Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI)

The Approach

Organizations across Denver have been using the Youth Program Quality Intervention to systematically improve the quality of afterschool programs since 2010. This intervention is a vehicle for quality improvement in more than 45 sites, including six community based organizations, Denver Parks and Recreation programs, and numerous individuals across the city. YPQI is an evidence-based process for improving the quality of staff within youth programs. The YPQI approach to program quality is based on positive youth development research and the desire to create a safe, supportive, and productive environment. The approach, represented in the pyramid, is premised on the belief that it is a youth worker’s job to set up an environment for youth in which needs are met and learning is encouraged - to create a space in which youth can thrive.\(^1\)

While this intervention has a foundation in the assessment tool, giving a quantitative, low-stakes quality score, the impact of the program lies in supporting organizational staff at all levels to use, assess, understand, and improve program quality at the point of service. There are two types of professional development within the intervention. First, there is support to participate in the data-driven process that includes training in the following practices:

1) Youth Program Quality Assessment Basics (how to use the assessment tool)
2) Planning with Data (how to use the assessment data to create a plan to improve program quality)
3) Quality Coaching (how a supervisor can coach staff to improve program quality)

Additionally, there is professional development for those who work with youth to implement the Youth Work Methods improving staff practice at the point of service. These Methods workshops create opportunities for staff to develop skills and build relationships with youth and encourage youth to take ownership of their experience. When integrated into youth programming, it is powerful to see youth of all ages connected to the content they are learning, feeling supported by staff and their peers, and engaged in their development.

Youth Work Methods Workshops include: Introduction to the Active Participatory Approach; Structure and Clear Limits; Reframing Conflict; Ask-Listen-Encourage; Active Learning;
Homework Help; Cooperative Learning; Building Community; Planning and Reflection; and Youth Voice.

**The Pyramid**

As you can see from looking at the pyramid, the construct of quality developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality reflects Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and should be looked at from that lens. There are four domains, each building off the foundation of youth voice and staff having the time and space to participate and engage in program improvement.

**The Cycle**

The Assess-Plan-Improve cycle is at the heart of the Youth Program Quality Intervention. Through it, site teams, including site leaders and front line staff use quality assessment data to create and implement an improvement plan that will increase program quality, and thereby increase the likelihood of achieving youth outcomes. Intervention components include:
Assess: The Program Quality Assessment (PQA) allows you to observe what actually goes on in their youth programs through collection of objective staff data that measures best practices for positive youth development.

Plan: Looking at the results of the self and external assessments provides the opportunity to develop concrete action plans. The conversation is the most important part of the process. Providers and their staff are empowered to work together to decide how to improve based on the objective data collected.

Improve: During the improve phase, programs are focused on plan implementation.

The Timeline

The greatest impact of the YPQI comes when sites and organizations are fully engaged and committed to the entire process. For those sites, The Denver Afterschool Alliance will provide meaningful support that walks site teams through the assess-plan-improve process via trainings, technical assistance, and coaching. It is essential that organizations and staff understand the time allocation required to participate in all aspects of the process. To that end, we suggest using the following timeline for the 2014-2015 trainings and meetings. Additional time may be necessary to support sites that haven’t previously engaged in quality improvement efforts.
### DRAFT Timeframe for 2014-2015 YPQI Implementation and Technical Assistance

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| **August** 2 hours  
Managers and Site Directors | Participants will attend a YPQI Kickoff focused on orienting staff to the process and providing an opportunity to network with other YPQI participants. |
| **September or October** 8 hours  
Managers, Site Team | The Youth PQA Basics training provides a deep overview of the Assessment tool and self-assessment process. |
| **Ongoing September-December** 3-5 hours by multiple staff, including a 3 hour staff meeting w/ entire team | Site teams will conduct program self-assessments and then participate in a consensus meeting to finalize site scores collectively. Sites will also receive external assessment during this time frame. Coaching/TA Support available as needed* |
| **December** 1 hour training/meeting  
.5 hours data input  
Site Leader | Site Leaders can participate in a Self Assessment Check-in & Scores Reporter Webinar* to ensure adequate progress is being made in the assessment process. |
| **TBD** | **Due Date**: Self-assessment scores from the consensus meeting are due in Scores Reporter |
| **Once between December-February** 4 Hours  
Site team | The site team will participate in 1-2 Planning With Data Workshops focusing on using self and external assessment data to create an improvement plan. |
| **February** 4 Hours  
Site Director | Quality Coaching Workshops – This workshop models the Observational-Reflection strategy for supervisors to use to support their staff through program improvements in an engaging and affirming manner. |
| **Once between December-February** 4 Hours  
Site Director | Training/Coaching: Sites will be creating and implementing improvement plans* |
| **TBD** | **Due Date**: Finalized improvement plans due in Scores Reporter  
Coaching/TA Support available as needed* |
| **Ongoing/Monthly** 2 hours/training  
Entire Site team  
AT LEAST 2 trainings | Staff will attend ongoing Youth Work Methods Workshops focused on the staff practices necessary to successfully execute improvement plans. |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ongoing/Monthly</th>
<th>Training/Coaching: Implementing Quality Improvement*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours/session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site Lead, Entire Site team and/or Managers</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT LEAST 2 sessions</td>
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<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>Complete end of the year process evaluation, attend a feedback session and host a spring external assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-4 Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entire team</td>
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*For Demonstration Project Sites Only

1 *David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality*