



NYSAN PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT (QSA) TOOL, 2ND EDITION QUALITY INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

ELEMENT 1: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

A quality program provides a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for all participants, staff members, and families.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 1

*Provides a stimulating, welcoming, and supportive environment for all young people.

Performance Level 1

Staff members do not greet youth as they arrive and make little or no effort to establish a personal connection with youth. There are no signs or posters in the program space. Youth have no opportunities for decision-making or to voice questions and concerns. Activities are not always facilitated by staff members, leading to unstructured activities during which students disengage. Youth sometimes end up disinterested in participating and staff members do not encourage them to join activities.

Performance Level 2

Staff members try to greet youth as they arrive if they are available to do so. There are a few signs directing participants to the program space, but no signs or posters otherwise. Although there is no formal way for participants to voice questions and concerns, staff members listen to youth when they are approached to talk. Activities are usually facilitated by staff members, but youth who are disinterested in participating are not encouraged to join activities. Activities are not reorganized in order to capture disinterested youth.

Performance Level 3

A staff member is designated as a greeter. Staff members ensure the space is decorated with signs and posters, and have regular check-ins with participants to make sure they feel comfortable in the program space. Youth have several informal opportunities to provide their input about activities. Activities are always facilitated by a staff member, who is charged with explaining and monitoring activities. Youth who seem disinterested in the activities are encouraged to participate. Differentiated activities allow participation options for those youth disinterested in what is being offered.

Performance Level 4

A staff member is designated as a greeter; the greeter checks each participant in and ensures that they find the activity that they would like to join. Staff members ensure the space is decorated with signs and posters and have a daily check-in with participants to make sure they feel comfortable in the program space. Youth have both formal and informal opportunities to provide input about activities. A staff member is charged with explaining activities and engaging others who might want to join. Youth who seem disinterested in the activities being offered are told more about each activity or provided with variations on the activity and are encouraged to try them.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 2

*Uses program space that is safe and clean.

Performance Level 1

The program space is rarely or never cleaned, as evidenced by un-emptied trash, dust, etc. Facilities, furniture, and other materials are not checked to ensure that they are safe and free from hazards. The program provider and program host are unclear as to who is responsible for facilities maintenance. Emergency supplies are not adequate or accessible.

Performance Level 2

The program space is cleaned when staff members have the time to do so. Facilities, furniture, and other materials are checked for safety on an ad hoc basis. The program provider and program host are not clear as to who is responsible, but make an informal effort to keep space clean. Emergency supplies are accessible, but do not adequately provide what the program needs in most emergency situations.

Performance Level 3

The program space is regularly cleaned both by program staff and professional janitors or cleaning staff. Facilities, furniture, and other materials are routinely checked and maintenance is performed when necessary. The program provider and program host are clear as to who is responsible for the maintenance of the space. Emergency supplies are accessible and provide what the program needs in most emergency situations, and several staff members are trained in how to use them.

Performance Level 4

The program space is regularly cleaned at the end of each day. Facilities, furniture, and other materials are frequently checked and maintenance is performed when necessary. The site director routinely conducts a walk-through of the program space and uses a facilities check-list to ensure that all aspects of the space are clean and safe. A partnership agreement between the program provider and program host clearly states who will handle the cleaning of the space, and these partners are aware of and abide by the agreement. Emergency supplies are accessible and adequately provide what the program needs in possible emergency situations, and all staff members are trained in how to use them.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 3

Has program space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for activities being conducted.

Performance Level 1

The program space is not adequately equipped for the activities offered at the site. Physical space is not adequate for planned activities; consequently, space determines what activities take place. Space is insufficient for science, technology, or art activities. Some physical activities are occasionally offered even though the space is not large enough to accommodate them. The activities menu is almost always the same due to space and material restraints, limiting the ability to run engaging or enriching activities for youth.

Performance Level 2

The program space is adequately equipped for a number of activities offered at the site. Space is available for limited science, technology, or art activities, but it is not fully equipped with the materials needed. Physical activities are limited to those that can be done in a smaller open space. The activities menu varies slightly but is dictated by space and material restraints rather than enrichment or engagement of students.

