New York State Office of Child and Family Services
NY-OCFS PQA SHORT FORM

OCFS PQA

Program Name:

_____

Program Self Assessment Team:

_____

_____

Date range of observations:

_____

Description of observations (who observed what):

_____

_____

_____

_____

DAVID P. WEIKART
CENTER FOR YOUTH
PROGRAM QUALITY

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NY-OCFS PQA Introduction

The NY-OCFS PQA Short Form is designed use by a team to examine, discuss, and plan to improve the quality of their youth program. The NY-OCFS PQA provides an introduction to the best practices of positive youth development. The NY-OCFS PQA draws upon elements of the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA)[1], which is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth programs and identify staff training needs. The NY-OCFS PQA is structured around the 8 key developmental features developed by the National Research Council.[2] This tool consists of a set of scorable standards for best practices in afterschool programs, community organizations, schools, summer programs, and other places where youth have fun, work, and learn with adults.

This instrument is meant for use as a program self assessment by a site team. As such, the methods we recommend for scoring the tool are designed primarily to achieve adult learning ends for members of site teams who are reflecting on their own practice and planning for change. The full Youth PQA is designed for both program self assessment and external assessment conducted by reliable outside observers. The Youth PQA is at the heart of the Youth Program Quality Intervention, a continuous improvement program that has been shown in an experimental field trial to improve program quality. Though rooted in youth development research, the NY-OCFS PQA has not yet been subjected to evaluation for validation. For this reason, this tool is best used through a self assessment process and with a low stakes accountability policy. The tool is structured with observational items listed at the top of the page, followed by Administrative Self Interview items, highlighted in gray. The complete program self assessment process is outlined on the right.

For more information on the Youth PQA and the Youth Program Quality Intervention, please contact the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality at (734) 961-6900 or the Forum for Youth Investment at (202) 207-3333.

[1] Smith, C., & Hohmann, C. (2005). *Full findings from the Youth PQA validation study.* Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Educational Research Foundation.
[2] Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). *Community programs to promote youth development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

NY-OCFS PQA Instructions

1. *Training and team selection*
   The program self assessment can happen in two ways: (1) The recommended process is a team-based self assessment. The team should consist of a site lead who will coordinate the process, at least one to two other staff and, if possible, include board members, parents, youth or other community members. Team members each observe the program in action, and the team comes together to score a single NY-OCFS PQA Form. (2) Youth Bureau external monitors or other funders could work with the site self assessment team or independently to conduct observations. Site leads should identify participants and a plan for completing the form at the beginning of the process.

   Once the team is chosen or monitor has been identified, participants should receive training in observational note-taking and use of the NY-OCFS PQA. Local county lead and online resources are available to assist with training.

2. *Data Collection Preparation, Observation & note-taking.*
   We recommend staff observe each other leading activities for at least 30 minutes and take objective notes while watching. You should take notes on a separate paper or laptop and complete the NY-OCFS PQA after the observation.

3. *Team-based Scoring Meeting*
   Next the self assessment team gathers to discuss their observations. It is important to remember people's feelings—it can be scary to have others critique your youth work! The team will go through the NY-OCFS PQA item-by-item to agree on scores as a team. At this time, the team or administrator can determine the scores for the gray Administrator Self Interview based on reflection of the policies, procedures and practices of the program. Plan at least 2 hours for this scoring meeting. For observations conducted by a single site manager or external monitor, the observer should score the NY-OCFS PQA on their own, using their notes from the observation. Administrative Self Interview items should still be discussed with the program administrator.

   Once completed, final scores should be marked on page 9, entered into the Excel-based Scores Reporter, and given to county leads. The scores will then be entered onto the QYDS Online System.

4. *Improvement planning*
   Ideally, the scoring process should lead right into ideas for how to improve the program. We recommend that you first identify strengths and then focus on no more than 3 areas for improvement. Resources are available to support your improvement planning. Later, plan time to reflect on the process.

