

NATIONAL

# AfterSchool | HEPA

ASSOCIATION STANDARDS



2.0

In 2011 the National AfterSchool Association adopted standards for healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) in Out-of-School time.

# Introduction to the Standards

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**Studies show that healthy, active children learn better, perform better academically, and experience fewer behavioral problems. But many children are not getting the healthy food and physical activity they need each day.**

More than 10 million children—from all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups; in all grades; and in urban and rural settings—participate in out-of-school time (OST) programs. As the role of OST programs has evolved from primarily providing a safe and supervised environment to a resource that provides a host of supports for children and youth, programs have become valuable partners in helping young people reach their full potential in school, careers, and life.

Young people spend less than 25% of their time in school. They may be in OST programs for 15 or more

hours per week during the school year and all day on weekdays in the summer. Afterschool and summer learning programs are well positioned to be key partners in a comprehensive effort to help children grow up healthy. From providing young people with access to nutritious foods to promoting healthy habits and keeping students physically fit, OST programs can combine and implement multiple approaches. However, until 2011, the OST field lacked a comprehensive set of operational standards for healthy eating and physical activity.

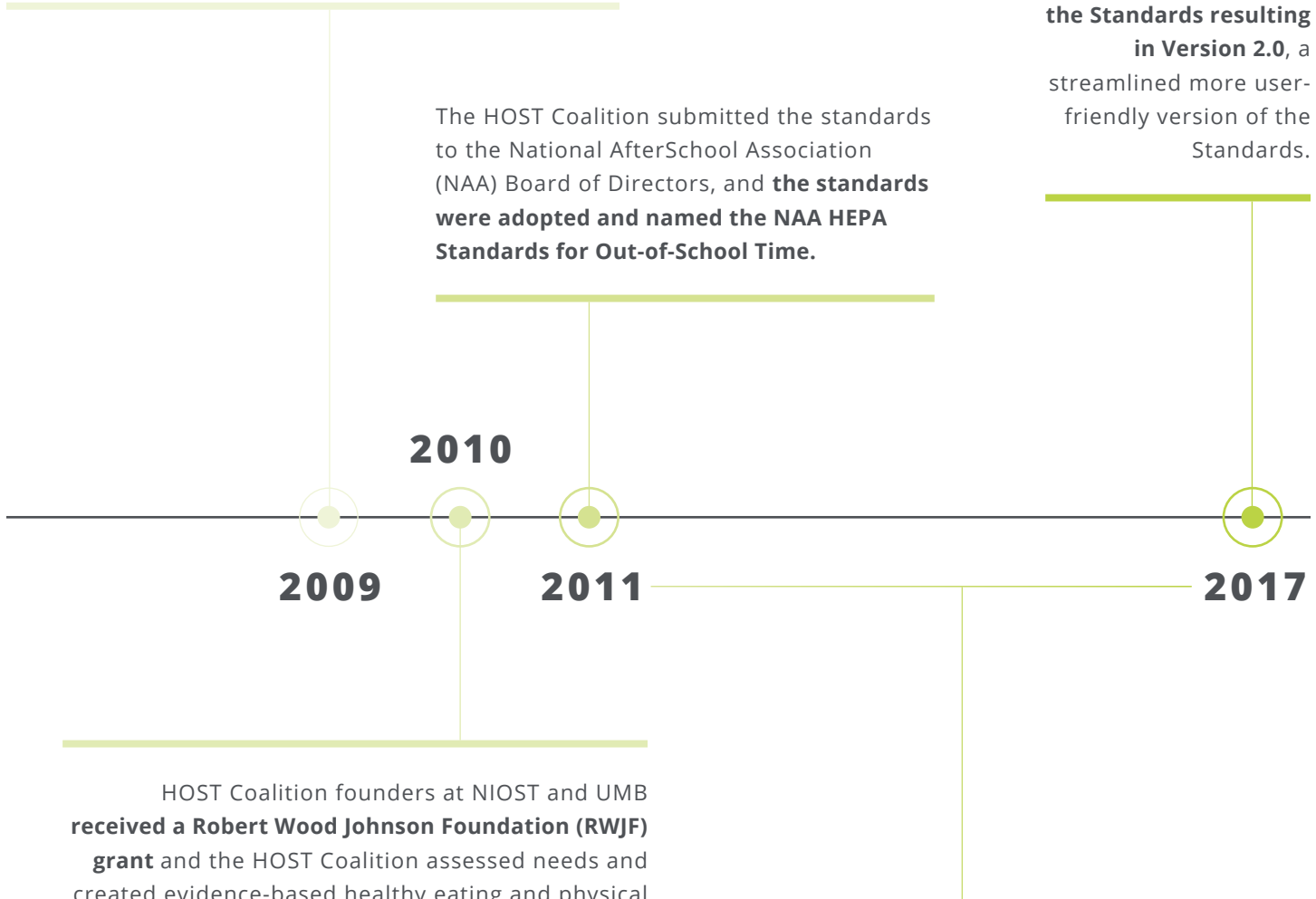


# Development of the Standards

Individuals from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), the University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB), and the YMCA of the USA collaborated to **found the Healthy Out-of-School Time (HOST) Coalition.**

The HOST Coalition Leadership, now including the Afterschool Alliance, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and National Recreation and Park Association, **embarked on an extensive refresh of the Standards resulting in Version 2.0**, a streamlined more user-friendly version of the Standards.

The HOST Coalition submitted the standards to the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) Board of Directors, and **the standards were adopted and named the NAA HEPA Standards for Out-of-School Time.**



**2009**

**2010**

**2011**

**2017**

HOST Coalition founders at NIOST and UMB **received a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) grant** and the HOST Coalition assessed needs and created evidence-based healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards that foster the best possible nutrition and physical activity outcomes for children and youth attending OST programs.

