DELAWARE EARLY CHILDHOOD

Inclusion Guide

Delaware Department of Education

> Programs, not children, need to be ready for inclusion.
>
> *Including Young Children with Special Needs*
> by Ilene S. Schwartz, Samuel L. Odom, and Susan R. Sandal

WELCOME!

The purpose of the Inclusion Guide is to help early childhood professionals in Delaware meet the needs of young children with disabilities and their families. This guide is for family child care providers as well as preschool and child care center program administrators, directors, and curriculum coordinators and the early childhood professionals in the classrooms – the teachers, the assistant teachers, and the aides who serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Inclusion provides children with disabilities access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, materials, and environments. In many cases, simple changes in the schedule, an activity, or the classroom can provide access, participation, and supports for a child with a disability.

This guide is a starting point for early childhood professionals to meet the developmental needs of children with disabilities. Information regarding coursework for the Inclusion Credential – Higher Education Pathways Resource is available at **https://dieecpd.org/early-childhood-credentials**. More information regarding other professional development opportunities can be found at the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood website at **www.dieec.udel.edu**.

Recommendations and information found in this guide are to be used at the discretion of the reader, and in cooperation with a child's family and physician.

FIVE PARTS OF THE INCLUSION GUIDE

PART 1 **Principles and Policies** establish a foundation for inclusion.

PART 2 **Strategies for Working with Families** suggests ways to gather and share information with families.

PART 3 **Accommodations, Modifications, and Supports** describes how participating in common activities can benefit children with disabilities. Ideas are provided for organizing activities, space, and materials to allow all children to participate.

PART 4 **When You Are Concerned About a Child's Development** lists who to contact, how to support the family, and what is involved in an evaluation.

PART 5 **Inclusion Resources and Supports** provides useful websites, books, classes, and other resources about including children with disabilities in early childhood programs.

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Research has shown that including children with disabilities in the same activities and educational settings as their typically developing peers benefits all children.

Advisory Committee and Reviewers

Member Agencies of the Early Childhood Inclusion Committee (ECIC), formerly Expanding Early Intervention Opportunities Committee (EIEIO)

Bayada Home Health

Children and Families First

Delaware Department of Education
- Office of Early Learning
- Head Start Collaboration Office

Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
- Birth to Three Early Intervention System, Division of Management Services

Head Start
- New Directions Early Head Start
- Wilmington Head Start

Parents

Parents as Teachers

Representatives from Early Childhood School District Programs

Statewide Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Subject Matter Experts

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT ON INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

September 14, 2015

Children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high-quality early childhood programs and too many preschool children with disabilities are only offered the option of receiving special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities. This lag in inclusive opportunities is troubling for many reasons:

- Being meaningfully included as a member of society is the first step to equal opportunity, one of America's most cherished ideals, and is every person's right – a right supported by our laws.
- Research indicates that meaningful inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities across a variety of developmental domains.
- Preliminary research shows that operating inclusive early childhood programs is not necessarily more expensive than operating separate early childhood programs for children with disabilities.
- Meaningful inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits.

It is the Departments' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations.

Though this policy statement focuses on including young children with disabilities, it is our shared vision that all people be meaningfully included in all facets of society throughout the life course. This begins in early childhood programs and continues into schools, places of employment, and the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ACTION

1. **Create a State-Level Interagency Task Force and Plan for Inclusion:** States should leverage existing early childhood councils or taskforces and create or strengthen a focus on early childhood inclusion. This council should build on existing early childhood efforts, bring partners together, co-create a written vision statement for early childhood inclusion, and carry out an inclusion State plan.

2. **Ensure State Policies Support High-Quality Inclusion:** States should review their policies to ensure that they facilitate high-quality inclusion. The State should ensure that future early learning initiatives within the State have specific policies and procedures to recruit, enroll, and appropriately support the learning and developmental needs of young children with disabilities.

3. **Set Goals and Track Data:** States should set concrete goals for expanding access to inclusive high quality early learning opportunities, and track progress in reaching these goals.

4. **Review and Modify Resource Allocations:** States should review how resources are allocated and how they may be reallocated to better support increased access to inclusive early childhood programs. States should consider using funds across multiple early childhood programs, particularly IDEA funds with other early childhood funding streams.