Physical and Psychological Safety

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 The emotional climate of the session is predominantly negative (e.g., disrespectful, tense, exclusive, even angry or hostile; with negative behaviors, such as rudeness, bragging, insults, "trash talking," negative gestures, or other such actions that are not mediated by either youth or staff).	**3** The emotional climate of the session is neutral or characterized by both positive and negative behaviors.	**5** The emotional climate of the session is predominantly positive (e.g., mutually respectful, relaxed, supportive; characterized by teamwork, camaraderie, inclusiveness, and an absence of negative behaviors). Any playful negative behaviors (not considered offensive by parties involved) are mediated by staff or youth.	☐	
1 There are major safety and health hazards (e.g., broken equipment or supplies, unmopped spills, flammable and/or toxic materials) affecting the program space.	**3** There are minor safety and health concerns (e.g., dirty floors or furniture, wobbly furniture, program materials in disarray) affecting the program space.	**5** The program space is free of health and safety hazards.	☐	
1 There are no written emergency procedures or exits (e.g., fire escape route, lost swimmer drill, severe weather instructions), **or** staff is unable to locate procedures.	**3** Written emergency procedures and exits are not posted, but staff is able to locate them.	**5** Written emergency procedures and exits are posted in plain view.	☐	Where are the emergency procedures and exits?
1 Access to indoor and outdoor program space is unsupervised during program hours.	**3** Access to either the indoor or outdoor program space is sometimes supervised during program hours and sometimes not.	**5** Access to indoor and outdoor program space is supervised during program hours.	☐	Is access to the program space supervised?

Appropriate Structure

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 Staff does not explain any activities clearly.	**3** Staff explains some activities clearly.	**5** Staff explains all activities clearly (e.g., youth appear to understand directions; sequence of events and purpose are clear).	☐	
1 There is either not enough or too much time for activities.	**3** There is an appropriate amount of time for some of the activities.	**5** There is an appropriate amount of time for all of the activities (e.g., youth do not appear rushed, frustrated, bored, or distracted; most youth finish activities).	☐	
1 Staff rarely shares or attempt to share control of activities with youth.	**3** Staff attempts to share control with youth but end up controlling most activities themselves.	**5** Staff shares control of most activities with youth, providing guidance and facilitation while retaining overall responsibility (e.g., staff uses youth leaders, semiautonomous small groups, or individually guided activities).	☐	
1 Staff provides no explanation/justification for expectations, guidelines, or directions given to youth.	**3** Staff sometimes provides an explanation/justification for expectations, guidelines, or directions given to youth.	**5** Staff always provides an explanation/justification for expectations, guidelines, or directions given to youth.	☐	

Administrator Self Interview

1 Youth and staff do not develop any guidelines for behavior together.	**3** Youth and staff together develop some guidelines for behavior (e.g., attire and standards of respect and cultural awareness), but other guidelines are developed without both staff and youth input.	**5** Almost all guidelines for behavior (e.g., attire and standards of respect and cultural awareness) are developed by youth and staff together.	☐	Who develops guidelines for behavior?
1 Rules and behavioral expectations are not readily available and the staff does not review them with participants.	**3** Rules and behavioral expectations are readily available, but the staff does not review them with participants over the course of the program offering (e.g.at the beginning of each session).	**5** Rules and behavioral expectations are readily available and the staff reviews them with participants over the course of the program offering (e.g. at the beginning of every session or whenever infractions are likely to occur).	☐	Are rules and behavioral expectations available? Does staff review them with youth?

Supportive Relationships

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 During activities, staff mainly uses a negative tone of voice and disrespectful language.	**3** During activities, staff sometimes uses a negative tone of voice and disrespectful language and sometimes uses a warm tone of voice and respectful language.	**5** During activities, staff mainly uses a warm tone of voice and respectful language.	☐	
1 During activities, staff generally frowns or scowls, uses unfriendly gestures, and avoids eye contact.	**3** During activities, staff sometimes exhibits unfriendly behaviors and sometimes uses a friendly approach.	**5** During activities, staff generally smiles, uses friendly gestures, and makes eye contact.	☐	
1 During activities, no staff is actively involved with youth except for brief introductions, endings, or transitions (e.g., they are physically separated from youth or do not interact with them).	**3** During activities, staff (or some of the staff) is sometimes, or intermittently, actively involved with youth.	**5** During activities, staff is almost always actively involved with youth (e.g., they provide directions, answer questions, work as partners or team members, check in with individuals or small groups).	☐	n/o = 1
1 The activities provide no opportunities for youth to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	**3** The activities provide at least one opportunity for some youth to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	**5** The activities provide all youth one or more opportunities to talk about (or otherwise communicate) what they are doing and what they are thinking about to others.	☐	n/o = 1

Administrator Self Interview

1 New staff participate in less than 8 hours of preservice orientation activities AND preservice orientation activities do <u>not</u> include elements of youth development	**3** New staff participate in 8 or more hours of preservice orientation activities OR preservice orientation activities include elements of youth development	**5** New staff participate in 8 or more hours of preservice orientation activities AND preservice orientation activities include elements of youth development.	☐	Does new staff participate in preservice orientation? Does this orientation include youth development elements?
1 Training for program staff is not provided regularly.	**3** Relevant training for program staff is provided regularly, either on -or off-site, but topics are not related to positive youth development.	**5** Relevant training for program staff is provided regularly, either on -or off-site, on a variety of topics related to positive youth development. Topics may include but are not limited to: conflict resolution, social/emotional development, cultural competency, focus on youth strengths or resiliency.	☐	Does staff get regular training in positive youth development topics?