**The NAA HEPA Standards were disseminated to tens of thousands of OST professionals and supporters.** Research and evaluation to monitor their uptake are ongoing. Many organizations have committed to using the NAA HEPA Standards. Some have adapted or selected from the standards to create organization-specific versions tailored to specific organizational settings.



# Design of the Standards

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**In designing the Standards, writers used a social-ecological framework.** Social-ecological models posit that individual behavior is influenced by concentric levels that emanate from peers and family to social settings, institutions and organizations, communities, and social policies and influence individual behavior. Thus, standards that become part of licensing, accreditation, organizational norms, or policy can have a profound influence on program practice.

NAA adopted the HEPA standards to provide practical, comprehensive guidance for OST programs. The NAA HEPA Standards address food and beverage and physical activity content and quality, staff training, social supports (including staff role modeling, family engagement, and children’s social development), program support, and environmental support.

## THE STANDARDS INCLUDE THE FIVE CONTENT AREAS AND AN ACCOMPANYING SET OF STANDARDS:

- 1. Content and Quality (CQ):** 19 Standards
- 2. Staff Training (ST):** 5 Standards
- 3. Social Support (SS):** 11 Standards
- 4. Program Support (PS):** 8 Standards
- 5. Environmental Support (ES):** 5 Standards

The first Content Area includes standards that translate nutrition and physical activity science into actions OST programs can take to offer health-promoting foods, beverages, and physical activity. The remaining four Content Areas have standards that address program and organizational policy and infrastructure and reflect implementation, as well as health promotion science and management expertise.

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## Suggested Use by Program Leaders and Providers

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The Standards are aspirational in nature. Programs should feel free to tailor them to their specific context as they strive to be a high-quality program that promotes healthy behaviors. Although these standards provide a shared framework, standards alone cannot change the quality of the programs or the knowledge and skills of the program staff and volunteers. The Standards provide a research-based framework for afterschool program providers and others to understand and measure a program’s healthy eating and physical activity and plan for improvement. By implementing these standards and creating continuous improvement plans in these Content Areas, the quality of programs will improve and simultaneously the outcomes for youth.

Not all standards are applicable to all afterschool programs, and some programs may hit roadblocks in implementing the Standards, such as lack of resources, lack of cooperation from external organizations or stakeholders, lack of control over certain programmatic features, and issues with their physical space. The Standards are meant to be a guidepost toward which programs should work. Programs may not have the ability to implement the Standards all at once but instead should develop a plan so that one day their program will include aspects of all of the Standards. Creating healthy afterschool programs is an ongoing process; it is not anticipated that any

program will have mastered all the items included in the Standards, but rather will use the Standards to focus the program on striving toward excellence.

