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Inclusive Child Care Statement

The Alameda County Child Care Planning Council’s mission is to advise and make recommendations to policymakers to ensure that all children and families have access to quality child care that educates children and enriches their lives. Our vision is to be a guiding force for excellence in the care and education of all children and to be regularly sought out for our expertise by local, state and national decision makers.

When we say all children and families, we mean ALL children, including children with special needs and disabilities. Children with disabilities or other special needs include children with a specific diagnosis, as well as children who do not have a diagnosis but whose behavior, development, and/or health affect their family's ability to maintain early care and education services.

As a core value of the Planning Council’s mission, we believe it is important to emphasize the explicit connection between quality child care and inclusion practices. One of the cornerstones of quality care is successful family partnerships, which begin in the first conversations with families, before they are even enrolled into child care. We believe that a strong foundation in child development, coupled with respect for meeting a child’s individual needs, prepares early childhood professionals to include children with special needs in your child care program.

The Planning Council also endorses the following definition of Inclusive Practices:

Inclusion is more than the presence of children with disabilities or other special needs in early childhood programs; it is the full and active participation of all children and their families, whether typically developing or with disabilities or other special needs in community activities, services, and programs. Support, accommodations, or modifications, when needed, are provided appropriately to ensure full, active participation for all children. One indicator of a high quality early childhood program is successful inclusion of children with special needs.

Inclusive child care practices include all of the following:

- Program policies with specific references to including children with special needs (see examples on opposite page);
- Programs are responsive to each child's individual capabilities and needs;
- Materials and equipment are appropriate and adapted for children of varying abilities, interests and needs;
- Curriculum includes rich opportunities for play and is responsive to the needs of the whole child-including cognitive and language, socio-emotional and physical development;
- Activities and instructional practices are based on on-going child assessment, and reflect an appropriate balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities;
- Daily schedules allow children to explore and develop sustained engagement with materials and peers and support individualized transitions from one setting to another;
- Environments foster social interaction, collaborative projects, interdependence, and independence;

- Family involvement in program planning and implementation and program activities for children and family members that reflect cultural diversity; and
- Ongoing program evaluation to assure that inclusive practices are being followed and goals for children are being achieved.

Courses and Training on Inclusion:

To educate and prepare the workforce and to create and sustain inclusive settings, coursework and professional training opportunities must:

- Include working collaboratively with the family and their team members (knowledgeable people including specialists if applicable) on the modification of the educational environment and approaches to assessment and curriculum;
- Examine issues and practices and develop strategies and modifications that support the humanistic view of the whole child;
- Critically assess the processes of both internalizing and resisting biases in the field of early childhood/special education in order to value and support children and family rights;
- Understand the characteristics of young children, those who are typically developing as well as those with disabilities and other special needs;
- Understand the history, terminology, legislation, and systems surrounding inclusion of children with special needs in the early care and education system.

Does your child care program welcome ALL children?

Do your policies state that you make reasonable accommodations to include ALL children, including children with disabilities or special needs?

We encourage you to add an inclusion statement to your Parent Handbook and suggest that you remove any exclusionary statements.

Here are a few examples of statements you might want to use.

"In adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), our program does not discriminate based on a child's disability, and we strive to offer reasonable accommodations to enable children with disabilities to become fully included in the program." (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1997)

"We are a Full Inclusion Preschool. This means that we accept children with special needs. This is an opportunity for them to mainstream into programs with typical children. There are many benefits for the typical child as well as the opportunity to learn about differences. This helps to instill the standards and values that promote compassion, patience and acceptance." (A Child's Place Learning Center, Costa Mesa)

"It is our mission to provide child care to a wide range of children of all ethnic diversities, all ages, keeping in mind the inclusion of children with needs that are different." (Miss Julie's Pre-School & Child Care, Anaheim)

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