14 Includes opportunities for youth to engage in international education and gain global competency

LINKAGES WITH THE SCHOOL DAY

Quality Element 2:
Linkages with the School Day

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program communicates and collaborates with school personnel to ensure that afterschool programming and activities complement and support school day learning, support performance standards, and build strong content knowledge and academic skills in youth.

2.1 Establishes and maintains strong and intentional links to the school day

2.2 Support the Georgia Standards of Excellence and Local Education Agency (LEA) priorities

2.3 Provides hands-on learning opportunities for participants to develop knowledge in content areas that complement the school day

2.4 When appropriate, incorporates academic support, including homework assistance and/or tutoring

2.5 Ensures that youth develop key academic skills, including research and study skills

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program provides a safe, clean, and developmentally appropriate environment that meets the physical needs of all youth; supports best practice programming, and reflects the needs and interests of youth.

3.1 Has a physically safe and clean environment

3.2 Ensures that the space, equipment, and materials are suitable for the ages and skill levels of youth and meet the program's needs

3.3 Adheres to state and local licensing and exemption requirements

3.4 Supports youth in navigating the learning space independently, taking initiative, and exploring their interests

3.5 Offers frequent access to nature and/or an outdoor space when possible

3.6 Has a physical environment that reflects the work and interests of youth and the program's activities

3.7 Allows for the inclusion and engagement of differently-abled youth

3.8 Reflects and incorporates the culture and language of youth and their families

3.9 Provides intentional character education and opportunities for moral action that promote core values in all domains of youths' lives

RELATIONSHIPS

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program fosters and nurtures positive relationships and interactions among staff, youth, families, and communities; provides an inclusive and respectful environment that is safe from teasing, bullying, and violence; and promotes diversity.

4.1 Builds positive relationships with youth that are supportive and nurturing

4.2 Ensures that staff are role models of positive and respectful adult relationships

4.3 Incorporates relationship-building opportunities among peers and ensures that youth interact with one another in positive ways

4.4 Teaches and encourages use of conflict resolution skills among youth

4.5 Reinforces positive behavior and employs strength-based techniques to address behavioral issues

HEALTH & WELL BEING

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program supports and promotes the social and emotional needs of youth, is committed to diversity, belonging and inclusion, and provides opportunities for youth to be physically activity and learn and practice healthy habits.

5.1 Provides a socio-emotionally safe and supportive environment that is free of bullying and harassment for youth

5.2 Offers regular opportunities for youth to engage in physical fitness and build health and nutrition knowledge and skills

5.3 When suitable to program duration, incorporates nutritious snack and/or meal options, if provided

5.4 Communicates with families to ensure that staff are aware of the individualized needs and special health concerns of youth

5.5 Seeks to connect families and caregivers with information and community resources to support the well-being of families and youth

STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program employs staff and volunteers who value each youth, understand youths' developmental needs, and develop working relationships with coworkers, youth, families and caregivers and other partners. A quality program supports the professional growth of staff and volunteers by providing ongoing professional development that bolsters the knowledge and skill necessary for implementing best practice programming.

6.1 Utilizes a performance evaluation system for staff and volunteers and provides appropriate supervision support and feedback

6.2 Offers all staff and volunteers ongoing professional development and fosters a commitment to continual growth

6.3 Ensures that staff and volunteers are competent in academic and skill-based domains, as appropriate to their positions

6.4 Trains staff to plan and implement programming and activities that are appropriate for the age, skill level, and interests of youth

6.5 Monitors and maintains staff-to-youth ratio as per state and local regulations

6.6 Holds regular staff meetings

6.7 Offers training to ensure compliance with OCGA § 19-7-5(c)(1) (Mandated Reporter of Child Abuse or Neglect)

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program has a clear mission and well-defined goals, sound fiscal management, and clear policies and procedures that support quality and sustainability.

7.1 Clearly defines the organization's mission, vision, values and goals and aligns this framework with specific outcomes to measure progress

7.2 Develops and employs an employee handbook that specifies internal policies and procedures

7.3 Establishes program policies and procedures and makes them available to families and caregivers and stakeholders

7.4 Establishes and maintains clear attendance and participation expectations

7.5 Maintains a system for the collection and monitoring of youth attendance data

7.6 Has a disciplinary protocol and makes clear the expectations for youths' behavior

7.7 Maintains confidential records on all youth and ensures records are up-to-date

7.8 Adheres to state and local licensing requirements (e.g., health certificate, security clearance, insurance, etc.)

7.9 Maintains a sound budget; reviews and adjusts budget periodically and as necessary

7.10 Completes all required reports and submits them in a timely manner

7.11 Ensures that lesson plans are available and accurate, and the program schedule and room assignments are posted

EVALUATION & OUTCOMES

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program has measurable program and outcomes-based goals; and a system and plan in place for gathering data, engaging in data- driven decision-making, implementing program improvement strategies, and regularly reassessing outcomes.

8.1 Delineates measurable program goals and objectives that reflect the organization's mission

8.2 Selects and implements appropriate assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of program practices and status of youth outcomes

8.3 Obtains and analyzes data and compares findings to the organization's mission, goals, and objectives

8.4 Employs data to design and implement an improvement plan that has measurable goals and objectives

8.5 Continually engages in data-driven decision-making and regularly reassesses findings

8.6 Develops the capacity in staff to carry out the data-driven decision-making process as a team

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

A quality program builds meaningful relationships and collaborates with families and caregivers to enhance programming and foster the healthy development of youth. A quality program develops community partnerships to establish an educative community and form an interconnected network that supports the holistic well-being of youth.

9.1 Builds meaningful relationships with families and caregivers and interacts with them in respectful and welcoming ways

9.2 Develops and maintains community collaborations to improve and extend programming

9.3 Communicates with families and caregivers regarding youths' needs and well-being

9.4 Solicits and incorporates the input of families and caregivers in decision making

Source Documents

The following reports and assessment tools were used in the creation and revision of the Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development Quality Standards Assessment Tool:

Afterschool Program Assessment System. (2010) The National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool. (2008) The California Department of Education After School Programs Office (ASPO) and the Quality Committee of the California Afterschool Network.

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development, The Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Jacquellyne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton-Goodman Editors. (2002) The National Research Council, and The Institute of Medicine.

A Guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Afterschool Programs, Fletcher, Piha, Rose. (2005) The Center for Collaborative Solutions, the Community Network for Youth Development, and the Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth.

Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools, Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, Shinn. (2007) Impact Strategies.

Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool: Planning for Ongoing Program Improvement. (2005) The New York State Afterschool Network.

The Quality of School-Age Child Care in After School Settings, Little, Priscilla. (2007) Harvard Family Research Project.

Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool. (2009) The Providence After School Alliance (PASA).

Shared Features of High Performing After school Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation, Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, Mielke. (2005) Policy Studies Associates Inc.

Youth Program Quality Assessment, Adams, Brickman, McMahon. (2005) High/Scope Education Research Foundation.

A list of all references can be found in the Users Guide, available at www.georgiaasyd.org

A Unified
Vision
to Serve,
Georgia's
Youth

Georgia Afterschool
& Youth Development
Initiative

A collaboration between GSAN & GUIDE, Inc.

WWW.GEORGIAASYD.ORG

Supported by

GaDOE
Georgia Department of Education
Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent
"Educating Georgia's Future"

D·B·H·D·D

BRIGHT from the START
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES · STATE OF GEORGIA · 1776

DPH
Georgia Department of Public Health