



Guide to the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation System



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Acknowledgements

The New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Model reflects the collective wisdom from the afterschool / youth development field and is modeled in part after the National Afterschool Association accreditation framework and the New York State Afterschool Network's Quality Self- Assessment Tool.

Led by AfterSchool Works! New York and informed by the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation workgroup; a group comprised of direct service practitioners, program directors, trainers, evaluation specialists, policy experts and agency leaders - the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation model is designed to provide afterschool providers in New York State with a viable, affordable and meaningful accreditation option.

About AfterSchool Works! New York

AfterSchool Works! New York (ASWNY) is a member-driven, non-profit organization serving the afterschool provider community throughout New York State. Formerly the New York State School-Age Care Coalition (NYSSACC), AfterSchool Works! New York was founded in 1995 by a group of school-age child care directors with the mission of promoting the growth and development of high quality school-age child care programs in New York State.

Through an extensive network of intermediaries, training organizations and child care resource and referral agencies, ASWNY provides information, training, credentialing and support to afterschool professionals in order to build high-performing, sustainable afterschool programs that meet the needs of children, youth and their families. In addition, we serve as a professional association through our affiliation with the National AfterSchool Association to further inform, educate and engage the afterschool workforce.

Our efforts are predicated on the belief and reinforced through research, that strong staff lends itself to improved program quality which increases positive outcomes for children and youth. This framework is supported by the *Massachusetts After-School Research Study*, a study of afterschool programs serving elementary and middle school youth from ten communities across Massachusetts which found that the **single most important factor in determining program quality is a well-trained, prepared and stable workforce**. And that children and youth served by stronger staff are more likely to stay enrolled, and therefore more likely to reap the documented benefits that come with being part of an afterschool program, such as higher rates of homework completion, increased social skills, and an enthusiasm for learning.

Our association includes practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and administrators representing all public, private, faith-based, school-based and community-based sectors. Our members work in school age child care programs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Advantage AfterSchool Programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's, 4H, Parks and Recreation Departments, and other before school, after school and summer programs.

Introduction

In the last decade, public and private investments in afterschool have grown dramatically in New York State leading to an increase in the number of programs available to children and youth. It is estimated that over 600,000 children and youth are served by nearly 5,000 programs throughout the state. Clearly, afterschool programs play a critical role in keeping kids safe, helping working families and supporting learning. Yet a lack of uniformity in quality persists.

High quality afterschool programs can have strong positive effects on children's academic, social, and emotional lives, especially for at-risk youth. Recent reviews of afterschool program evaluations done on well-run and effective afterschool programs showed that participation in quality afterschool programs improved youths' feelings of self-confidence, self-esteem, attitude towards school, school grades, achievement test scores, and reduced problem behaviors. Conversely, the impact of low-performing, low quality programs on children and youth are far-reaching and involve social, physical, emotional and academic developmental risks.

Program accreditation is the ultimate indication of program quality. It also provides afterschool professionals with performance indicators, benchmarks of quality - to guide program planning, implementation and evaluation. Accreditation also serves to guide families in making more informed choices about afterschool care for their children. Moreover, the accreditation process supports a team approach to program improvement and fosters a competent, caring and qualified staff.

All programs serving school-age children in New York State will be eligible to apply for New York State accreditation starting in September 2010. Accreditation is in effect for four years, pending completion of an annual activity report. An accreditation renewal process is available to interested programs beyond the four year accreditation period.



Frequently Asked Questions About the Building of a New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation System

Why develop a state model of accreditation?

In an effort to provide afterschool providers in New York State with a viable and affordable option to national accreditation, AfterSchool Works! New York has taken the lead in developing a New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Model. An active workgroup comprised of direct service practitioners, program directors, trainers, evaluation specialists, policy experts and agency leaders has been established to inform the design and implementation of the model.

How does this work intersect with the national system?

AfterSchool Works! New York is actively engaged in conversations with the Council on Accreditation, the agency responsible for administering the national system, around ways to support our respective models and collectively promote the value of accreditation to the field. Providers in New York State will be at a **greater advantage** than their peers in other states in that they will have multiple pathways to accreditation and can determine which model will best meet their needs.

What are the principles that guide the development of the model?

- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model must be rooted in a set of accreditation standards that reflects the collective wisdom of the field.** Representing a higher tier of quality than the New York State School-Age Child Care Regulations, our accreditation standards will build on the collective knowledge of the field and include research-proven, innovative and promising practices in afterschool programming.
- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model must be responsive to the afterschool landscape in New York State.** The accreditation standards and accompanying observation tool, while serving as the final assessment upon which an endorser will recommend accreditation, will allow for programs to utilize existing self-assessment processes (i.e. NYSAN QSA, YPQA, SACERS, etc.)
- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model must be recognized by the child care regulatory system of the state.** AfterSchool Works! New York has been invited to serve on the state's quality rating and improvement system (Quality Stars New York) design team to ensure alignment and integration with their framework.
- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model must be accessible to all afterschool programs.** Our design team is working to ensure that the accreditation process is streamlined and easy to navigate—while remaining rigorous and relevant.

- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model must be affordable.** The accreditation price points will be between \$1,200 - \$1,400 (per the size and scope of the program) with a customized accreditation package for multi site organizations and / or programs serving in excess of 250 children.
- **The New York State Afterschool Accreditation model was tested for reliability prior to a full, statewide implementation.** A field test involving a diverse set of ten programs was successfully initiated in the fall of 2009.

How long will accreditation remain in effect?

If awarded, accreditation will remain in effect for four years, pending completion of an annual activity report. An accreditation renewal process is available to interested programs beyond the four year accreditation period.

How can I become involved in the process?

We welcome your participation in the process. Here are some ways to get involved!

- ✓ Encourage programs that you work with to apply for accreditation
- ✓ Become an accreditation coach
- ✓ Become an accreditation endorser
- ✓ Help get the word out and promote the value of accreditation

Please contact AfterSchool Works! New York at 518.694.0660 or visit us online at www.afterschoolworksny.org for more information.



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Overview of Accreditation

Introduction

Program accreditation is the ultimate indication of program quality. It also provides afterschool professionals with performance indicators to guide program planning, implementation and evaluation. Accreditation also serves to guide families in making more informed choices about afterschool care for their children. Moreover, the accreditation process supports a team approach to program improvement and fosters a competent, caring and qualified staff.

The New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation is intended to be inclusive. As such, all programs serving school-age children in New York State are eligible to apply for New York State accreditation. Once achieved, accreditation is in effect for three years, pending completion of an annual activity report. An accreditation renewal process will be available to interested programs beyond the three year accreditation period.

Overview of the Accreditation Process

A quality program is one that is reflective, willing to improve, change and grow, and believes in successful outcomes for its participants. The New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation model is rooted in an authentic self-study process designed to guide practitioners from direct service staff to program directors and administrators, through an examination of their program as a first step towards accreditation.

The foundation of the self-study process is the Self-Study Tool which is comprised of a set of quality standards that represent effective practices in afterschool programming. This tool, while representing the final standards by which a program's accreditation status will be determined, was designed to be aligned with a variety of assessment and self-study tools used throughout New York State, therefore allowing a program to build on existing quality improvement efforts. These tools include the New York State Afterschool Network's Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool, the School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS), and the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). Programs can choose to use the Self-Study Tool, or one of the aforementioned self-study tools. Programs choosing to use an alternate tool will be prepared for the accreditation endorsement, however, it is strongly recommended that program leadership reviews the Self-Study Tool several times prior to the endorsement visit to become familiar with the standards and indicators and to ensure full preparation for the endorsement visit. Accreditation coaches have been familiarized with the QSA Tool, YPQA, and SACERS, and your coach can support self-study and planning for quality improvement regardless of what tool you choose.

The self-study must occur in the same program year that the accreditation application is submitted to AfterSchool Works! New York.

Programs are encouraged to engage their staff and stakeholders in the self-assessment process. Programs are asked to rate their performance on the standard as demonstrated by the performance indicator using a scale of 0 (unmet) to 2 (met). For those indicators that score a less than satisfactory score, programs must develop a plan for improvement, a template for which is included. In order to attain accreditation, programs are expected to achieve level 2 on all of the performance indicators within each of the program foundation areas at the time of the Accreditation Endorsement visit.

About the Field Test

The initial phase of the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation model was a field test involving ten diverse programs. Coordinated by AfterSchool Works! New York in partnership with the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Workgroup, the field test was designed to evaluate the efficacy of the orientation, training, technical assistance, tools, materials and administration of process. Data collected through the field test was considered, and minor adjustments to the model were made.



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Process Roles and Responsibilities

Program accreditation is the ultimate indicator of program quality – quality that lends itself to improved outcomes for children, youth and families. Moreover, the accreditation process supports a team approach to program improvement and fosters a competent, caring and qualified staff. The various stakeholders and their role and responsibilities are described below.

