

Welcoming All Children



A Guide
for Child Care Providers
by Child Care Providers



Dear Childcare Provider:

When it comes to childcare, you know what it takes to welcome a child into the world of childcare, where learning and play go hand in hand. You know how to make parents comfortable, as they trust their child's care to another person.

It has become common knowledge that there are similarities as well as differences in how young children learn. Some children learn how to share, to get along with others on the playground or in the dress-up center, or to participate in circle time very quickly. Yet other children need more support and direct guidance. Maybe the child has a disability or developmental delay and extra support or accommodation is necessary. Perhaps the child needs supports specifically designed to help the child learn and grow and can be provided through a network of local early intervention agencies.

This booklet was designed to help childcare providers welcome and support all children. Information in this booklet comes from the experiences of childcare providers that are supporting all children. These childcare staff have seen what happens when parents realize that their child's delays or special needs do not prevent him/her from having opportunities to learn and play with other children. They have discovered the reciprocal benefits when children with disabilities regularly have opportunities to interact with children who do not have disabilities. And they know that successful strategies and early intervention agencies can support their goal of "Welcoming All Children".



Community Quest
Information Management Workgroup
A Resource Based Early Intervention Project

Preparations

1. What preparations does your program make prior to a child with special needs attending your program?

- Determine specific needs and expectations for the child by meeting with the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU) staff, therapists, other agencies involved and the parents.
- Learn about the child's special needs through reading reports, articles related to the disability and attending Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.
- Collaborate with an Early Intervention program therefore having professional staff available to meet the child's specific needs.
- Assess each child's needs on an individual basis.
- Meet/observe child visiting day.
- Identify supports for teacher.
- Identify supports for child-equipment.
- Educate staff about child in routine-staff training.
- Team meetings and ongoing communication.



"The child is otherwise one of our family and is treated like anyone else"

Adaptations

2. What adaptations do you make?

- ☑ Work with inclusion support personnel.
- ☑ Acquire appropriate equipment, furniture and toys-possibly from the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU).
- ☑ Whole class stays in classroom for breakfast and lunch due to steps.
- ☑ Changes to the physical classroom arrangement ex. Modify space to accommodate wheelchair.
- ☑ Modify teaching methods, class projects and classroom routines based on individual needs and child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- ☑ Ongoing evaluation of child's needs.



"Each child is different-whether they have a special need or not. I try to have each child work to the best of his or her abilities. If I find a way to make this easier, I will try new ideas or techniques".

Strategies

3. What are the strategies you use to help children make friends?

- ☑ Allow child to freely explore the classroom with peers.
- ☑ Encourage other children in class to become helpers-assign peer "buddy"-pair like personalities.
- ☑ Allow for various group sizes and various group makeups to promote socialization among the children during specific activities.
- ☑ Stage interactions based on child's interests and play preferences.
- ☑ Include child at all times.
- ☑ Peer modeling of special duties and various play activities.



"Incorporating what children can do, not what they can't, appreciating the similarities/differences".

Families

4. How do families help? (include their child with special needs into childcare and preschool settings)

- ☑ By providing special equipment, toys, and being open about informing the childcare provider about what has or hasn't been successful with their child in other settings.
- ☑ By keeping childcare staff updated regarding therapy and changes to the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs).
- ☑ By participating in childcare sponsored activities such as meal times, field trips, party days, special occasion programs, and open houses.
- ☑ By arranging "play dates", which facilitates friendships and socialization opportunities for the children as well as their parents.
- ☑ By working on skills at home that have been worked on in school.
- ☑ By being a "Parent contact" for families who are new to the early intervention system.
- ☑ By being open to a variety of communication methods including communicating by telephone, in writing, therapist's daily logs, and regularly scheduled conferences.



" They enter into the overall life of the school. As they relax and make friends here, they are able to support our efforts and help their little ones adapt."

Agencies

5. How do agencies help?

- ☑ Providing support and encouragement.
- ☑ Offering suggestions and ideas about how to design Classroom space and organize activities that meet the developmental needs of all children.
- ☑ Sharing information about obtaining needed equipment.
- ☑ Providing information about how childcare programs can support a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- ☑ Sharing information about therapy services that can benefit children with special needs.
- ☑ Sharing teaching strategies and ideas that work for all children.
- ☑ Sharing information about the different needs and challenges that children have.
- ☑ Sharing resource information to help us understand the needs that children have as they grow and develop. They help us see that what we do, helps the development of all children.
- ☑ Providing information in the areas of speech, cognitive, social, physical and behavioral development of children. More often than not, these strategies can be useful with all children.
- ☑ Providing referral information so that we know where to get help for families we care so much about.

Other Information

6. What have you learned from having a child with special needs in your program?

- Staff fear of the unknown can be the biggest obstacle.
- Communication is critical.
- Have a well-prepared teaching team.
- On-going evaluations to ensure support for the child and his/her teachers.
- It is extremely important for the agencies, child care providers and parents to work together.
- All children learn from each other.
- Being open to new ideas and suggestions.
- Staff have learned new teaching methods.
- Families of special needs children need to be part of the community preschool.
- There are excellent resources and professionals available to help.
- If a child is having difficulty, refer the parents to get help.



"I have learned that inclusion is not easy. It takes time and effort to create environments that are appropriate for all children. I have learned that inclusion is working. When you look into a classroom and see children growing, learning and accepting each other, together, as friends you know that all your time and effort is more than worth it!"

"That nothing is impossible!! All children can be active participants in our school."

