

# ARQ: Advancing & Recognizing Quality

## NAA's Program Improvement and Accreditation System



*This shows the steps you can take toward program improvement and Accreditation. YOU decide how fast and how far you want to go in the process.*



### ARQ Overview: Seven Steps

Step	Component	Materials	Remarks
1	Introduction to Quality: Standards, Readiness, and Resources	Standards For Quality School-Age Care, Standards at a Glance, and Bringing Yourself to Work	General information
2	Self-Study	Self-Study/ASQ Materials	Program assessment and improvement
3	Accreditation	Guide to Accreditation, Application, and Impact Quality Kit	Accreditation process and application preparation
4	Intent to submit	Letter of Intent (form available at <a href="http://www.naaweb.org">www.naaweb.org</a> )	Non-refundable fee to commit to the Accreditation process. Must submit application within 60 to 90 days or receive prior approval from NAA
5	Application submission, review, and processing	Application	Application reviewed and approved by NAA
6	Endorser visit and report review and processing	None	Endorsers scheduled by RPA
7	Continuous improvement	Interim Report and Statement of Continuous Improvement (forms available at <a href="http://www.naaweb.org">www.naaweb.org</a> )	Annual fee for three years with reporting documents during four-year Accreditation term

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## The NAA Standards *continued*

- b) Staff have access to adequate and convenient storage.
  - c) The indoor space meets or exceeds local health and safety codes.
  - d) Written guidelines are in place regarding the use and maintenance of the program facility.
27. The outdoor space is large enough to meet the needs of children, youth, and staff.
- a) There is enough room in the outdoor space for all program activities.
  - b) The outdoor space meets or exceeds local health and safety codes.
  - c) Staff use outdoor areas to provide new outdoor play experiences.
  - d) There is a procedure in place for regularly checking the safety and maintenance of the outdoor play space.
28. Staff, children, and youth work together to plan and implement suitable activities, which are consistent with the program's philosophy.
- a) Staff ask children to share their ideas for planning so that activities will reflect children's interests.
  - b) The program's daily activities are in line with its mission and philosophy.
  - c) Staff keep on file their records of activity planning.
  - d) Staff plan activities that will reflect the cultures of the families in the program and the broad diversity of human experience.
29. Program policies and procedures are in place to protect the safety of the children and youth.
- a) Staff and children know what to do in case of general emergency.
  - b) The program has established procedures to prevent accidents and manage emergencies.
  - c) The program has established policies to transport children safely; it complies with all legal requirements for vehicles and drivers.
  - d) A system is in place to prevent unauthorized people from taking children from the program.
30. Program policies exist to protect and enhance the health of all children and youth.
- a) There is current documentation showing that the program has met the state and/or local health and safety guidelines and/or regulations.
  - b) There are written policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of children.
  - c) No smoking is allowed in the program.
  - d) The staff are always prepared to respond to accidents and emergencies.
31. All staff are professionally qualified to work with children and youth.
- a) Staff meet the requirements for experience with school-age children in recreational settings.
  - b) Staff have received the recommended type and amount of preparation. They meet the requirements that are specific to school-age childcare and relevant to their particular jobs.
  - c) Staff meet minimum age requirements.
  - d) Enough qualified staff are in place to meet all levels of responsibility. Qualified staff are hired in all areas: to administer the program, to oversee its daily operations, and to supervise children.
32. Staff (paid, volunteer, and substitute) are given an orientation to the job before working with children and youth.
- a) A written job description that outlines responsibilities to children, families, and the program is reviewed with each staff member.
  - b) Written personnel policies are reviewed with staff.
  - c) Written program policies and procedures, including emergency procedures and confidentiality policies, are reviewed with staff.
  - d) New staff are given a comprehensive orientation to the program philosophy, routines, and practices. They are personally introduced to the people with whom they will be working.
33. The training needs of the staff are assessed, and training is relevant to the responsibilities of each job. Assistant Group Leaders receive at least 15 hours of training annually. Group Leaders receive at least 18 hours of training annually. Senior Group Leaders receive at least 21 hours of training annually. Site Directors receive at least 24 hours of training annually. Program Administrators receive at least 30 hours of training annually.
- a) Staff receive training in how to work with families and how to relate to children in ways that promote their development.
  - b) Program directors and administrators receive training in program management and staff supervision.
  - c) Staff receive training in how to set up program space and design activities to support program goals.
  - d) Staff receive training in how to promote the safety, health, and nutrition of children.
34. Staff receive appropriate support to make their work experience positive.
- a) The program has a plan in place to offer the best possible wages and working conditions in an effort to reduce staff turnover.
  - b) Full-time staff receive benefits, including health insurance and paid leaves of absence. Staff are also given paid breaks and paid preparation time.
  - c) Staff are given ample time to discuss their own concerns regarding the program.
- d) Staff receive continuous supervision and feedback. This includes written performance reviews on a timely basis.
35. The administration provides sound management of the program.
- a) The financial management of the program supports the program's goals.
  - b) The administration oversees the recruitment and retention of program staff.
  - c) The director involves staff, board, families, and children in both long-term planning and daily decision-making.
  - d) Administrators assist with ongoing evaluation. They aim for improvement in all areas of the program.
36. Program policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of children, youth, and families in the community.
- a) A written mission statement sets forth the program's philosophy and goals.
  - b) The program makes itself affordable to all families by using all possible community resources and sources of subsidy.
  - c) The program's hours of operation are based on families' needs.
  - d) It is the program's policy to enroll children with special needs.