Opportunities to Belong

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 Comments or slurs intended to hurt someone who is present explicitly indicate religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation bias(es).	3 There is evidence (e.g., comments or slurs) of religious, ethnic, class, gender, ability, appearance, or sexual orientation bias, but comments are not directed at anyone present.	5 There is no evidence of bias but rather there is mutual respect for and inclusion of others of a different religion, ethnicity, class, gender, ability, appearance or sexual orientation.	☐	Is there mutual respect between youth despite differences in religion, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.? Please give an example.
1 Youth have no opportunities to get to know each other (beyond self-selected pairs or small cliques).	3 Youth have informal opportunities to get to know each other (e.g., youth engage in informal conversations before, during, or after session).	5 Youth have structured opportunities to get to know each other (e.g., there are team-building activities, introductions, personal updates, welcomes of new group members, icebreakers, and a variety of groupings for activities).	☐	n/o = 1
1 The activity does not include opportunities for youth to work cooperatively together.	3 The activity includes opportunities for some youth to work cooperatively together.	5 The activity includes opportunities for all youth to work cooperatively together.	☐	

Administrator Self Interview

1 None of the following are present: a staff member speaks an other-than-English language spoken by program participants, food reflects cultural diversity, decoratons reflect cultural diversity, some staff share cultural/racial/ethnic background of participants, youth or families are invited to share about their culture, the program space displays youth's work.	3 Cultural diversity is promoted by 1 or 2 of the following: a staff member speaks an other-than-English language spoken by program participants, food reflects cultural diversity, decoratons reflect cultural diversity, some staff share cultural/racial/ethnic background of participants, youth or families are invited to share about their culture, the program space displays youth's work.	5 Cultural diversity is promoted by at least 3 of the following: a staff member speaks an other-than-English language spoken by program participants, food reflects cultural diversity, decoratons reflect cultural diversity, some staff share cultural/racial/ethnic background of participants, youth or families are invited to share about their culture, the program space displays youth's work.	☐	How is cultural diversity promoted by staff?

Positive Social Norms

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 Youth exhibit predominantly exclusive relationships, limited to a few individuals or a small clique within the program offering.	**3** Relationships to others in the group are not fully inclusive, but youth know and use one another's names.	**5** Youth exhibit predominately inclusive relationships with all in the program offering, including newcomers.	☐	
1 Youth do not identify with the program offering (e.g., many youth complain about or express dislike of the program offering or activities).	**3** Youth do not strongly identify with the program offering but do not complain or express dislike.	**5** Youth strongly identify with the program offering (e.g., hold one another to established guidelines, use ownership language, such as "our program," engage in shared traditions such as shared jokes, songs, gestures).	☐	
1 The activities provide no opportunities to acknowledge the achievements, work, or contributions of youth.	**3** The activities provide opportunities to acknowledge the achievements, work, or contributions of some youth, but opportunities are unscheduled or impromptu.	**5** The activities include structured opportunities (e.g., group presentations, sharing times, recognition celebrations, exhibitions, performances) to publicly acknowledge the achievements, work, or contributions of at least some youth.	☐	

Administrator Self Interview

1 The organization does not have explicit conflict resolution policies or procedures.	**3** The organization has explicit conflict resolution policies or procedures, but they do not include all of the following (1) approaches youth conflicts in a, non-threatening manner (i.e. approaches calmly, stops hurtful actions, and acknowledges youth feelings); (2) seeks input from youth to determine cause and solution of conflict; (3) examines relationship between actions and consequences; (4) follows up with those involved afterward.	**5** The organization has explicit conflict resolution policy or procedure that consists of several steps that staff uses when addressing conflict including: (1) approaches youth conflicts in a, non-threatening manner (i.e. approaches calmly, stops hurtful actions, and acknowledges youth feelings); (2) seeks input from youth to determine cause and solution of conflict; (3) examines relationship between actions and consequences; (4) follows up with those involved afterward.	☐	Does the organization have a conflict resolution policy? If yes, what does it entail?