Representative(s) of Program Seeking Accreditation

- Utilizes the AfterSchool Works! New York website to better understand the Accreditation process
- Selects and develops an agreement with an Accreditation Coach from the list of “approved” Accreditation Coaches on the AfterSchool Works! New York website
- Works closely with the Accreditation Coach during the self-study process from initial internal review of the program to preparation of the administrative review materials
- Submits completed application and fees to AfterSchool Works! New York
- Secures a quiet, private space for the Accreditation Endorser the day of the endorsement visit
- Attends a MANDATORY meeting with ALL staff and the Accreditation Endorser the day of the endorsement visit
- Attends an exit interview session the day of the endorsement visit

Accreditation Coach

- Participates in training delivered by AfterSchool Works! New York
- Communicates and develops an agreement with program representative(s)
- Facilitates the self-study process
- Provides feedback and recommendations for program improvement
- Guides the program in the development of their application and preparation of the administrative review materials
- Certifies the application as complete

Accreditation Endorser

- Participates in training delivered by AfterSchool Works! New York
- Serves as the representative of AfterSchool Works! New York
- Schedules and performs assigned program endorsement visit
- Coordinates a meeting with program staff to obtain additional evidence of program quality
- Reviews program documentation and self-study materials
- Observes the program for a minimum of 2.5 hours (or duration of program)

- Interviews the Program Director in an effort to learn more about aspects of the program that may not have been clearly observed and to obtain additional evidence to determine the level of quality
- Verifies that all procedures have been followed and submits completed documentation to AfterSchool Works! New York
- Respects the confidentiality of all information reviewed during the accreditation visit
- Submits paperwork to AfterSchool Works! New York within 5 business days after performing the Accreditation endorsement visit

AfterSchool Works! New York

- Maintains up-to-date list of Accreditation Coaches trained and supported by AfterSchool Works! New York
- Maintains up-to-date list of Accreditation Endorsers trained and supported by AfterSchool Works! New York
- Maintains up-to-date Accreditation Guidebook and all supporting material
- Matches program with Accreditation Endorser
- Ensures accreditation visit procedures were followed
- Convenes Statewide Accreditation Review Panel to carefully review paperwork of each program seeking accreditation, including a second review of information collected during the endorsement visit and documentation review
- Awards Accreditation Certificate or defers until appropriate changes are made



Seven Steps to New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation

Step One: The interested program participates in a web-based accreditation orientation (powerpoint) and secures an Accreditation Coach from the AfterSchool Works! New York.

Step Two: Program representative completes the accreditation application, including self-study tool and pre-visit documentation checklist and submits the completed documentation to AfterSchool Works! New York.

Step Three: Within 30 business days of receipt, AfterSchool Works! New York reviews the documentation to ensure completeness and assigns an Accreditation Endorser.

Step Four: The assigned Accreditation Endorser contacts the program representative within 5 business days to schedule a visit within the following 30 days.

Step Five: The endorsement visit is completed within 30 business days.

Step Six: Within 5 business days of the visit, the Accreditation Endorser submits the completed paperwork to AfterSchool Works! New York along with a recommendation for accreditation or deferment.

Step Seven: Within 45 business days of receiving documentation, the New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Review Board assesses the paperwork, makes the final accreditation determination and notifies the program of the decision.



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Accreditation Fees and Payment Instructions

The fee for New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation is based on program size and must be submitted with your completed application cover page, application, program practices self-study tool and pre-visit documentation checklist and related documents.

Please select the accreditation rate that applies to your program:

- Program site with a total enrollment of 0-35 children: \$1,200
- Program site with a total enrollment of 36-60 children: \$1,300
- Program site with a total enrollment of 61-99 children: \$1,400

A customized fee structure for multi-site organizations and programs serving 250 or more children will be available. For details, contact AfterSchool Works! New York at 518.694.0660.

- Renewal: \$1,000

All fees must be paid in full prior to an accreditation endorsement visit. The cost for the accreditation coach, if applicable, is not included in the price points above and is negotiated between the program and the coach.

Please make checks payable to:

**AfterSchool Works! New York
91 Broadway
Menands, New York 12204
Attn: NYS Accreditation**



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation The Accreditation Coach

Position Summary

The role of the Accreditation Coach is to provide mentoring and guidance to the program throughout the accreditation process.

