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# RIPQA

## The Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool

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### DEVELOPING QUALITY STANDARDS AND INDICATORS FOR RHODE ISLAND

In recent years, quality improvement has grown in importance for Rhode Island after school providers, due in large part to a shift in how after school is perceived by the general public. No longer are after school programs viewed as simply babysitting for children with working parents. Instead, they have become enriching holistic programs with their own goals and objectives. As a result, after school providers have expressed the need to learn more about how they can improve their programs and reach more youth. As a first step to addressing those needs, in 2004, the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) brought together a representative work group of 25 after school providers to develop a set of standards and indicators that would help define quality after school programming. The standards cover five broad areas of program quality:

- **Health, Safety, and the Environment**
- **Relationships**
- **Programming and Activities**
- **Staffing and Professional Development**
- **Administration**

PASA scanned the country for existing after school standards and indicators and information about how well they had worked. The work group then customized the standards and indicators to fit the needs and context of Providence. As the standards and indicators emerged, they were brought to providers, parents, youth leaders and after school funders for feedback and approval. The Rhode Island After School Plus Alliance (RIASPA) was intimately involved in the development of the standards and indicators and, as part of its mission, is working to disseminate them statewide.

### WHAT IS THE RIPQA?

From the outset, PASA and RIASPA recognized that standards and indicators alone could not change the quality of programs or the skills of program staff and volunteers. In fact, standards, when not matched with an assessment process, can be quite overwhelming and difficult to implement. It is with that in mind that PASA has partnered with the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation to develop the Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool.

The work group, providers, parents, and funders all agreed that an “off the shelf” assessment tool would not work for Rhode Island. We had invested too much of a community process in developing standards and indicators to throw them away in favor of a pre-packaged tool. Neither did stakeholders feel that a completely “home-grown” tool would have the credibility, reliability, or validity necessary to feel confident in the assessment process. Instead, we have come up with a hybrid approach that combines a nationally recognized and validated tool developed by High/Scope with a supplementary component that addresses the unique needs and priorities of Rhode Island after school providers. The RIPQA helps organizations to reflect on how well they are serving young people in the five standards categories listed above.

### HOW DO I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RIPQA?

To learn more about the RIPQA and begin using it with your own organization for self-assessment purposes, contact:

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## Form A Indicator Summary

### I. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

#### A. Psychological and emotional safety

1. Emotional Climate
2. Mutual respect (religion, ethnicity, etc.)

#### B. Physically safe environment

1. Health and safety
2. Sanitation
3. Ventilation and lighting
4. Temperature

#### C. Emergency procedures

1. Emergency procedures
2. Fire extinguisher
3. First aid kit
4. Other safety equipment
5. Supervised entrances
6. Supervised access to outdoor space

#### D. Program space and furniture

1. Sufficient space
2. Suitable space
3. Furniture
4. Physical environment can be modified

#### E. Healthy food and drinks

1. Drinking water
2. Available food and drinks
3. Healthy food and drinks

### II. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

#### F. Welcoming atmosphere

1. Staff greet youth
2. Staff tone of voice and language
3. Staff smile, use friendly gestures, make eye contact

#### G. Session flow

1. Start and end on time
2. Materials and supplies ready
3. Enough materials and supplies for all youth
4. Staff explain activities clearly
5. Appropriate time for activities

#### H. Active engagement

1. Youth engage with materials or ideas
2. Tangible products or performances
3. Youth talk about what they are doing
4. Balance concrete and abstract

#### I. Building new skills

1. Youth encouraged to try new skills
2. Mistakes allowed

#### J. Encouragement

1. Staff actively involved with youth
2. Staff use specific, nonevaluative language
3. Open-ended questions

#### K. Reframing conflict

1. Staff approach calmly
2. Staff seek input from youth
3. Relationship between actions and consequences
4. Staff follow up

### III. INTERACTION

#### L. Sense of belonging

1. Get to know each other
2. Inclusive relationships
3. Youth identify with program offering
4. Publicly acknowledge achievements

#### M. Small groups

1. Number of groupings
2. Ways to form small groups
3. Groups have purpose and members cooperate

#### N. Youth lead and mentor

1. Group-process skills
2. Opportunities to mentor
3. Opportunities to lead a group

#### O. Youth-adult partnerships

1. Staff share control with youth
2. Staff explain guidelines

### IV. ENGAGEMENT

#### P. Youth set goals and make plans

1. Plans for projects and activities
2. Planning strategies

#### Q. Youth make choices

1. Content choices
2. Process choices

#### R. Youth reflect

1. Youth reflect on what they are doing
2. Youth reflect in multiple ways
3. Youth make presentations
4. Youth give feedback on the activities

# Form B Summary Sheet

## V. Family and Civic Engagement

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Staff and volunteers interact with families in positive ways.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Staff and volunteers provide opportunities for meaningful engagement of participants' family members.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. The program builds upon community resources.
- \_\_\_\_\_ D. Staff and volunteers are aware of cultural and individual differences in working with participants and their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ E. Program policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of children, youth and families in the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ F. The program engages families as partners in its success.
- \_\_\_\_\_ G. The program builds links to the community.

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|  | <b>Family and Civic Engagement Sum</b>           |
|  | <b>Family and Civic Engagement Average Score</b> |

## VII. Administration

- \_\_\_\_\_ M. Staff-to-participant ratios and group size enable the staff to meet the needs of participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ N. The administration sets clear expectations for participant behavior and active, consistent participation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ O. The administration provides sound leadership and management.
- \_\_\_\_\_ P. Program policies and procedures exist to enhance the health and safety of all participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Q. The program solicits feedback from children, youth and their families about the program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ R. The program has a system for using information for learning and program improvement as well as for measuring outcomes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ S. The program has a clear vision and mission and a plan to support sustainability.

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|  | <b>Administration Sum</b>           |
|  | <b>Administration Average Score</b> |

## VI. Staffing and Professional Development

- \_\_\_\_\_ H. All program staff receive relevant training and attend ongoing professional development activities that support their own growth and build more effective program practice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I. Program managers assess job performance and satisfaction among staff and volunteers and make improvements where necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ J. Staff and volunteers are familiar with their job roles and responsibilities prior to working with participants and their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ K. Staff and volunteers of all levels are eligible and well prepared to work with participants and their families.
- \_\_\_\_\_ L. Staff and volunteers receive the necessary support to work effectively.

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|  | <b>Staffing and PD Sum</b>           |
|  | <b>Staffing and PD Average Score</b> |