5. **Ensure Quality Rating Frameworks are Inclusive:** Each level in a quality framework should include indicators applicable to children with disabilities, as opposed to indicators specific to children with disabilities being optional or only applying at the highest level of a framework.

6. **Strengthen Accountability and Build Incentive Structures:** The State should address barriers to inclusion within their accountability system. This should include reviewing the individualized education program (IEP) processes to ensure that placement decisions are individualized and consistent with LRE requirements for eligible children under the IDEA.

7. **Build a Coordinated Early Childhood Professional Development (PD) System:** An effective early childhood workforce is a key component of expanding access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs. States should ensure that their professional development efforts are coordinated and that inclusion of children with disabilities are meaningfully addressed across all efforts. Specifically, States should:

   - Build a Common Knowledge and Competency Base Across Child-Serving Providers
   - Ensure that State Certifications, Credentials, and Workforce Preparation Programs have a Strong Focus on Inclusion
   - Ensure Personnel Policies Facilitate Inclusion
   - Offer Cross-Sector Professional Development and Technical Assistance

8. **Implement Statewide Supports for Children's Social-Emotional and Behavioral Health:** Early childhood programs should have access to specialists who can build capacity in working with young children, with an emphasis on fostering social-emotional and behavioral health.

9. **Raise Public Awareness:** The State should take an active role in trying to shift perceptions of inclusion by partnering with community leaders to communicate the benefits of early childhood inclusion by affirming the laws and research that form the foundation for inclusion. By doing so, this will set the expectation that the community is responsible for ensuring that all children have access to high-quality early childhood programs and the individualized supports they need to fully participate in those programs.

LOCAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Partner with Families:** Families are children's first and most important teachers and advocates. Schools and programs should ensure all families are knowledgeable about the benefits of inclusion and include them in policy development, advocacy efforts, and public information initiatives. They should build staff's capacity to form strong goal-oriented relationships with families that are linked to their child's learning, development, and wellness.

2. **Adhere to Legal Provisions of Supports and Services in Inclusive Settings with IFSPs/IEPs:** LEAs, schools, and other local early intervention service providers should review their IFSP/IEP processes to ensure that inclusive settings are meaningfully discussed for each child.

3. **Assess and Improve the Quality of Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs:** Pair children's assessments with environmental assessments of their early childhood programs to ensure that there are appropriate accommodations and modifications to support children in reaching their goals.

4. **Review and Modify Resource Allocation:** LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs can examine the ways they allocate funds that serve children with disabilities and modify them to promote inclusion.

5. **Enhance Professional Development:** A high-quality staff should have knowledge, competencies, and positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and disability in order to foster the development of all children. Specifically:

   - LEA Administrators, Early Childhood Directors and Principals should participate in professional development focused on the research on inclusion, establishing a culture of inclusion and enacting strong inclusive policies. As well, they will need to develop practical resource allocation strategies that support inclusion. Leaders should require staff to engage in professional development specific to inclusion and supporting the learning and developmental needs of children with disabilities.

   - Teachers and Providers should have the skills necessary to meet the learning needs of all children. All professional development opportunities offered to early childhood staff should incorporate how the content applies and can be individualized for children with disabilities.

   - Early interventionists, Special Educators and Related Service Personnel should deliver services to children with disabilities in early childhood settings that are embedded in everyday routines; and/or co-teach and coach early childhood teachers and providers to encourage inclusive educational environments, as opposed to focusing on working with children in separate settings or pulling children out of their settings for specialized instruction, as a first option.

6. **Establish an Appropriate Staffing Structure and Strengthen Staff Collaboration:** LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs should shift existing resources and systems to establish staffing structures and increase staff collaboration to better support inclusion. Early childhood programs could consist of a skilled teacher or provider and an aide, supported by specialized service providers. Programs should also have a disability or inclusion coordinator.

7. **Ensure Access to Specialized Supports:** Early childhood programs and schools should have access to specialized supports delivered by experts. These specialized supports can increase the quality of early learning experiences for all children.

