

quality out-of-school time program checklist

ask the director:

- __What is the program's mission and philosophy?
- __How does the program support children's education and learning?
- __Have all staff members been trained in CPR and first aid?
- __Is the program licensed? Is it licensed-exempt?
- __What is the staff to child/youth ratio?
- __Are you aware of national quality standards?
- __Is the program accredited?
- __What are your fee schedules?
- __Do you offer any financial assistance?
- __How are families involved in the program?
- __Do you have an orientation for new families?
- __Do you serve children with special needs?
- __May I have a copy of your policies?
- __Do you have a list of family references I can contact?

ask the staff:

- __What is your system for knowing where my child is at all times?
- __What is your procedure for handling emergencies?
- __How do you handle sick children?
- __Are children able to get a drink or use the bathroom when needed?

final step - discuss the information you've learned with your child!



Arizona Center for **Afterschool** Excellence

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** This checklist is adapted from National AfterSchool Association and Child Care Aware Pamphlet:
Selecting a quality after school care program for your child.*

For more information visit www.naa.org and www.childcareaware.org.

decisions: choosing quality after-school programs



Why is a quality after-school program important for my child?

- Children and youth are likely to spend as many hours in their out-of-school program as in school.
- Quality programs help your child grow socially, emotionally, and physically.
- Quality care supports your child's learning. Children and youth in after school programs tend to do better in school. They have higher school attendance rates and have greater expectations for their future.
- Quality after school programs build links to the community and encourage community service, enriching your child's life as well as your entire community.
- Good staff-to-child/youth ratios allow for individual attention and help children build strong relationships with caring adults. Children and youth learn to be more cooperative with adults. They learn to handle conflict by talking or negotiating instead of hitting and fighting.
- Children and youth in quality after-school programs are less likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and use drugs. They are also less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.
- You will be more productive at work when you know your children are safe after school, during school vacations, and in the summer.



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How do I select a quality program for my child?

- Begin by reflecting on what you did after school and in the summer as a school-age child. What did you like? How did you feel? What did you learn? Were there safety issues?
- Think about your child and family's needs. What type of program would best serve your child and family. Then look for programs that can meet the needs of your child and family.
- Start your search by asking friends, family members, and school personnel for recommendations.
- Contact your local resource and referral agency. They can provide useful information to help guide you in your search for quality programs. If you have an internet connection, go to www.azafterschool.org for links to finding out-of-school time programs in your community.
- Look for programs in your area that are dedicated to continuous improvement and are working toward meeting accreditation standards.
- Once you receive several referrals you may want to narrow your search by telephoning a number of programs and asking about availability, hours and fees. Ask if they are open on school vacation days and in the summer.



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look and listen:

- ___ Does the program seem clean, safe and organized?
- ___ Do children and youth appear to be happy in the program?
- ___ Do staff seem to work well together?
- ___ Are staff respectful to each other?
- ___ Are the children busy with activities?
- ___ Do the children help each other and cooperate?
- ___ Do you hear happy sounds in the program?
- ___ Are staff engaged in activities and conversation with the children and youth?
- ___ Are there adequate materials and space for a variety of activities?
- ___ Are there quiet, soft spaces for reading, quiet games and relaxing as well as space for active play?
- ___ Do the materials and program space reflect diversity?
- ___ Does the space reflect the work and interests of the children and youth in the program?
- ___ Does the program provide a rich learning atmosphere that supports children's education?
- ___ Is the playground area safe? Is it fenced in? Is there some kind of cushioning material under climbing equipment?
- ___ Does the bathroom look and smell clean?
- ___ Are there adequate supplies?
- ___ Are all hazardous materials kept out of reach of children and youth?
- ___ Do food preparation areas look and smell clean?

ask the children:

- ___ Do you like coming here?
- ___ Are you able to choose what activities you want to do and with whom?
- ___ Do you help plan activities?
- ___ Do the children here get along well with each other?
- ___ Do you feel safe here?