Performance Level 3

The program space allows staff members to run activities that use varied spaces and different types of materials and equipment. New activities can often be added to the program without concern for space restraints or lack of supplies. Some areas are available for science, technology, and art that are stocked with the materials needed. Adequate open space is available to offer a range of sports and other physical games. The activities menu is regularly updated to use new materials and equipment.

Performance Level 4

The program space allows staff members to run a variety of activities that use varied spaces and different types of materials and equipment. New activities can almost always be added to the program without concern for space restraints or lack of supplies. Dedicated space is always available for science, technology, art, and other enrichment activities that are stocked with the needed materials. There is adequate space, including fields or other open spaces, to offer most sports and other physical games. The activities menu is frequently updated to use new materials and equipment.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 4

*Develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.

Performance Level 1

The program has no formal safety plan. The program has no connection to their program host's safety plan. No plan is posted or reviewed with other staff or participants.

Performance Level 2

The program has developed a written safety plan, but it is not posted or shared. Staff members are aware of the program host's safety plan, but they are not connected to it. Staff members take responsibility for the safety of participants, but are mostly unaware of the official procedures outlined in the plan or other requirements such as reporting of "violent incidents" or fire drill protocols.

Performance Level 3

The program has developed a written safety plan. The program has connected the program host's safety plans to the needs of the program and there are provisions for the program in the host's plan. The safety plan is posted throughout the program space and is pointed out to participants, staff, and families. Staff members are aware of the procedures and know what to do in case of an emergency, and they know what the official procedures and incident reporting requirements are.

Performance Level 4

The program has developed a written safety plan, which is updated annually. The program has made a connection to the host's safety planning committee and plays a role in that committee. The safety plan is posted throughout the program space, sent to each participants' home, and is discussed with participants, staff, and families. Staff members are trained during their orientation on safety procedures and incident reporting requirements, and they are prepared to handle an emergency.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 5

*Provides adequate security and participants are supervised by an approved adult at all times.

Performance Level 1

No security is provided for the program. The program has no formal connection to the program host's security. Participants are usually supervised by an adult, but occasionally are left unsupervised for short periods of time.

Performance Level 2

Security is informally handled by staff members. Staff members must monitor the safety of program participants and monitor external guests. The program host's security does not assist with visitors. Participants are always supervised by an adult, but occasionally the adult is a family or community member who does not work for the program.

Performance Level 3

The program employs a security guard during program hours. During staff orientation, staff members are taught how to ensure the security of the program, including keeping participants safe and monitoring external guests. The program is formally included in the program host's security efforts (e.g., safety agents patrol the halls during and after the program). Participants are always supervised by an approved adult according to all applicable regulations and program policies.

Performance Level 4

The program employs a security guard during program hours. During staff orientation, staff members are taught how to ensure the security of the program, including keeping participants safe and monitoring external guests. A security plan was developed by staff members, the security guard, participants, families, and others that addresses what to do in the case of different emergencies. The program host seamlessly incorporates the program into all its security procedures. Participants are always supervised by multiple, approved adults according to all applicable regulations and program policies.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 6

*Develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home.

Performance Level 1

There is no formal procedure for arrival and dismissal. Staff members do not track participants' arrival to and departure from the program. Staff members sometimes leave the site before all the participants have left. Staff members are unaware of how participants' transportation needs are met.

Performance Level 2

Most staff members follow an informal procedure to generally track participants' arrival to and departure from the program. Staff members remain at the site until every participant has left.

Performance Level 3

The site director creates and implements a formal set of arrival and dismissal procedures. Staff members are aware of these procedures and check participants in and out each day. Staff members remain at the site until every participant has left, and staff members are mostly aware of how participants travel home.

Performance Level 4

The site director creates and implements a formal set of arrival and dismissal procedures in consultation with staff members, participants, and families. Staff members are trained during orientation on these procedures. Staff members check participants in and out each day, and these records are kept with other attendance information. Staff members are aware of participants' transportation arrangements and ensure that every participant begins their travel home safely.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 7

*Provides healthy and nutritious snacks and/or supper.

Performance Level 1

Participants may choose to bring their own snack or supper, but food is not provided by the program. Therefore, not every participant has a snack and food is not regulated by staff members.

Performance Level 2

A snack or supper is provided on some days. Food options are based on what is readily available with limited selection, and not with consideration of healthy options.

