



# QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING: VIRTUAL/BLENDED LEARNING ADDENDUM

## About HousED's Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in Public and Affordable Housing

The [Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in Public and Affordable Housing](#) were developed out of a need to identify a standard of practice for housing communities offering educational programs. The Quality Standards were developed to leverage the unique opportunities housing providers have to build greater equity in education and life outcomes for youth living in affordable housing communities. More than 50 educators, housing representatives, and stakeholders from across the country lent their expertise to refine these standards. Participants included every level of youth work, from direct service providers to senior executives to academic researchers and policy leaders.

### There are 12 Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in Public and Affordable Housing:

1. Clear Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Management
2. Continuous Quality Improvement
3. Quality Staff
4. Collaborative Partnerships
5. Family Engagement
6. Sustainability
7. Diversity, Access, and Inclusivity
8. Safe and Supportive Environment
9. Active and Engaged Learning
10. Skill Building
11. Youth Voice and Leadership
12. Healthy Choices and Behaviors

While much of our world and day-to-day programming have shifted as a result of COVID-19, the basic tenants of youth development have not changed. The science of learning and development still says young people need strong relationships with caring adults that foster a sense of belonging.

### Continuous Quality Improvement During COVID

As such, using a continuous quality improvement process is still imperative. That means: 1) establishing a standard of practice (quality standards); 2) maintaining meaningful performance data; 3) committing to planning and improvement; and 4) ensuring sustainability.

The Quality Standards' Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process was built with a long-term vision that didn't consider extraordinary circumstances like those we currently face. During critical and uncertain times, the following adjustments should be made to a CQI process:

- Shift to a rapid assessment cycle with a directed focus on a few select areas instead of using broad, in-depth assessment cycles.
- Focus on immediate and short-term improvements.
- Agencies may need to prioritize and tailor specific needs and improvements of individual sites over larger program goals.
- De-emphasize certain standards and/or items within a standard given the lack of access and reduction of authority.

## Public and Affordable Housing Agencies play a unique role during COVID-19

- Public and affordable housing program sites are playing a more critical role in connecting resources and services for children and families during COVID-19.
- Public and affordable housing sites have become a vital hub where community partnership, school day, afterschool, social services, and home intersect in an extraordinary way.

## Updating the Quality Standards for Public and Affordable Housing to reflect COVID-19 and blended learning needs

To reflect current changes in programming in response to COVID-19, we have added three standards for virtual/blended learning to the QSA Tool:

- Standard A: Critical Response Support
- Standard B: Household Learning Environment
- Standard C: Distance and Blended Learning

During COVID-19 and other times when distance learning may be recommended, we urge you to:

- Adapt your Continuous Quality Improvement process to reflect your immediate and short term realities.
- Prioritize the Virtual/Blended Learning Standards above (A,B,C) in addition to the following standards:
  - Standard 4: Collaborative Partnerships
  - Standard 5: Family Engagement
  - Standard 7: Diversity, Access, and Inclusivity
  - Standard 8: Safe and Supportive Environment
  - Standard 9: Active and Engaged Learning
  - Standard 11: Youth Voice and Leadership

During these uncertain times, we recommend that you be incredibly kind and forgiving to yourself and your colleagues in creating a standard of practice, and that you use the QSA/QSAT Virtual/Blended Learning Addendum with fidelity to provide the best learning and development supports for your children and families.

## Virtual/Blended Learning Standards

### Standard A: Critical Response Support

1. Program staff provide information and advocacy to support families trying to meet basic needs (e.g. food, transit, legal, health, mental well-being).
2. Program staff provide critical health knowledge (e.g. how viruses spread) and share federal and local guidance for hygiene and personal protective equipment (PPE).
3. Program staff have trauma-informed training to understand the experience of families and communities and design programming to optimize child and family engagement.
4. Program staff build individual relationships through regular check-ins with child and family to monitor mental and physical health and well-being.
5. Program staff incorporate opportunities for fun and informal social interactions (e.g. family SEL games, physically-distanced outdoor activities, or virtual activities).
6. Program staff well-being practices are a foundation for high-quality instruction and student social and emotional skill building (e.g. effective program design, multiple staff per offering, opportunities to debrief programming, feedback loops).
7. Program staff support larger housing efforts to support families (e.g. food distribution, community partnerships, etc.).

### Standard B: Household Learning Environment

1. Program staff connect with children and families using a variety of methods and technologies (e.g. phone, internet video apps, email, text, mail), times, and languages.
2. Program staff use a flexible calendar of programming (e.g. virtual sessions, check-in calls, drop off packets) that balances the availability of children and families with the capacities of program staff at specific sites.
3. Program staff maintain updated contact information and communication preferences for each student and family, including language, technology, and best times for program contact with children and/or families.
4. Program staff coach students and families to set up a workspace (or flexible/mobile workspace) that is designed to support the child's learning needs and preferences (e.g. desk, storage, lighting, sound, privacy).
5. Program equips students with tools for learning if they are not already available in the household learning environment (e.g. markers, storage, electronic tablets).
6. Program staff provide recommendations and support families' access to internet, tech, and apps along with limited helpdesk support for program-selected tech/apps.

## Standard C: Distance Learning (Virtual/Blended)

1. Program staff explicitly and intentionally model and provide participant's opportunities for warm welcomes, reflecting on one's own emotions, practicing empathy, recognizing strengths (i.e. child's use of social and emotional skills) during distanced programming.
2. Program staff practice multiple strategies to keep participants engaged in virtual learning (e.g. breakout rooms, music, group-sharing, virtual platform features, whiteboards).
3. Program staff include blended (synchronous and asynchronous<sup>1</sup>) options for children to receive content and promote learning (e.g. packets, kits, online resources, guided and open-ended projects).
4. Program staff support children and families to meet school-day requirements and connect with K-12 services.
5. Program staff provide cyber safety training and appropriate digital literacy knowledge to assure children's and families' safety and supervision when interacting online with program staff and peers.

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1 Synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time. Asynchronous learning does not require real-time interaction; instead, content is available online for students to access when it best suits their schedules, and assignments are completed to deadlines.

## Acknowledgements

This is an addendum to the [Quality Self-Assessment Tool for Expanded Learning in Public and Affordable Housing](#). Partnership for Children & Youth is thankful to Public Profit for reviewing an early draft of the updated Standards and accompanying rubric. To inform the pilot of this addendum, Partnership for Children & Youth adapted [QTurn's Guidance for Afterschool Learning at a Distance](#).



Partnership for Children & Youth (PCY) is an advocacy and capacity-building organization championing high-quality, equitable learning opportunities for underserved youth in California. Grounded in research and experience, PCY trains school and community-based educators, facilitates relationships between schools and community-based organizations, and advocates for effective public policies and resources. Through the HousED initiative, PCY increases the accessibility and quality of educational supports in public and affordable housing communities, creating pathways out of poverty. Learn more at [www.partnerforchildren.org/housing-and-education](http://www.partnerforchildren.org/housing-and-education).