Key Responsibilities

- Facilitating the self-assessment process
- Providing feedback and recommendations for program improvement
- Guiding the program in the development of their application and preparation of administrative review materials

Core Qualifications

- Current membership in professional association
- Education related to child development; Bachelor's degree preferred
- Demonstrated knowledge of afterschool / youth development principles and practices
- Successful completion of Accreditation Coach training module provided by AfterSchool Works! New York

Skills and Abilities

- Significant experience in facilitating organizational change and quality improvements
- Experience working with diverse populations
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Strong verbal and written skills
- Computer proficient and knowledge of MS Office
- Ability to work independently, efficiently, establish priorities and meet deadlines
- Outstanding organizational skills and attention to detail
- Ability to travel locally and perhaps, regionally

To apply, please submit by email a thoughtful cover letter detailing your qualifications, skills and abilities along with an updated resume, completed Accreditation Coach application and three professional references. Selected candidates must be willing to incur the \$30.00 cost of the required training.



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation The Accreditation Endorser

Position Summary

The role of the Accreditation Endorser is to act as the official agent of AfterSchool Works! New York and verifies that the program has met the accreditation threshold of quality.

Key Responsibilities

- Serve as the representative of the Accreditation Agency
- Schedule and perform program endorsement visit assigned
- Review program documentation and self-study materials
- Observe the program for a minimum of 2.5 hours (or the duration of the program day)
- Interview the program director to learn more about quality standards that may not have been clearly observable
- Facilitate a meeting of program stakeholders to obtain additional evidence of program quality
- Verify that all procedures have been followed and submit completed documentation to AfterSchool Works! New York
- Notify AfterSchool Works! New York within 5 business days when assigned – either to alert them to a scheduled Endorsement Visit or to notify them that the Endorser was unable to schedule the Endorsement Visit and another Endorser should be assigned.

Core Qualifications

- Evident of current membership in a professional association
- A minimum of three years experience working in a school-age care program in a management capacity
- Education related to child development; Bachelor's degree preferred
- Thorough understanding of afterschool / youth development principles and practices
- Successful completion of Accreditation Endorser training module provided by AfterSchool Works! New York
- Prior experience as an NAA endorser a plus

Skills and Abilities

- Excellent observation skills
- Experience working with diverse populations
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Strong verbal and written skills
- Computer proficient and knowledge of MS Office
- Ability to work independently, efficiently, establish priorities and meet deadlines
- Outstanding organizational skills and attention to detail
- Ability to travel

Endorsement Assignments

Accreditation Endorsers are asked to make themselves available for up to five program assessment visits per program year, depending on the demand.

When assigning an Accreditation Endorser to make a visit, AfterSchool Works! New York attempts to balance competing issues of travel time and potential conflict of interest. Ideally, the Accreditation Endorser will have no prior knowledge of the program. Therefore Accreditation Endorsers should plan to travel outside their immediate area.

Accepting and Scheduling an Assignment

AfterSchool Works! New York will contact Accreditation Endorsers by phone or e-mail with the program name, location, and contact person, plus the time frame in which the Accreditation visit should take place. Accreditation Endorsers should contact the program to schedule the visit – and inform AfterSchool Works! New York of the date of the Visit – *within five business days of receiving the assignment.*

To apply, please submit by email a thoughtful cover letter detailing your qualifications, skills and abilities along with an updated resume, completed Accreditation Endorser application and three professional references. Selected candidates must be willing to incur the \$30.00 cost of the required training.

Accreditation Endorsers are eligible to receive a \$200.00 stipend per endorsement visit plus mileage reimbursement at \$.50/mile.



**New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation
Proposed Endorsement Visit Schedule**

While each visit will vary depending on the size and scope of the program being observed, the following is a proposed framework for the endorsement visit.

Timeline	Tasks
12:00 pm – 2:30 pm	1. Arrive 2. Meet program contact 3. Tour facility 4. Set up in separate room for documentation review and debriefing sessions 5. Perform preliminary documentation review and verification 6. Meet program staff at mandatory staff meeting
2:30 pm – 5:00 pm	7. Observe program set-up 8. Observe program
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	9. Perform final documentation review 10. Follow up with program contact, if necessary 11. Document findings 12. Complete paperwork
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	13. Convene final debriefing session with program contact, coach and program administrator 14. Adjourn



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Endorsement Visit Tip Sheet for Programs

Before the Visit:

- A representative from AfterSchool Works! New York will contact program representative to confirm receipt of application and ask any clarifying or follow-up questions.
- An endorser will contact Program Representative to review the visit schedule and to get directions to the program.
- Inform the endorser of any special program events or activities taking place during the visit.
- Please do not arrange for activities, meals or gifts for the endorser.

