

The Top Eight Questions Providers Ask About Inclusive Child Care



A Publication of the Alameda County Child Care Planning
Council Committee on Special Needs

This document was developed by the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council's Committee on Special Needs. The Committee's goal is to work collaboratively to develop an infrastructure for inclusive care in Alameda County. Portions of this document are based on several sources, including the Inclusion Fact Sheet from Child Care Plus at the Rural Institute on Disabilities at the University of Montana.

What is inclusive child care?

An inclusive child care program is just like any other child care program. In an inclusive program, children with and without disabilities are nurtured and participate in play and learning activities together. The philosophy of an inclusive program is to acknowledge and support the individual needs of each child and to make sure every child feels welcome.

Children with disabilities engage in the typical day-to-day activities of all children in child care settings. Child care providers in an inclusive program value and celebrate all children as unique individuals – each with special talents and needs. They make modest and often creative modifications to routines and activities so that each child can benefit from participating.

As in all quality programs, caregivers recognize and maximize the benefits of the relationships among all children, families, and staff. High-quality child care programs provide a rich environment for children's social experiences and developmental opportunities, and promote inclusive child care programs that encourage cooperation, choices and a sense of belonging.

Just as with parents of typically developing children, families

of children with disabilities want their children to have relationships with children their own age in a supportive environment that promotes the development of a positive self-concept. Programs embracing inclusive child care often do so as part of an effort towards increasing their overall quality and find that they are often recognized as exemplary programs. ♦

What are some of the benefits for children in an inclusive program?

Early childhood programs provide a playful and natural environment for all children to grow and develop. The opportunity for children with special needs to participate in these experiences with other young children has great value for all children. Children become aware of differences and similarities between themselves and their peers. As they play together, they develop a sense that everyone, regardless of ability or disability, makes an important contribution. In addition, children benefit from an environment that is responsive to individual strengths and needs. ♦

new information, offering inclusive care involves the same skills and attention that you would bring to any child care situation. Being conscious of the ways in which children are the same, while being sensitive to the ways in which they are different, are characteristics necessary to provide quality care to all children.

Parents know their children best and can tell you most of what you need to know to care for any particular child. It may be helpful to realize that the parents of children with disabilities had no special training when their children were born. Spend time talking with parents to learn about their child's needs and to find additional resources that may be available in the community.

Many of the accommodations children need in child care are not complicated and can be easily learned. Some characteristics of a disability may be more challenging than others and you may find training and other resources to be very helpful, even necessary. In addition to parents, training may be available from early intervention or special education specialists, from health professionals, from disability organizations, resource and referral agencies or community colleges.

In some instances, training may be required to administer certain medical procedures. Currently, child care providers are permitted to administer finger-prick tests for children with diabetes and nebulizer treatments for children with asthma. While these procedures are relatively simple, Community Care Licensing requires that providers document that they have received training on how to perform these procedures from a parent or health professional.

R&R staff can assist you in finding current community resources and training opportunities to support your inclusive child care program. ♦

How do I talk to parents?

It's always important to have open communication with parents in any situation. Many parents are eager to share tips and strategies for including their child in your program. Parents want their child care arrangements to be successful. Your reassurance and expressed interest in their child's healthy development will encourage a greater degree of openness and trust. Reinforce the message that you are always there to provide support, but in some cases their child may need additional help. Let parents know that you will help them find out how to access any special services their child might need.

Offer parents encouragement to follow-up by sharing your observations of the child's strengths and needs. Encourage parents to talk to their child's primary health care provider. Continue to work and communicate with parents as you create a nurturing environment for their child. For more ideas, talk to R&Rs or the Family Resource Network. ♦

Who do I call for help?

Quality connections you make with other professionals involved with the family will make it easier for you, the child, and the child's family. We've compiled a list of key contacts for you below.

ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

How to Find Out More About Inclusive Child Care

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R's)

Inclusion Services at each R&R assist families with special needs in finding appropriate child care.

- BANANAS, Inc. (North County) (510) 658-0381
- 4C's of Alameda Co. (Mid County) (510) 582-2182
- Child Care Links (Tri Valley) (925) 417-8733

Legal Issues Related to Inclusive Child Care

Child Care Law Center

Provides legal assistance on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, California's civil rights laws, and other child care legal issues. A Free Information & Referral Line is available Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 12-3 Pacific Time at (415) 394-7144.

Department of Justice

Department of Justice Hotline (between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. EST weekdays) at (800) 514-0301 or (800) 514-0383 (TDD). DOJ Disability website: <http://www.usdoj.gov/disabilities.htm>. "Commonly Asked Questions About Child Care and the ADA" at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/childq%26a.htm>.

Fair Employment and Housing Commission

The Mission of the Department of Fair Employment and Housing is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations, and from the perpetration of acts of hate violence. (800) 884-1684, <http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/>

Help in Making My Child Care Program More Accessible for Children With Special Needs

Every Child Counts/Alameda County First Five Child Care –
Early Care & Education Department
(510) 875-2400

Provides professional guidance to early childhood educators to improve the quality of child care, and administers the Child Care Fund that provides loans, grants and business training to licensed center and family child care providers.

Resource and Referral Agencies (See above)