Because OST programs provide a host of supports for young people, finding an effective, easy-to-implement healthy eating and physical activity strategy can be somewhat challenging. To that end, here are a few tips to help you improve the health and wellness of youth in your programs.

### **SET CLEAR, INDIVIDUALIZED, AND ACHIEVABLE GOALS**

Start with the end in mind. Use the Standards to identify clear, program-specific, achievable goals. Goals should be measurable, within budget, and suited to staff capacity.

Once goals are identified, develop a plan of action. Action plans help track target dates and give all program staff a clear blueprint for success. The Alliance for Healthier Generation's OST Framework is a self-guided online system that assesses health and physical activity programming, creates an action plan, and identifies resources to meet program needs.

### **CONNECT TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Access federal child nutrition programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, the National School Lunch Program, and the Summer Food Service Program to maximize the number of nutritious meals and snacks provided.

Explore shared-use agreements. Use of existing school and community sport and recreational facilities can be a cost-effective way to promote physical activity in programs.

### **SUPPORT PROGRAM STAFF**

Check in with program staff to measure their comfort level with engaging in nutrition education and physical activity with young people. Lack of staff training and low comfort levels can act as barriers to implementing nutrition programming and safe and developmentally appropriate physical activity.

### **INVOLVE FAMILIES**

Parents are key allies in reinforcing new habits. Include parents (and guardians) in programming and encourage them to support their children's consumption of tasty nutritious foods and participation in enjoyable physical activities by acting as healthy role models.

Additionally, leverage parent voices in advocacy efforts for increased physical activity and nutritious foods in your programs. According to the Afterschool Alliance Kids on the Move report, parents look to afterschool programs to provide healthy foods and physical activity opportunities to children during the OST hours. Their voices, efforts, and outreach can help make that happen!

### **INTEGRATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION INTO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND APPROACHES**

To maximize time, connect nutrition education and physical activity to other programming, such as tutoring, homework, STEM, creative arts, and other enrichment activities. Review this STEM and Wellness Issue Brief for ideas on how to blend these two important components.

### **PLAN YOUR CELEBRATION**

Prepare to succeed! As the action plan is implemented throughout the year, take time to celebrate incremental milestones. Keep staff and parents updated on progress and share stories of success with other programs and community partners.

## Suggested Uses for Other Stakeholders

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Beyond program leaders, other afterschool and youth development stakeholders may find the Standards useful in the following ways:

### **PARENTS AND FAMILIES**

The Standards help parents and families understand the key elements of high-quality afterschool programs that promote HEPA and advocate for healthy programs in their own communities. Parents and families can use the Standards to find ways to collaborate with programs to have a greater impact on youth outcomes.

### **FUNDERS AND POLICY MAKERS**

The Standards help funders and policy makers link funding to research-based practices that lead to measurable outcomes. Funders should ensure that programs are using the Standards to evaluate and improve their programs. Funders should value this process of evaluation and improvement and not use the Standards as a measurement tool to withhold funding or cut programs. The Standards help funders and policy makers establish clear expectations for all stakeholders and a common language to assist in policy development.

### **K-12 EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

The HEPA Standards help K-12 educators understand the key elements of afterschool and summer learning programs that promote HEPA and provide a common language for partnership. These Standards provide principals and superintendents with a guide to reinforce and advance key priorities. Because healthy, active children learn better, perform better academically, and experience fewer behavioral problems, school leaders can incorporate afterschool HEPA programming into their plans to improve school outcomes.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

The HEPA Standards can assist higher education and training institutions in designing content for courses related to youth development and in choosing strategic partners for research initiatives.



# 01

## Content and Quality

### Content Area Overview

**The program provides foods, beverages, and physical activities that promote lifelong health and reduce the risk of chronic disease.** The program's physical activity offerings support the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 2018 guidelines recommending that youth obtain at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day that includes a mixture of moderate and vigorous intensity activity as well as bone- and muscle-strengthening activities.

### Content and Quality (CQ) Standards:

#### THE PROGRAM:

- CQ1.** At a minimum, **all foods and beverages served, offered, and sold should follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA)** and the federal child nutrition programs and standards the DGA inform (National School Lunch, Child and Adult Care Food Programs, Summer Nutrition Program, and the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards). Programs should also comply with all state and local food safety regulations.