Reminders:

- Arrange a quiet and private space where the endorser can work throughout the day.
- Work with your Accreditation Coach to ensure all documentation is available for review.
- Arrange for a meeting with the staff and Accreditation Coach before the observation and plan for the coach to attend the Exit Interview at the conclusion of the visit.
- Invite the Program Director and/or another representative to the Exit Interview.
- Operate your program as you normally would.

During the Visit:

Meet the Endorser when he/she arrives to:

- Review the schedule for the visit
- Tour the facility (space used during program hours)
- Show the endorser the quiet, private space that is available for the day
- Introduce the endorser to the staff.
- Be available to answer questions and assist the endorser in locating documents. **It is important to stay close by but not in the room with the endorser.**
- **Do not** stay with the Endorser during the observation but let him / her know how you can be found if necessary.
- **Do not** have “extra” people around for the observation (such as Administrators, Accreditation Coach, etc., who don’t usually work with the children).



New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation Program Appeals Process

The New York State Afterschool Program Accreditation process provides programs the right to appeal the decision reached at the accreditation endorsement visit. The purpose of the appeals process is to ensure that the standard and correct *process* was applied to the program's accreditation process.

It should be noted, however, that the appeals process has NOT been designed to provide a second judgment regarding the program's achievement of accreditation standards. Before submitting an appeal, programs should clearly understand that the appeal looks only at *how* the process was conducted, not at whether the program met the necessary quality standards to be awarded accreditation.

Appeals will be upheld if adequate documentation is submitted to support that specific policies and procedures were violated during the accreditation visit or other portions of the process.

Appeals May be Initiated Only by the Program

The appeal must be submitted in writing and must be received within 30 days from the date of the notification letter sent by AfterSchool Works! New York to the program. The written appeal must contain a clear statement of the procedural or policy violation(s) upon which the appeal is based, along with a factual account of the circumstances involved. This means that only specific, documented facts should be stated.

Appeals must be sent to:

AfterSchool Works! New York
91 Broadway, Menands, NY 12204
Phone: 518.694.0660
Fax: 518.690.2887

AfterSchool Works! New York will conduct an in-depth investigation of the appeal. It will involve fact-finding activities such as review of accreditation assessment visit materials, review of written statements from the program and Accreditation Endorser, and telephone interviews with the Accreditation Coach whenever necessary. AfterSchool Works! New York will then consider all pertinent information and make a decision regarding the appeal. Once a decision is made, the program will be officially notified in writing.

If the accreditation agency upholds the appeal, this action will not be equivalent to a judgment of competence. Accreditation will not automatically be awarded. An appeal upheld means that the program is granted a second assessment at no additional cost. The accreditation agency will assign a different Accreditation Endorser to conduct another accreditation assessment visit.

If the accreditation agency does not uphold the appeal, the program may reapply for accreditation by requesting a new site visit and proceeding through all steps of the process. The accreditation agency will assign a new Accreditation Endorser who will observe and conduct the accreditation assessment. **All fees must be paid again.**

About the Deferral Process

If an endorser determines that a program does not fully meet the accreditation criteria, she/he will recommend that the decision to accredit be deferred until the program has had the time to make the necessary improvements. After a thorough staff review from the AfterSchool Works! New York Accreditation Review Panel, the program will receive a full report identifying the strengths of the program as well as the areas that need improvement before accreditation can be granted.

A deferred program will have a period of 3 months (excluding the two summer months) from the time of the initial visit to apply for a second endorsement visit. The fee for the second visit will be \$400.00.

In the application for the second endorsement visit, the program will submit new information and ratings on the Self-Study Tool. They will not, however, be required to send in the Program Accreditation Pre-Visit Review Checklist unless specifically requested.

The endorser will observe and complete the Program Practices Tool; focusing on observing the areas that were identified as “needing improvement” for accreditation. The endorser will also review documentation related to those standards identified as needing improvement.

If a program does not apply for a second visit within 3 months, it will be considered a new visit when the program does apply, and the program will need to complete the full application and pay the full fee.

About Immediate Corrective Actions (ICA)

Occasionally there may be a circumstance in which a physical impediment impacts accreditation. If the Endorser would recommend accreditation except for some *physical* change that could be made in a short time span, they will identify that as an *Immediate Corrective Action* for the program to take. If the program can take that immediate action and can certify that they have done so, then they will be accredited. As a general, only physical changes (e.g., removing some hazardous piece of equipment from the playground or cleaning supplies out of children’s reach) will be accepted for immediate corrective action.