Support for Efficacy and Mattering

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 The activities do not (will not) lead to tangible products or performances.	**3** The activities lead (or will lead) to tangible products or performances but do not reflect ideas or designs of youth (e.g., only staff's ideas are reflected).	**5** The program activities lead (or will lead in future sessions) to tangible products or performances that reflect ideas or designs of youth.	☐	n/o = 1
1 During activities, no youth have an opportunity to lead a group.	**3** During activities, some youth have an opportunity to lead a group.	**5** During activities, all youth have one or more opportunities to lead a group (e.g., teach others; lead a discussion, song, project, event, outing, or other activity).	☐	
1 Youth do not have opportunities to make plans for projects or activities.	**3** Youth have at least one opportunity to make plans for a project or activity (individual or group).	**5** Youth have multiple opportunities to make plans for projects and activities (individual or group).	☐	n/o = 1
1 The activities do not provide opportunities for all youth to make choices.	**3** All youth have opportunities to choose among alternatives, but choices are limited to discrete choices presented by the leader.	**5** All youth have the opportunity to make at least one open-ended choice (content or process) within the content framework of the activities (e.g., youth decide topics within a given subject area, subtopics, or aspects of a given topic; youth decide roles, order of activities, tools or materials, or how to present results).	☐	n/o = 1
1 No youth are engaged in an intentional process of reflecting on what they are doing or have done.	**3** Some youth are engaged in an intentional process of reflecting on what they are doing or have done.	**5** All youth are engaged in an intentional process of reflecting on what they are doing or have done (e.g., writing in journals; reviewing minutes; sharing progress or feelings about the experience).	☐	n/o = 1

Administrator Self Interview

1 Youth and staff do not share responsibilities on any of the following: (1) program quality review/ improvement; (2) hiring or training staff; (3) recruiting new youth to the organization; (4) program evaluation and feedback (5) determining program schedules and program offerings.	**3** Youth and staff share responsibilities on one or two of the following: (1) program quality review/ improvement; (2) hiring or training staff; (3) recruiting new youth to the organization; (4) program evaluation and feedback; (5) determining program schedules and program offerings.	**5** Youth and staff share responsibilities on at least three of the following: (1) program quality review/improvement; (2) hiring or training staff; (3) recruiting new youth to the organization; (4) program evaluation and feedback (5) determining program schedules and program offerings.	☐	Do youth participate in program quality review, hiring/training staff, recruiting new youth, program evaluation or determining program schedules?

Opportunities for Skill Building

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 The activities provide no opportunities for youth to engage with either materials **or** ideas or to improve a skill through guided practice; activities mostly involve waiting, listening, watching, and repeating.	**3** The activities provide limited opportunities for youth to engage with materials **or** ideas or to improve a skill though guided practice.	**5** The bulk of the activities involve youth in engaging with (creating, combining, reforming) materials **or** ideas or improving a skill though guided practice.	☐	n/o = 1
1 The activities focus almost exclusively on abstract concepts, providing limited or no related concrete experiences.	**3** The activities focus almost exclusively on concrete experiences, providing limited or no opportunities to engage with related abstract concepts.	**5** The activities balance concrete experiences involving materials, people, and projects (e.g., field trips, experiments, interviews, service trips, creative writing) with abstract concepts (e.g., lectures, diagrams, formulas).	☐	
1 Youth are not encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	**3** Some youth are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance but others are not.	**5** All youth are encouraged to try out new skills or attempt higher levels of performance.	☐	n/o = 1
1 Some youth who try out new skills with imperfect results, errors, or failure are informed of their errors (e.g., "That's wrong") and/or are corrected, criticized, made fun of, or punished by staff *without* explanation.	**3** Some youth who try out new skills receive support from staff who problem-solve with youth despite imperfect results, errors, or failure, and/ or some youth are corrected *with* an explanation.	**5** All youth who try out new skills receive support from staff despite imperfect results, errors, or failure; staff allows youth to learn from and correct their own mistakes and encourage youth to keep trying to improve their skills.	☐	n/o = 1