## The NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care

# STANDARDS AT A GLANCE



**America's Leading Network for After-School Professionals**

*For information on NAA Membership or the Program Improvement and Accreditation System, contact:*

**The National AfterSchool Association**  
Tel: 800-617-8242  
email: [staff@naaweb.org](mailto:staff@naaweb.org) • web: [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org)

The NAA Standards have been developed through a collaboration with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time and are based on their publication, *Assessing School-Age Child Care Quality*.



# The NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care

**T**he NAA Standards describe the practices that lead to stimulating, safe, and supportive programs for young people ages 5 to 14 in their out-of-school time.

These “Standards at a Glance” give you an overview of the Standards which are organized into 36 “keys” to quality. The first 20 keys are things that you can see happening in a program. The other 16 “Administration” keys describe the policies and “behind the scenes” practices that are the foundation of a quality program.

The complete publication, *The NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care*, also has concrete examples, guiding questions for staff discussion, a glossary, and an appendix.

Purchasing the Standards publication and using it to guide your staff in making targeted improvements is the first step in the whole NAA Program Improvement and Accreditation System.



## Human Relationships

- Staff relate to all children and youth in positive ways.
  - Staff treat children with respect and listen to what they say.
  - Staff make children feel welcome and comfortable.
  - Staff respond to children with acceptance and appreciation.
  - Staff are engaged with children.
- Staff respond appropriately to the individual needs of children and youth.
  - Staff know that each child has special interests and talents.
  - Staff recognize the range of children’s abilities.
  - Staff can relate to a child’s culture and home language.
  - Staff respond to the range of children’s feelings and temperaments.
- Staff encourage children and youth to make choices and to become more responsible.
  - Staff offer assistance in a way that supports a child’s initiative.

- Staff assist children without taking control, and they encourage children to take leadership roles.
  - Staff give children many chances to choose what they will do, how they will do it, and with whom.
  - Staff help children make informed and responsible choices.
- Staff interact with children and youth to help them learn.
  - Staff ask questions that encourage children to think for themselves.
  - Staff share skills and resources to help children gain information and solve problems.
  - Staff vary the approaches they use to help children learn.
  - Staff help children use language skills through frequent conversations.
- Staff use positive techniques to guide the behavior of children and youth.
  - Staff give attention to children when they cooperate, share, care for materials, or join in activities.
  - Staff set appropriate limits for children.
  - Staff use no harsh discipline methods.
  - Staff encourage children to resolve their own conflicts. Staff step in only if needed to discuss the issues and work out a solution.
- Children and youth generally interact with one another in positive ways.
  - Children appear relaxed and involved with each other.
  - Children show respect for each other.
  - Children usually cooperate and work well together.
  - When problems occur, children often try to discuss their differences and work out a solution.
- Staff and families interact with each other in positive ways.
  - Staff make families feel welcome and comfortable.
  - Staff and families treat each other with respect.
  - Staff share the languages and cultures of the families they serve, and the communities they live in.
  - Staff and families work together to make arrivals and departures between home and childcare go smoothly.
- Staff work well together to meet the needs of children and youth.
  - Staff communicate with each other while the program is in session to ensure that the program flows smoothly.
  - Staff are cooperative with each other.
  - Staff are respectful of each other.
  - Staff provide role models of positive adult relationships.



## Indoor Environment

- The program’s indoor space meets the needs of children and youth.
  - There is enough room for all program activities.
  - The space is arranged well for a range of activities: physical games and sports, creative arts, dramatic play, quiet games, enrichment offerings, eating, and socializing.
  - The space is arranged so that various activities can go on at the same time without much disruption.
  - There is adequate and convenient storage space for equipment, materials, and personal possessions of children and staff.
- The indoor space allows children and youth to take initiative and explore their interests.
  - Children can get materials out and put them away by themselves with ease.
  - Children can arrange materials and equipment to suit their activities.
  - The indoor space reflects the work and interests of the children.
  - Some areas have soft, comfortable furniture on which children can relax.



