

OVERVIEW

The ACT Now Coalition works towards ensuring that young people in Illinois have access to quality, affordable afterschool, youth development, and community schools’ programs. Our vision is to make Illinois a place where all youth have access to high-quality learning opportunities beyond the school day. ACT Now has worked with partners statewide to develop the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards to improve and strengthen afterschool programming in Illinois. Our Quality Standards capture practices that research demonstrates lead to quality programs and positive outcomes for youth, families, and communities.

For the fifth consecutive year, ACT Now sought to enhance implementation of these Standards in Teen REACH programs and foster a culture of continuous quality improvement by implementing the Standards self-assessment tool, the Illinois Quality Program Self-Assessment Tool (IL-QPSA). IL-QPSA participants came primarily from publicly funded programs, through the Illinois Department of Human Services’ (DHS) Teen REACH grantees and Reimagine Public Safety Act (RPSA) Youth Development grantees and or the Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). However, ACT Now also had some additional participants outside of those funding streams. This fiscal year, Teen REACH and RPSA Youth Development were the only grantees required to participate.

OVERALL DATA POINTS

The chart below captures Teen REACH participants in the IL-QPSA process for 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school year. The last column of the chart details the full data points for all providers that have engaged with ACT Now and the IL-QPSA process. These include but are not limited to 21st CCLC grantees, Teen REACH grantees, RPSA Youth Development grantees, School-Age Child Care (SACC) grantees, privately funded programs, etc.

Pledge to Quality Indicators:	TOTAL 2018-2019	TOTAL 2019-2020	TOTAL 2020-2021	TOTAL 2021-2022	Total 2022-2023
Number of assessments completed within the IL-QPSA:	224 (Includes IL Top Ten Standards & IL Afterschool Quality Standards set)	163 (Includes IL Top Ten Standards & IL Afterschool Quality Standards set)	166 (Includes IL Top Ten Standards & IL Afterschool Quality Standards set)	156 (Includes IL Top Ten Standards & IL Afterschool Quality Standards set)	160 (Includes IL Top Ten Standards & IL Afterschool Quality Standards set)
Number of action plans completed and submitted to ACT Now:	163	142	112	89	93

**ACT Now viewed Boys and Girls Club programs as individual entities rather than a part of the Alliance. **

OVERALL DATA FINDINGS

During fiscal year 2023 (2022-2023 school year), ACT Now collected a total of 160 completed assessments in the IL-QPSA. For these assessments, average scores of the IL Top Ten Quality Standards

were generated. ACT Now has collected this data each year and has provided the data by average score, for each fiscal year, in the chart below. Like the scores last year, this year’s scores indicate a need for improvement in staff training and family engagement. It is worth noting that both areas the Standards emphasize the need for a system to track and monitor these items. This information is not only helpful for ACT Now to provide evidence for advocating what the out-of-school time field needs; but it is also beneficial for state agencies to be aware of the barriers that programs face and how they can better serve their grantees. It should be known that ACT Now only shared aggregate data with State Agencies, site-specific data were kept confidential.

The following chart depicts average assessment scores for both Teen REACH, RPSA Youth Development, 21st Century, and other grantees not specified by those funding streams.

#	IL Top Ten Quality Standards Program Standard Description: *Note the scoring score scale from a 5 pt. to a 4 pt. changed from year 1 to 2*	OVERALL Average Score 2018- 2019	OVERALL Average Score 2019- 2020	OVERALL Average Score 2020- 2021	OVERALL Average Score 2021- 2022	OVERALL Average Score 2022- 2023
3	The program protects the health and safety of all youth.	4.4	3.8	3.53	3.70	3.8
4	Youth are carefully supervised to maintain safety, and there are clear protocols for responding to emergency situations.	4.4	3.9	3.53	3.70	3.8
9	The program develops and implements a system for promoting continuous quality improvement.	4.2	3.7	3.46	3.40	3.6
15	Staff are professionally qualified to work with all youth.	4.5	3.9	3.60	3.60	3.7
16	Staff are given an orientation to the job before working with you.	4.2	3.8	3.53	3.50	3.6
17	The training needs of the staff are assessed, and training is relevant to assigned responsibilities as provided.	3.9	3.7	3.30	3.30	3.5
18	The program has a systemic approach and structure for family and community engagement.	4.0	3.6	3.25	3.10	3.5
22	Staff encourages all youth to make thoughtful and responsible decisions.	4.4	3.8	3.60	3.50	3.7
23	Programs provide flexible and supportive activities for all youth.	4.4	3.8	3.64	3.60	3.7
25	Staff relate to all youth in positive ways.	4.5	3.9	3.70	3.60	3.8