Performance Level 3

A snack or supper is provided daily. Staff members try to have several options available for participants to choose from. Snacks and supper offerings are usually healthy and nutritious.

Performance Level 4

A healthy snack or supper is provided every day. Participants have several options to choose from, and the snack or supper menu is rotated. Special consideration is given to include a variety of nutrients, and to exclude foods that youth are commonly allergic to, such as peanuts.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 8

*Is aware of, records, and informs staff of special health needs of participants.

Performance Level 1

The program requires medical forms. No tracking is done to ensure completed records of participants are received. Forms that are submitted are kept on file but rarely used. Therefore, staff members are not always aware of the special health needs of participants.

Performance Level 2

The program requires medical forms and tracking is done to ensure all forms are received. Forms are kept on file and are reviewed if there is a medical concern or emergency. No review of forms is done to make the staff aware of special needs. Staff members may only become aware of the issue during an emergency that prompts them to review a participant's form.

Performance Level 3

The program requires medical forms and receives them from each participant. Forms are reviewed by staff members and special health needs are flagged; forms are then kept on file. Staff members are informed of relevant special health needs of participants, such as food allergies, at the beginning of each year. Adjustments are made to the program design as necessary based on participants' health needs. Any information shared with staff members is done so in consideration of confidentiality rules.

Performance Level 4

The program requires medical forms and receives them from each participant. Forms are reviewed by staff members and by a nurse or health specialist and special health needs are flagged; forms are then kept on file. Staff members are informed of relevant special health needs of participants, such as food allergies, at the beginning of each year, and again in the middle of the year. Adjustments are made to the program design as necessary based on participants' health needs. The site director or other staff members maintains relationships with school nurses to receive updates on participants' health needs as they change. Any information shared with staff members is done so in consideration of confidentiality rules.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 9

Conducts all required fire/safety drills.

Performance Level 1

Fire and safety drills are never conducted.

Performance Level 2

Fire and safety drills are sometimes conducted, but are not conducted properly or frequently enough to meet requirements. No connections exist between the program host's drill procedures and the program.

Performance Level 3

Fire and safety drills are conducted regularly and meet all requirements. The program host's drill procedures incorporate the youth in the program.

Performance Level 4

Fire and safety drills are conducted regularly and meet all requirements. Drills occur more frequently than the requirements mandate. The program host's drill procedures incorporate the youth in the program. Staff members and the program host plan and assess the outcomes of drills together.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 10

Has a culture that allows participants to take initiative and explore their interests.

Performance Level 1

There is no opportunity for youth to contribute to the direction of programming or to express their interests. No leadership opportunities exist for students to show initiative. It is difficult for youth to become engaged with activities due to limited space and supplies. Youth are not given choices; rather, they are assigned to activities and tasks. The arrangement of the physical space does not allow for positive interactions among participants, successful implementation of activities, or exploration of personal interests.

Performance Level 2

Although supplies are limited, youth are given opportunities to engage in activities that are of interest to them. Supplies and materials are available for some activities, but they are often kept in a locked closet. Young people are seldom asked for their opinions and ideas for enhancing activities. When suggestions are made, they are often not implemented. Although staff members understand the importance of providing young people choices, they are not consistent in doing so.

Performance Level 3

Youth are encouraged to provide feedback on the program. Supplies and materials are always accessible to participants and kept at a central location, which encourages youth to find activities that interest them. Staff members provide opportunities for youth choice by administering monthly surveys on program options. The physical space is intentionally selected to complement activities.

Performance Level 4

All the staff members provide multiple opportunities for youth choice in their groups, and youth are always encouraged to provide feedback on the program. Supplies and materials are consistently stocked, accessible, and visible to all participants. The physical space is organized to allow positive peer interaction, facilitate rich discussions, and promote collaboration on projects. Space is often used as a model for other program providers to learn from.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 11

Establishes, maintains and communicates code of conduct to participants, staff, and their families.

Performance Level 1

No code of conduct is created. Therefore, participants do not know what is expected of their behavior and staff members make discipline decisions on a case-by-case basis. Families are unaware of what program staff members communicate to their children about behavior.

Performance Level 2

A code of conduct is created by staff members. Most participants are aware of the expectations in the code of conduct. Families are informed about the code of conduct if they are contacted about their child's behavior.