## Outdoor Environment

- The outdoor play area meets the needs of children and youth, and the equipment allows them to be independent and creative.
  - Each child has a chance to play outdoors for at least 30 minutes out of every three-hour block of time at the program.
  - Children can use a variety of outdoor equipment and games for both active and quiet play.
  - Permanent playground equipment is suitable for the sizes and abilities of all children.
  - The outdoor space is suitable for a wide variety of activities.



## Activities

- The daily schedule is flexible, and it offers enough security, independence, and stimulation to meet the needs of all children and youth.

- The routine provides stability without being rigid.
  - Children meet their physical needs in a relaxed way.
  - Individual children move smoothly from one activity to another, usually at their own pace.
  - When it is necessary for children to move as a group, the transition is smooth.
- Children and youth can choose from a wide variety of activities.
  - There are regular opportunities for active, physical play.
  - There are regular opportunities for creative arts and dramatic play.
  - There are regular opportunities for quiet activities and socializing.
  - Children have a chance to join enrichment activities that promote basic skills and higher-level thinking.
- Activities reflect the mission of the program and promote the development of all the children and youth in the program.
  - Activities are in line with the styles, abilities, and interests of the individuals in the program.
  - Activities are well suited to the age range of children in the program.
  - Activities reflect the languages and cultures of the families served.
  - Activities reflect and support the program’s mission.
- There are sufficient materials to support program activities.
  - Materials are complete and in good repair.
  - There are enough materials for the number of children in the program.
  - Materials are developmentally appropriate for the age range of the children in the program.
  - Materials promote the program’s mission.



## Safety, Health, & Nutrition

- The safety and security of children and youth are protected.
  - There are no observable safety hazards in the program space.
  - Systems are in place to protect the children from harm, especially when they move from one place to another or use the rest room.
  - Equipment for active play is safe.
  - A system is in place to keep unauthorized people from taking children from the program.

- The program provides an environment that protects and enhances the health of children and youth.
  - The indoor and outdoor facilities are clean.
  - There are no observable health hazards in the indoor or outdoor space.
  - There are adequate supplies and facilities for handwashing.
  - The heat, ventilation, noise level, and light in the indoor space are comfortable.
- The program staff try to protect and enhance the health of children and youth.
  - Staff are responsive to the individual health needs of the children.
  - Staff protect children from communicable disease by separating children who become ill during the program.
  - Staff protect children from potential hazards such as the following: caustic or toxic art materials and cleaning agents, medications, and hot liquids; overexposure to heat or cold.
  - Staff and children wash hands frequently, especially after using the toilet or before preparing food.
- Children and youth are carefully supervised to maintain safety.
  - Staff note when children arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave.
  - Staff know where the children are and what they are doing.
  - Staff supervise children appropriately according to children’s ages, abilities, and needs.
  - Staff closely supervise activities that are potentially harmful.
- The program serves foods and drinks that meet the needs of children and youth.
  - The program serves healthy foods.
  - Drinking water is readily available at all times.
  - The amount and type of food offered is appropriate for the ages and sizes of children.
  - Snacks and meals are timed appropriately for children.



## Administration

- Staff/child ratios and group sizes permit the staff to meet the needs of children and youth.
  - Staff/child ratios vary according to the ages and abilities of children. The ratio is between 1:10 and 1:15 for groups of children age six and older. The ratio is between

- 1:8 and 1:12 for groups that include children under age six.
  - Staff/child ratios and group sizes vary according to the type and complexity of the activity, but group sizes do not exceed 30.
  - There is a plan to provide adequate staff coverage in case of emergencies.
  - Substitute staff are used to maintain ratios when regular staff are absent.
- Children and youth are supervised at all times.
  - Children’s arrivals are supervised.
  - Children’s departures are supervised.
  - Staff have a system for knowing where the children are at all times.
  - Staff plan for different levels of supervision according to the level of risk involved in an activity.
- Staff support families’ involvement in the program.
  - There is a policy that allows family members to visit any time throughout the day.
  - Staff offer orientation sessions for new families.
  - Staff keep families informed about the program.
  - Staff encourage families to give input and to get involved in program events.
- Staff, families, and schools share important information to support the well-being of children and youth.
  - Program policies require that staff and family members communicate about the child’s well-being.
  - Staff, families, and schools work together as a team to set goals for each child; they work with outside specialists when necessary.
  - Staff and families share information about how to support children’s development.
  - Staff and families join together to communicate and work with the schools.
- The program builds links to the community.
  - Staff provide information about community resources to meet the needs of children and their families.
  - The program develops a list of community resources. The staff draw from these resources to expand program offerings.
  - The staff plan activities to help children get to know the larger community.
  - The program offers community-service options, especially for older children.
- The program’s indoor space meets the needs of staff.
  - There is enough room in the indoor space for staff to plan various program activities.