Teen REACH Cohort Data Collection

A more refined look as to how each organization engaged in detailed in the chart below. Every organization was asked to assess all their program's site(s) with Teen REACH funding. Provider participants knew that if they did not comply with all steps, they would not receive a certificate of completion. Providers that fulfilled the entire Pledge to Quality received certificates of completion the week of 08/07/2023. Some organizations did not complete this process and others had varying levels of engagement. This year, providers finished by or before June 16, 2023.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Assessment Completed</i>	<i>Action Plan Completed and Submitted</i>	<i>Pledge to Quality Completion (Newsletter subscription, Map/Database entry, etc.)</i> July 2023
A Knock at Midnight, NFP	✘	✘	✘
African American Resource Center at Booker	✔	✘	✘
Albany Park	✔	✔	✘
Angel of God Resource Center, Inc.	✘	✘	✘
Asian Human Services	✔	✔	✘
Austin Peoples Action Center	✘	✘	✘
Beautiful Beginnings	✘	✘	✘
Bella Ease Quincy Teen REACH	✔	✔	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Alton	✔	✔	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Bethalto	✔	✔	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington Normal	✔	✔	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Central Illinois	✔	✘	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Chicago	✔	✘	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Cicero	✔	✔	✔
Boys and Girls Club of Danville	✘	✘	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Decatur	✘	✘	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Don Moyer	✔	✘	✘
Boys and Girls Club of Dundee Township	✔	✔	✘

Boys and Girls Club of Elgin	✓	✓	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Freeport & Stephenson	✓	✓	✓
Boys and Girls Club of George Werden Buck	✓	✓	✓
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Peoria	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Lake County	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Livingston County	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Mississippi Valley	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Pekin	✓	✓	✓
Boys and Girls Club of Rockford	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Scott AFB	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Southern Illinois	✗	✗	✗
Boys and Girls Club of Stateline	✓	✓	✓
Boys and Girls Club of Union League	✗	✗	✗
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (BPNC)	✗	✗	✗
BUILD, Inc.	✗	✗	✗
Carole Robertson Center for Learning / Albany Park	✓	✓	✗
Cass County Health Department	✓	✓	✓
Catholic Charities of St. Sabina	✗	✗	✗
Center for New Horizons	✗	✗	✗

Chicago Area Project	✓	✗	✗
Chicago Youth Centers	✓	✓	✗
Chicago Youth Programs	✓	✓	✓
Christopher House	✓	✓	✗
Clay County Health Department	✓	✗	✗
Coordinated Youth and Human Services	✓	✓	✗
Corazon Community Services	✓	✗	✗
County of Lawrence	✓	✓	✓
Erie Neighborhood House	✓	✓	✓
Envision Community Services	✗	✗	✗
Gads Hill Center	✓	✓	✗
Gary Comer Youth Center	✓	✗	✗
Good Hope NFP	✓	✓	✓
Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois	✓	✗	✗
Greater Joliet Area YMCA	✓	✗	✗
Harold Jones Memorial Community Center	✓	✓	✓
Homework Hangout Club, Inc.	✓	✗	✗
Howard Area Community Center	✗	✗	✗

Human Resources Development Institute, Inc.			
Illinois Coalition for Community Services			
The Institute for Positive Living			
Iroquois-Kankakee Regional Office of Education #32			
Kenneth Young Center			
Land of Lincoln Goodwill			
Latino Organization of the Southwest			
Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, Inc.			
Logan Square Neighborhood Association			
Martin Luther King Center			
National Youth Advocate Program			
New Original Ministries, Inc.			
Northeast DuPage Family Services			
Northwestside Housing Center			
Outreach Community Ministries			
Pilsen Wellness Center			
Project Success of Vermilion County, Inc.			
Project Vision			
Proviso Leyden Counsel for Community Action			