8. **Develop Formal Collaborations with Community Partners:** Early childhood programs and schools should establish formal agreements with service providers in their community to ensure alignment and delivery of comprehensive services.

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-executive-summary.pdf

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Early childhood inclusion

embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports."

From the *"Joint Position Statement of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children"* (2009)

Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments

MISSION

Part C early intervention builds upon and provides supports and resources to assist family members and caregivers to enhance children's learning and development through everyday learning opportunities.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.

2. All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children's learning and development.

3. The primary role of a service provider in early intervention is to work with and support family members and caregivers in children's lives.

4. The early intervention process, from initial contact through transition, must be dynamic and individualized to reflect the child's and family members' preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs.

5. Individualized Family Service Plan outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs and family-identified priorities.

6. The family's priorities, needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support.

7. Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research, and relevant laws and regulations.

Practical Examples of Key Principles
http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Principles_LooksLike_DoesntLookLike3_11_08.pdf

Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments: Susan Addision, Betsy Ayankoya, Mary Beth Bruder, Carl Dunst, Larry Edelman, Andy Gomm, Barbara Hanft, Cori Hill, Joicey Hurth, Grace Kelley, Anne Lucas, Robin McWilliam, Stephanie Moss, Lynda Pletcher, Dathan Rush, M'Lisa Shelden, Mary Steenberg, Judy Swett, Nora Thompson, Julianne Woods, and Naomi Younggren.

Key Principles Underlying the IEP Process:

Supporting Family Participation, Inclusive Practices and Positive Outcomes for Preschool Children with Disabilities

Developed by the NECTAC Workgroup on Principles and Practices for the IEP Process
May 2012

The overarching goal statement is intended to reflect the broad purpose of services provided under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA to support positive outcomes for children with disabilities, ages three through five, and their families. The principles are the foundation necessary to support the system of services and supports and are intended to reflect key values for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

Goal: Preschool special education is to enable young children to be active and successful participants in home, school, and community settings resulting in positive outcomes for children and their families.

Principle 1: Preschoolers learn best through meaningful everyday experiences and interactions within developmentally, linguistically and culturally appropriate routines, play, and activities in inclusive settings.

Principle 2: All families, with appropriate supports and resources, promote their children's learning and development.

Principle 3: The primary role of preschool special educators and related service providers is to provide and support high quality services in collaboration with families, teachers, and caregivers to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

Principle 4: Throughout the preschool special education process, the child's individual strengths and needs, along with the family's culture, priorities, and preferences, are respected and reflected.

Principle 5: IEP goals based on multiple sources of information, including family concerns and authentic assessment, support and promote access to and participation in the preschool curriculum.

Principle 6: Professionals build partnerships with families and support them as the primary decision makers for their children.

Principle 7: Preschool learning experiences are developmentally appropriate and based on recommended practices.

Background: NECTAC convened a workgroup of diverse stakeholders including researchers, higher education faculty, state policy makers, regional and local program administrators, family representatives, service providers, and technical assistance providers to develop, through a consensus process, an overarching goal statement and related principles for preschool special education services.

NECTAC Workgroup on Principles and Practices of the IEP Process: Hilary Bonnell, Kimberly Brancato, Linda Brekken, Janet Cornwell, Sandra Erickson, Kate Gallagher, Sherry Halley, Vivian James, Jennifer Kalis, Robin McWilliam, Phyllis Mondak, Cindy Ramagos, Ruth Ann Rasbold, Sandy Smith, Pat Snyder, Judy Swett, Verna Thompson, Carol Trivette, Gaye Tylka, Gwen Van Ark, Lisa Wagley, Pam Winton. **Facilitators:** Debbie Cate, Shelley deFosset, Martha Diefendorf, Kathi Gillaspy, Joicey Hurth, Christina Kasprzak, Grace Kelley, Mary Peters, Robin Rooney, Kathy Whaley

Resources: The preschool principles build upon the work and products developed for early intervention services: Agreed Upon Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments, Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, November 2007. Other resources guiding the work include: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), DEC Recommended Practices, NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice, and Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO).

Citation: NECTAC Workgroup on Principles and Practices for the IEP Process, May 2012.