#### IN ADDITION, THE PROGRAM AND MENU:

- CQ2.** Include a fruit or vegetable at every snack or meal. Fruit and vegetables are fresh, frozen, or dried with no added sweeteners or canned in 100% juice or water.
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- CQ3.** Do not include pre-fried foods or foods with artificial trans fats.
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- CQ4.** Serve dairy or dairy-alternative products that are plain, 1% low fat, or fat free and do not have added flavors, sugars, or artificial ingredients.
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- CQ5.** Offer easily accessible plain or naturally flavored non-carbonated drinking water.
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- CQ6.** Serve foods that do not list added sugars among the first three ingredients in the ingredient list.
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- CQ7.** Provide dietary accommodations to account for food allergies or intolerances and religious or cultural preferences.
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- CQ8.** Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals and snacks.
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- CQ9.** Offer developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, evidence-informed nutrition education that provides youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health.
- Education or enrichment activities are:**

- a.** Developed and/or delivered by qualified personnel. Examples: program staff trained in the curricula

or activities delivered or a registered dietitian, university extension staff, an evidence-based public health organization with youth development education or experience.

**b.** Connected to or integrated into existing programming, such as tutoring, homework, STEM, creative arts, and other enrichment activities.

**c.** Do not support a specific industry or agenda. For example, activities or materials are not the product of a food, beverage, or supplement company.

**CQ10.** Offer developmentally appropriate, inclusive physical activities, games, and sports that provide youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to enjoy being physically active throughout their lives and **reflect the CQ best practices.**

**a.** Developed and/or delivered by qualified personnel. Examples: program staff trained in the curricula or activities

**b.** Connected to or integrated into existing programming, such as tutoring, homework, STEM, creative arts, and other enrichment activities

**CQ11.** Plan and provide time for **physical activity:**

**a. 1-hr. program**—10 mins.

**b. 2-hr. program**—20 mins.

**c. 3-hr. program**—30 mins.

**d. 4-hr. program**—40 mins.

**e. 5 hrs. or more**—60 mins.

**CQ12.** Provide moderate to vigorous activity for at least 50% of the **physical activity time:**

**f. 1-hr. program**—5 of 10 mins.

**g. 2-hr. program**—10 of 20 mins.

**h. 3-hr. program**—15 of 30 mins.

**i. 4-hr. program**—20 of 40 mins.

**j. 5 hrs. or more**—30 of 60 mins.

**CQ13.** Offer daily outdoor physical activity.

**CQ14.** Ensure that daily physical activities include a variety of physical activity options aimed at engaging children and youth in fun aerobic and cardio-respiratory (e.g., swimming, jogging, dancing, bicycling, skiing) and age-appropriate bone- and muscle-strengthening (e.g., jump rope, push-ups, sit-ups) fitness activities.

**CQ15.** Offer free play with space available for unstructured physical activity or organized physical activities that involve opportunities for all the program's children and youth.

**CQ16.** Offer non-competitive physical activities (e.g., walking, yoga, swimming, dancing).

**CQ17.** Offer activities that are adaptable, accessible, and inclusive of children and youth with all abilities, including physical, sensory, and intellectual disabilities.



- CQ18.** Conduct physical activities that are integrated with enrichment, academic, or recreation content; goal driven, planned, sequentially designed and delivered: and available to all children and youth, directed by trained staff, grouped by age and skill level.
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- CQ19.** Ensure that digital devices are used for homework, research, or digital learning that is active rather than passive. No television or movies are allowed. **Daily total screen time is limited to:**  
**1- to 2-hr. programs**—40 mins.  
**3 hrs. or more**—60 mins.
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## 02 Staff Training Content Area Overview

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**All staff members participate in ongoing evidence-informed training** and professional development in essential topics on healthy eating and physical activity.

### Staff Training (ST) Standards:

#### THE PROGRAM:

- ST1.** All staff members participate in training or professional development on healthy eating, nutrition, and physical activity at least once per year. Training and professional development are comprehensive to support staff knowledge of and competency in practices that support the HEPA Standards and accompanying best practices.
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- ST2.** Staff members are quickly oriented to and regularly coached on the role that healthy eating, physical activity, and social supports play in supporting healthy youth behaviors.
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- ST3.** Training and professional development are developed and/or delivered by qualified personnel. Examples: program staff trained in the curricula or activities, a certified physical education teacher, SHAPE America trainer, university extension staff, or a registered dietitian with youth development education or experience.
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- ST4.** Staff members are trained on positive guidance techniques that include approaches that teach positive behaviors and apply logical consequences. Staff members do not withhold food or physical activity opportunities as a punishment.
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- ST5.** Training and professional development do not support a specific industry or agenda. For example, training materials are not produced by a food, beverage, or supplement company.