Performance Level 3

A code of conduct is jointly created by participants and staff members. All participants are aware of the code of conduct and are encouraged to follow it. The code of conduct is displayed in program spaces. Families are informed about the code of conduct at family events and if they are contacted about their child's behavior.

Performance Level 4

A code of conduct is jointly created by participants, staff members, and families. All participants agree to and sign the code of conduct. The code of conduct is displayed in program spaces, and a copy of it is sent to each participant's home.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 12

Applies rewards and consequences for participant behavior appropriately and consistently.

Performance Level 1

There is no system for rewarding or applying consequences to participants' behavior. Each staff member addresses behavior in their own way. Behavioral issues are not recorded in participant records. There is no code of conduct to determine how to apply rewards and consequences.

Performance Level 2

Staff members are asked to reward and apply consequences to participants based on their behavior, and they do so on an ad hoc basis. Behavioral issues are not recorded in participant records. The program has a code of conduct but there is little connection between the code of conduct and the application of rewards and consequences.

Performance Level 3

Staff members are asked to reward and apply consequences to participants based on their behavior. The staff members have a set of expectations for participants, which are communicated to participants. Staff members base their rewards or consequences on these expectations. Behavioral issues are recorded in participant records. The program has a code of conduct and it is frequently referenced in applying rewards and consequences.

Performance Level 4

Staff members are required to reward and apply consequences to participants based on their behavior. The program has a code of conduct, written by staff members, participants, and families, which defines good behavior and behavior in need of improvement. Behavioral issues are recorded, and the information is used to track participant progress over time. The program has a code of conduct, and it is frequently and consistently referenced and clearly used to assure consistent application of rewards and consequences.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 13

Actively recruits and welcomes youth with disabilities.

Performance Level 1

The program does not actively recruit youth with disabilities. Families of youth with disabilities are often directed to other programs where they can be accommodated.

Performance Level 2

The program does not actively recruit youth with disabilities, but welcomes them into the program if they seek to enroll. Accommodations are made for physical accessibility in the program space so youth with physical disabilities can attend the program. Youth with disabilities are able to participate in some, but not all, activities and events.

Performance Level 3

The program actively recruits youth with disabilities and welcomes them into the program. Accommodations are made for physical accessibility in the program space so youth with physical disabilities can attend the program. Accommodations are also made for youth with psychological, learning, and other disabilities. Youth with disabilities are able to participate in almost all activities and events.

Performance Level 4

The program actively recruits youth with disabilities and welcomes them into the program. The program was designed to be accessible to youth of all levels of ability, and program leaders continuously update the program to ensure full accessibility. Accommodations are made for physical accessibility in the program space so youth with physical disabilities can attend the program. Accommodations are also made for youth with psychological, learning, and other disabilities. Youth with disabilities are able to participate in all activities and events.

Environment and Climate, Indicator 14

Promotes psychological and emotional safety through a culture of support, inclusion, and mutual respect.

Performance Level 1

The program does not explicitly promote psychological and emotional safety. Some of the staff is supportive, inclusive, and respectful, but these characteristics are unique to individual staff members. Therefore, not every participant feels completely comfortable in the program.

Performance Level 2

The program promotes psychological and emotional safety in its mission and/or vision statements. The staff is asked to be supportive, inclusive, and respectful, but not all staff members prioritize these attitudes in their work. Program leaders do not have enough time to work with all staff members to build the skills and knowledge needed to create a culture of psychological and emotional safety. Therefore, not every participant feels completely comfortable in the program.

Performance Level 3

The program promotes psychological and emotional safety in its mission and/or vision statements. Staff orientation includes a discussion of what it means to be supportive, inclusive, and respectful of all youth. Program leaders include a review of these characteristics in staff assessments, and regularly provide feedback to staff. Some participants are surveyed to get feedback about how comfortable they feel in the program.

Performance Level 4

The program promotes psychological and emotional safety in its mission and/or vision statements, as well as in other places (e.g. brochures, web pages, etc.). Staff orientation includes a discussion of what it means to be supportive, inclusive, and respectful of all youth, and follow-up professional development sessions cover these topics throughout the year. Program leaders include a review of these characteristics in staff assessments, and provide feedback to staff in an ongoing manner. All participants are surveyed to get feedback about how comfortable they feel in the program.

*Indicator is critical to program start-up.