Puerto Rican Cultural Center	✘	✘	✘
Reaching for Kids & Youth of Massac County	✔	✔	✔
Rockford Park District	✔	✔	✔
Sesser-Valier Teen REACH	✔	✔	✔
SGA Youth and Family Services	✔	✔	✘
Tazewell County Health Department	✘	✘	✘
Universal Family Connection	✘	✘	✘
Universidad Popular	✘	✘	✘
Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center	✘	✘	✘
WES Health	✔	✔	✔
YMCA of Greater Peoria	✘	✘	✘
YMCA of Metro Chicago	✘	✘	✘
YMCA of Rock River Valley	✘	✘	✘
Youth Guidance	✘	✘	✘
Youth With a Positive Direction	✘	✘	✘

Lessons Learned

This fiscal year, the main findings reflect a need for increased professional development opportunities for staff and a more systems-driven model for family and community engagement, as reflected by the two lowest-scoring Standard averages from the IL Top Ten Quality Standards. Many action plans were robust and full of long and short-term goals. Providers articulated the strategies that they could leverage in their plans and the timeline required. However, not all programs that assessed their sites completed and submitted action plans. This was due to a variety of extenuating circumstances, such as staff turnover, additional funding for new sites, etc. ACT Now recognized these real-life challenges and expressed that it was more important to create small actionable goals that were achievable than be overwhelmed at the lack of process. In total, 93 completed action plans were submitted to ACT Now this fiscal year.

Innovation

Like all good evaluators, ACT Now wants to ensure we are engaging grantees in a process that is high-quality and mindful of capacity. Over the summer, the ACT Now Quality Initiatives Department read through action plans, analyzed data for end-of-year reports, and listened to grantees about what changes they'd like to see next year. It is through those conversations we have decided to introduce IL-QPSA changes for the fiscal year 2024. The comparison chart below quickly demonstrates these differences and allow IL-QPSA users set themselves up for a successful year of assessment and engagement.

LAST AND CURRENT FISCAL YEAR DIFFERENCES	2022-2023	2023-2024
All IL-QPSA participants must be in ACT Now's Center for Afterschool Learning (ANCAL)	✗	✓
IL-QPSA participants are divided into two cohorts, NEW and RETURNING users.	✓	✗
All IL-QPSA Webinars are held live and if missed have to reach out to ACT Now staff	✓	✗
All IL-QPSA Webinars are held asynchronously and housed in ANCAL being viewed at any time	✗	✓
IL-QPSA starts in October for NEW users and in January for RETURNING users	✓	✗
IL-QPSA starts in September for ALL users	✗	✓
All IL-QPSA users can assess ANY 10 Quality Standards.	✗	✓
Action Plans are due in June of that fiscal year	✓	✗
Action Plans are due in April of that fiscal year	✗	✓

One of the biggest differences to the IL-QPSA for fiscal year 2024 is that all recordings will be housed in our online ACT Now Center for Afterschool Learning (ANCAL) management system and will be accessible anytime, asynchronously. It is our hope that by giving grantees this information early in their school year and allowing them to access it at any time, will help in overall participation and engagement. A fantastic feature of ANCAL is it allows us to assign users specific trainings and what we call learning paths. These are specific tracks that list each and every recording, resource, and discussion board in one place so that the user's experience is as straightforward and formulaic as possible.

Another difference in this year's process is the due date of the completed and submitted action plan(s). In years past we allowed grantees to submit their action plans close to the end of the fiscal year (mid-June). This year we are asking all completed action plans to be submitted by April 1, 2024. This helps ACT Now capture grantee's success and share with state agencies, like DHS, sooner to help inform continuation applications.

Finally, in year's past we stipulated which Standards grantees needed to assess in order to be successful. This year, we will allow grantees to assess *any* ten Standards within the Illinois Afterschool Quality Standards Framework. We are excited about this prospect because it will allow us to assess new data and empower grantees to make choices that are in line with their unique agency needs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we had a successful fifth year using the IL-QPSA with Teen REACH programs. We look forward to continuing to work with DHS and Teen REACH programs in supporting efforts to improve the quality and delivery of effective afterschool and youth development programming for all children in Illinois.

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