Other Information Continued

Would you have done anything differently?

- This is an on-going learning process – things should change for the good of the child and room.
- With parent permission, have support personnel indicate specific goals and techniques that will enhance the child's learning experience prior to his/her placement.
- Discuss plans for class placement based on age and development.
- Spend more time with the child and his/her parents at the start of the year.
- Learn more about the child's individual strengths and needs.
- Provide teachers with training.
- Refer the family to resources as soon as concerns are identified.



"No, this has (and still is) evolved beautifully."

Information from Directors

8. A new director had just enrolled a child with special needs and has come to you for advice. What would be the most important thing the director needs to know?

- Understand what changes or adaptations may be necessary to support the child.
- Become informed about the nature of the child's special need. If possible, attend the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting. This gives specific insights and the opportunity to better understand specific needs.
- Inclusion support staff from the intermediate unit have done an excellent job of supporting inclusion in our classroom by providing the observation and extra hands needed. They support children directly and model strategies effective for use by our staff.
- Provide plenty of opportunity for direct caregivers to communicate with the family, agency representatives and medical persons to alleviate fears. Provide time for staff to communicate and ask questions regarding family expectations, as well as referring agencies.
- Make sure staff members responsible for including the child with special needs are open to this challenge. You want it to be successful.
- I would tell the director that this child would be a wonderful addition to her class. Relax and enjoy this special gift.
- Help the child be part of the group. This is very important.
- Know the needs of the children in the class, as well as the needs of the child with special needs. Know whom to contact for support.
- Understand what the family and agencies expect from this enrollment.

"Special needs children are children. Just as all children require individual attention and direction, a child with special needs does too. Do not be afraid!"



"The most important thing they need to know is that with time and effort, it can work. I would tell someone to look at the big picture and write down all the things the child can do and the things at your center that will be a positive impact. Then write down all the "cant's" and the things that may need to change. The "cans" will greatly outweigh the "cant's". You just need to take the changes one at a time and keep the lines of communication between families, teachers, therapists, and direct care staff open at all times."

Who can I call for help?

Dauphin and Cumberland/Perry Early Intervention Services

Daily relationships and experiences provide children with rich learning opportunities. Yet when a child has a developmental delay, that delay often impacts how that child is able to learn from everyday experiences.

Early intervention is a variety of supports and services that help families to identify new and existing activities that help their child's development and which make everyday experiences successful.

For more information:

**If your child is under age 3 and you live in Cumberland or Perry County –
Contact Cumberland/Perry Early Intervention at 240-6325**

OR

**If your child is under age 3 and you live in Dauphin County –
Contact Dauphin County Early Intervention at 232-8761**

OR

**If your child is over the age of 3 and you live in Dauphin, Cumberland, or Perry counties-
Contact the Capital Area Intermediate Unit at 732-8400**

Glossary of Terms

✓ Adaptation/modification

“changing an activity to enable all children to participate regardless of age and/or ability”

✓ Capital Area Association for the Education of Young Children (CAAAYC)

CAAAYC is the local chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. CAAAYC supports families and early childhood professionals that work with young children.

CAAAYC offers educational programs, family events, and scholarships to those who desire to further their professional development in the early childhood field. In addition, CAAAYC provides financial assistance to programs that want to become accredited.

✓ Capital Area Head Start

Capital Area Head Start is a comprehensive preschool program for children and families who meet certain income guidelines in Dauphin, Cumberland and Perry Counties. Health, Nutrition, Social Services, Mental Health, Disabilities and Education services and supports are provided to families to meet their individual needs. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the program by volunteering in the classrooms, participating in center parent groups and on Policy Council, the governing body.

✓ Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU)

The CAIU Preschool Program provides a wide range of direct and consultative early intervention services for children 3 through 5 years of age who have special needs. Programs and services are provided free of charge and operate throughout the year for eligible young children and their families. Services include: developmental screening and assessment; group instruction and therapeutic services for children found to be experiencing delays in thinking, motor, self-help, communication, social skill development, and/or who demonstrate sensory impairments in vision or hearing. Children receive services in community childcare sites and in specialized classrooms. Signed parental permission is required to obtain early intervention services. When a child is determined to be eligible as the result of participating in a multi-disciplinary evaluation and individual education program (IEP) process, services are started. Each IEP will have a family services section if desired by the parents.

✓ Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

A written plan that describes the special services and supports that a preschool or school-aged child who is eligible for special education needs in order to benefit from education.

✓ Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

A written plan that describes the special services and supports that an infant or toddler with special needs and their family need, to improve that child's development.

✓ Inclusion

The practice of welcoming all children, including children with disabilities into a community school, childcare program, or community activity. This practice includes the use of specialized services/supports, and modifying or adapting the environment so all children can successfully participate.

RESOURCES ON INCLUSIVE CHILDCARE

Interested in additional information on how to support young children with disabilities in childcare programs? Check out these resources!

Child Care plus+
Montana University Affiliated Rural
Institute on Disabilities
 The University of Montana

Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA)
 6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600
 Harrisburg, PA 17112
 800-360-7282 x3712

Thank You!

This booklet is the result of input from twenty preschools including:

St. Catherine Laboure Preschool
St. Marks

Silver Springs Presbyterian
Trinity Lutheran Preschool
Grace Lutheran Nursery
Magic Years
Happy Hollow at Hope
Capital Area Children's Center

Thank you for your input and your help in creating this wonderful resource for Child Care Providers.



Photos courtesy of the Capital Area Children's Center