Defining Features of Inclusion

The Joint Statement of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has further described the three components of inclusive early childhood programs. The presence of these three components has been shown, through research, to result in higher quality early childhood programs for all children.

Access

Providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, materials, and environments is a defining feature of high quality early childhood inclusion. In many cases, simple changes can provide access to activities for children with disabilities.

- **Believing that all children have the potential to learn.** A positive attitude is important for helping all children grow and develop.
- **Knowing and understanding child development.** Understanding that children learn skills in a particular order will help the early childhood professional set realistic expectations for a child's skill development. As an example, a child must practice standing before practicing walking. A child with special needs may need to have a skill divided into smaller steps before that skill can be mastered.
- **A physical environment that meets the needs of the child.** In most cases, the environment may not need to be changed at all. Compare your space with the needs of the child.
- **Planning activities that all children can do.** It is possible to plan activities, snacks, meals, and programs that are appropriate for all children.

Examples of Access:

- Having a ramp so that the building is accessible to children with wheel chairs
- Arranging your classroom so that all children have access to all areas
- Using a variety of riding equipment so that all children can participate in gross motor skills
- Providing a cube chair during circle time

Participation

Even if children with disabilities are able to access programs and environments, some may require additional, individualized accommodations and modifications or adjustments to fully participate in play and learning activities with peers.

- **Knowing that children with special needs are more like all children than different.** While there are some exceptions, many two-year-olds with special needs have the same challenges of being two that all children face. Where and when possible, setting similar expectations for all children will help them to be accepted.
- **Encouraging a child to be independent.** Children like to do things on their own. There is a tendency to "over" help children with special needs. Yet, it is better for the development of these children to encourage them to do whatever they can for themselves.

Examples of Participation:

- Providing a picture song chart so that all children can choose a song to sing
- Assigning a peer to engage a child in imaginative play
- Providing a variety of activities on various levels

Supports

Achieving high-quality inclusion of children with disabilities requires that there be a strong foundation of systems-level supports to ensure that the efforts of individuals, programs, and organizations are successful and can be maintained. Systems-level supports address such things as providing on-going training, well-defined processes, and procedures to work collaboratively among all stakeholders (families, therapists, and staff) to provide specialized services and ensure that quality standards are met. Without systems-level supports, the efforts of individuals and organizations providing inclusive services to children and families will be compromised.

Examples of Systems-Level Supports:

- Providing collaborative professional development for child care and early childhood special education teachers
- Supporting community programs with itinerant teachers or paraprofessionals
- Providing incentives to programs to assist in meeting the needs of children with disabilities

An Inclusive Early Childhood Program Includes:

- Children of all abilities and backgrounds living, learning, and playing together
- Daily activities and routines planned to meet the needs of each child so that all children are participating
- Access to materials or activities adapted to meet the different needs of children
- Valuing each child's individual strengths and needs
- Activities based on children's interests, which build on and repeat their successes to develop their increased confidence

Who Benefits from High-quality, Inclusive Early Childhood Programs?

You, the early childhood professional

- Inclusion expands your experiences and skills to benefit all children.
- Inclusion is rewarding. You are able to see all children learn and grow together.

Other children in your care

- Inclusion helps children discover that all children are more alike than different.
- Inclusion builds children's self-esteem.
- Inclusion allows children to learn from one another.
- Inclusion helps children see the strengths and abilities of each unique friend.

Children with a disability

- Inclusion increases children's opportunities to play and communicate with children of different abilities.
- Inclusion creates opportunities for friendships among children.
- Inclusion builds children's self-esteem.

Families

- Inclusion connects families to other families and resources in their community.
- Inclusion increases families' participation in the community.

Communities

- Inclusive early care and education sends a message to the community that all children are valued and welcomed.
- Inclusion strengthens communities by exposing everyone to a wider variety of perspectives and experiences.
- Inclusion teaches communities to respect and celebrate diversity.

Related Service Providers

- Inclusion shares resources provided by agencies, benefitting all children.
- Inclusion involves early interventionists partnering with early childhood professionals in the child's classroom.