## Social Supports

### Content Area Overview

**The program creates a culture that supports and promotes healthy eating,** physical activity, and positive relationships among staff, children and youth, families, and the community.

#### Social Supports (SS) Standards:

##### THE PROGRAM:

- SS1.** Has children and youth participate in food and beverage selection, distribution, preparation, and clean up and has children and youth select, organize, and lead physical activities.

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- SS2.** Does not use food as a reward or withhold food or physical activity as punishment.

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- SS3.** Employs staff members who promote the importance of healthy eating and physical activity by sitting and interacting with children and youth during snacks and meals and participating in physical activities with children and youth. All staff members model healthy eating, physical activity, and positive self-talk during the program, including bringing in or consuming only foods or beverages consistent with CQ Standards while in the program.

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- SS4.** Ensures staff members discuss the benefits of the healthy eating and physical activity expectations contained within the Standards with children and youth and their families.

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- SS5.** Ensures that all foods and beverages served, offered, or sold during celebrations or family or community events or in staff-only spaces reflect and reinforce the best practices outlined in CQ Standards. This SS covers program-sponsored staff events, meetings, and staff lounges.

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- SS6.** Provides families with information and examples of foods and beverages allowed and served and examples of physical activity opportunities based on best practices outlined in the CQ Standards.

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- SS7.** Shares information about healthy eating practices and physical activity through communication channels, including at family and community meetings.

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- SS8.** Includes family engagement components as part of nutrition education, enrichment, and physical activities.

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- SS9.** Develops opportunities for families and community members to advise and support healthy eating and physical activity in the program, in the community, and at home.

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- SS10.** Promotes healthy eating and physical activity standards, practices, and programs to children and youth, families, and people in the community who are current or potential participants.

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- SS11.** Ensures food fundraisers are limited to foods and beverages consistent with best practices outlined in the CQ Standards.

# 04 Program Supports

## Content Area Overview

**Organizational infrastructure**, including leadership, management, and budgeting practices, support and promote healthy eating and physical activity.

### Program Supports (PS) Standards:

#### THE PROGRAM:

- PS1.** Budgets to provide healthy foods and beverages and physical activity experiences consistent with best practices outlined in the CQ Standards.

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- PS2.** Participates in ongoing self-assessment, action planning, and program improvement strategies that support healthy eating and physical activity.

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- PS3.** Ensures its leadership supports continuous food and beverage and physical activity quality improvement through observations, staff coaching, and progress monitoring.

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- PS4.** Promotes and encourages healthy eating and physical activity among staff.

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- PS5.** Ensures access to adequate food preparation and storage space and indoor and outdoor physical activity space through formal or informal shared facility use agreements.

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- PS6.** Pursues procurement strategies that support healthy eating such as bulk purchasing and partnerships with food banks, farms, and gardens.

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- PS7.** Accesses federal child nutrition programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, the National School Lunch Program, and the Summer Nutrition Program to maximize the number of nutritious meals and snacks provided.

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- PS8.** Has liability and risk management policies that enable staff members to participate in physical activity with children and youth.

## 05

## Environmental Supports

### Content Area Overview

The program's physical space supports and promotes healthy eating and physical activity.

#### Environmental Supports (ES) Standards:

##### THE PROGRAM:

- ES1.** Gives children and youth access to foods and beverages, including vending machines, stores, food carts, and concession stands, that are consistent with the best practices outlined in the CQ Standards.

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- ES2.** Has adequate types and amounts of equipment for games, activities, and sports that support best practices in the CQ Standards.

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- ES3.** Has posters, pictures, and books that promote positive messages about good nutrition, healthy eating, and safe and developmentally appropriate physical activity.

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- ES4.** Has adequate food preparation and storage space to support healthy eating and adequate indoor and outdoor space for physical activity with CQ.

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- ES5.** Does not allow marketing of products or displays of logos or trademarks from companies that produce foods and beverages that are not consistent with the best practices outlined in CQ.



## Resources and Recognition

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