Integration of Families, Schools, Communities

Items				Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 Family members are not formally or informally welcomed as part of the program AND there are limits or barriers to their participation (i.e. family members are not allowed or are discouraged from being present during the program offering).	**3** There are no formal policies or procedures to encourage family members' participation, but family participation is allowed or welcomed.	**5** Family members are formally welcomed as part of the program (e.g., there is an open door policy, families are given opportunities to volunteer or participate, there is an orientation on program enrollment).	☐	How are family welcomed into the program?
1 No communication occurs with most families of youth participants.	**3** Some communication with families of youth participants occurs, but it is informal or there is no plan to make sure it occurs.	**5** Staff has intentional or established ways of communicating with families (e.g., conferences, communicate about youth academic and social or emotional goals, newsletters and phone calls).	☐	In what ways does staff communicate with families?
1 Communication with families almost always focuses exclusively on solving problems.	**3** Communication with families sometimes focuses on youth strengths, setting goals, and/or building a team with parents, but often focus exclusively on dealing with problems.	**5** Communication with families usually focuses on youth strengths, setting goals, and building a team with families rather than on dealing with problems.	☐	What is the focus of communication with families?
1 No communication occurs with schools that serve youth.	**3** Communication with schools is limited to coordination of transportation, schedules, or other logistics.	**5** Communication with schools occurs to better coordinate supports and opportunities for youth.	☐	In what ways does staff communicate with schools? If program is seasonal or it is not approriate to communicate with schools, do not rate. Write an "X" in the box at the left.
1 No communication occurs with other organizations that serve youth.	**3** Communication with other youth organizations is limited to coordination of transportation, schedules, or other logistics.	**5** Communication with other youth organizations occurs to better coordinate supports and opportunities for youth.	☐	In what ways does staff communicate with other youth organizations?
1 The organization does not actively builds links to the community.	**3** The organization actively builds links to the community in only one of the following ways: (1) actively seeks new participants by reaching out to youth and families that are not yet involved in the program; (2) seeks opportunities for youth to participate in community service, civic engagement, or service learning; (3) recruits and trains community volunteers from diverse backgrounds to assist in program; (4) pursues new opportunities for community members to support the program (e.g., in-kind donations of space and materials, financial support).	**5** The organization actively builds links to the community in two of the following ways: (1) actively seeks new participants within the community; (2) seeks opportunities for youth to participate in community service (3) recruits community volunteers from diverse backgrounds to assist in program; (4) pursues new opportunities for community members to support the program (e.g., in-kind donations of space and materials, financial support).	☐	In what ways does the organization build links to the community?

Continuous Improvement

Items			Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
1 The organization does not have explicit continuous improvement policies or procedures.	**3** The organization has continuous improvement policies or procedures, but they include only one of the following: 1) self-assessment with a site team; 2) team planning for improvement,; 3) providing feedback on the implementation of the plan; 4)aligning professional development with identified areas for improvement.	**5** The organization has explicit continuous improvement policy or procedure that consists of several steps, including: (1) self assessment with a site team; (2) planning with team; (3) providing feedback on implementation of the plan; (4) aligning professional development.	☐ Does the organization have a continuous improvement policy? If yes, what does it entail?

NY-OCFS PQA Summary and Scoring

		Score				Score
Physical and Psychological Safety	Emotional climate		**Positive Social Norms**	Inclusive relationships		
	Healthy and safety			Strongly identify with the program		
	Emergency procedures and exits			Publicly acknowledge achievements		
	Supervised access to program space			Explicit conflict resolution policy		
	Total	/4		**Total**		/4
	Average Score			**Average Score**		
Appropriate Structure	Staff explains activities clearly		**Support for Efficacy and Mattering**	Tangible products or performances		
	Appropriate time for activities			Opportunities to lead a group		
	Staff appropriately shares control			Plans for projects and activities		
	Staff gives reasons for expectations			Open-ended choices		
	Behavior guidelines developed together			Intentional process of reflecting		
	Rules and expectations available			Share administrative responsibilities		
	Total	/6		**Total**		/6
	Average Score			**Average Score**		
Supportive Relationships	Staff is warm and respectful		**Opportunities for Skill Building**	Youth engage with materials or ideas		
	Staff smiles and is friendly			Balance concrete and abstract		
	Staff actively involved with youth			Youth encouraged to try new skills		
	Opportunities for youth to talk			Mistakes allowed		
	Staff orientation on youth development			**Total**		/4
	Staff training provided regularly			**Average Score**		
	Total	/6	**Integration of Families, Schools, Communities**	Family welcomed as part of program		
	Average Score			Communicate with families		
Opportunities to Belong	Mutual Respect			Communication is strength-based		
	Opportunities to get to know each other			Communicate with schools		
	Youth work cooperatively together			Communicate with other organizations		
	Cultural diversity			Links to the community		
	Total	/4		**Total**		/6
	Average Score			**Average Score**		
			Continuous Improvement	Explicit continuous improvement policy		
				Total		/1
				Average Score		