Inclusion Quiz for Early Childhood Programs

(Questions are designed to reveal how well a program can support children with special needs)

1. Children with special needs can easily access any classroom.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

2. Children with special needs can access many classroom areas independently.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

3. There are many materials and equipment that children can access and use independently.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

4. Adults monitor how children use materials and equipment and provide the necessary support for children who have difficulty using the materials.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

5. Adults organize the space and activities to encourage peer interaction.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

6. Adults in the classroom support children in having conversations with other children.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

7. Classrooms have a great variety of recommended toys, materials, and equipment selected to meet individual needs and to promote the participation of all children.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

8. Inclusion looks the same for every child.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

9. Parents are the best experts regarding what would best meet the needs of their child.

   ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

10. Classroom teachers reflect on their own personal philosophy of serving a diverse set of children.

    ❑ TRUE ❑ FALSE

Items 1-6 based on: Soucacou, E.P. (2007). *Assessment of Classroom Quality in Inclusive Preschool Settings: Development and Validation of a New Observation Measure.* Unpublished D.Phil Thesis. Department of Education, Oxford University. Available at: **http://community.fpg.unc.edu/discussions/blog-speaking-of-inclusion/measuring-the-quality-of-inclusion**

1) T, 2) T, 3) T, 4) T, 5) T, 6) T, 7) T, 8) F, 9) T&F, 10) T

PART 2

Strategies for Working with Families

A child's family is their first teacher and parents are the primary experts as it relates to meeting the needs of their child. Therefore, it is important to host a family orientation meeting when new families join your program. This will likely be the first meeting between an early childhood professional and the family, and can be a great source of comfort and learning.

Host this meeting when you have a block of time to present a welcoming atmosphere. It is important to use the time to ask questions, answer questions and to tour your classroom or program without interruption.

It is helpful to have information about children and their families before you begin care of them. The next page contains sample questions to create the best foundation of care for children.

You may want to send these questions to the family before you meet so they will have a chance to think about their answers and perhaps gather resources to aid in this introductory phase. Learning about a new child is a first step in forming a good working relationship with the parents and child.

About Your Child

- What are your child's favorite activities?
- In what topics does your child show interest?
- What are their favorite toys, games, and books?
- Favorite foods?
- Any pets?
- Other significant relationships? *(Siblings, neighbors, grandparents, etc.)*

About Your Child's Routines

- What is your child's daily routine?
- How does your child get along with other children?
- What is the best way of handling the following situations with your child?
  - When your child gets fussy
  - When it is time to take a nap
  - What comforts your child?
  - What do you do to calm your child when he or she has been upset?
  - How do you reinforce positive behaviors?
- Are there any "family rules" of which we should be aware?
- Does your child have any fears?
- Does your child have any food allergies or require a special diet?
- Does your child need any help with routines such as toileting or eating?
- Does your child take specific medications?
- What do you think might be difficult about coming to child care for your child?

About Your Child's Development

- Do you have any concerns about your child's development? Yes/No
  - If yes, please describe
- Has your child had a hearing and vision screen? Yes/No
  - If yes, please describe
- Does your infant or toddler have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) – a plan for any child identified as having a special need, disability or developmental delay?
  - If yes, may we have a copy?
- If the child is 3 years or older, does the child have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
  - If yes, may we have a copy?
- Does your child use any special equipment or devices? i.e. glasses, braces, walker, hearing aide, etc.
- How does your child communicate?
- What is your child's home language?
- What would you like us to know about your child?
- Who does your child live with?
- Does your family have any cultural or religious practices of which we should be aware?

Information you may want to share with the family about your program and the teachers

- Mission and philosophy of partnering with families in addressing the needs of all children enrolled in the program
- Schedule of the day, teacher/child ratio
- The program's experience of working with children with special needs and the specialists who may meet with children in the early childhood program
- The teacher's experience in offering a high quality learning experience for all children
- A copy of the parent handbook
- The program's willingness to support the team of the family, early intervention specialists, and program staff encouraging the child's growth, development, and participation
- Daily written/electronic communication to parents of infants and toddlers

Sample interview forms, daily progress sheets, and other free child care forms can be found at **www.supportingproviders.com**

Resource books are available at local libraries or Parent Information Center of Delaware (**www.picofdel.org**)

PART 3

Accommodations, Modifications, and Supports

An inclusive early care and education program plans activities and routines so that all children can participate.

Some activities may need to be adapted or changed for children of different abilities or stages of development. When you observe children being successful, repeat the activity or plan similar activities to let children practice their skills. Success builds on success. Adjust routines to meet the needs of children with special needs, as well as for all of the children.

Think about your classroom. Consider how you might use these suggestions to assist your children in being successful.

Environmental Supports

1. Use visual supports to present information
2. A picture schedule is available in the classroom
3. Review and refer to the picture schedule on a daily basis
4. Present information in multiple formats (pictures, symbols, words)
5. The learning environment addresses all sensory modalities – visual, auditory, kinesthetic, music, and movement toys and activities
6. Provide a predictable mix of active and quiet activities, daily
7. Peer support is used within the classroom
8. Language is modified to reflect the developmental levels of the children
9. Appropriate behavior is modeled
10. Children are encouraged to use appropriate communication strategies
11. Available toys and materials meet a range of developmental levels
12. The classroom has a quiet area with soothing materials and activities
13. All areas of indoor and outdoor play are accessible to all children with a variety of toys to support motor development
14. Assure the appropriate use of Assistive Technology
    Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (**www.DATI.org**) • 800-870-3284 • DATI-UD@UDEL.EDU
15. Other classroom visuals and supports may be found at
    https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/classroom-visuals-supports
    **See glossary for more information, samples, and links*

Transitions

1. Review your schedule to reduce transitions when possible
2. Plan for transitions, adding extra time and strategies
3. Remind children what to do before transition occurs
4. Provide cues prior to transition (count down, timer)
5. Provide clear signals for transition from one activity to another (flick lights, ring bell, sing)
6. Be present and ready to begin a new activity as soon as children arrive
7. If needed, use pictures to break down the steps and guide transition
    **See links in appendix*

Systems-Level Supports

High-quality inclusion of children with disabilities means

- Being able to provide specialized services for children with disabilities
- Access to ongoing professional development
- Well-defined processes and procedures to coordinate with families, therapists, program staff, and all other supporting stakeholders

Programs that seek to offer high-quality inclusion establish program guidelines and information that clearly describes their commitment to helping all children reach their full potential.

Frequently, early childhood teachers are involved in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) process for infants and toddlers with disabilities or the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for three to five year old children with disabilities. Teachers may meet with child's support team, provide information about the child's capabilities, and be involved in implementing day-to-day strategies in support of the child's development.

Programs serving children with disabilities typically host meetings with teachers, therapists, and family to discuss a child's progress and to set new goals for development.

Professional Development

Staff is encouraged to continue to learn how to meet the needs of all children. Professional development for those serving children with disabilities is available from Delaware colleges and universities. Community-based professional development is also offered by Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood. (**https://dieecpd.org**)

PART 4

When You Are Concerned About a Child's Development

Observe and Prepare to Describe Your Observations

One responsibility of an early childhood professional is to identify when a child may be experiencing a developmental delay or challenge. This is a critical step in supporting the growth and development of children in your program. When needs are identified early, children can begin to receive supports to help them grow and learn with their peers.

Children grow and learn new skills at different rates. Some children take longer to learn new skills than others, or may be quick to develop in one area, while learning skills in another area of development more slowly. For instance, a child may quickly learn to move around and walk, yet take longer to learn language skills. This is typical of children's development.

If you have concerns, a Developmental Screening is the first step that you can recommend to families to help determine if their child is at risk for possible developmental delays.

Developmental Screening

All children should have access to developmental screenings. A developmental screening is a snapshot of a child's development to determine if a child is on target or requires a follow up evaluation to gather more information.

The Delaware Office of Early Learning (OEL) supports the use of the Ages and Stages® Developmental Screening tool, and training for the tool is provided through the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC). Child care providers share online links with families to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional 2 (ASQ: SE-2). Screening results are shared with families. School districts and child care programs will work closely together to support families with developmentally appropriate activities and resources and to determine next steps.

If a request for evaluation is necessary, details can be found on the DOE website at:
https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3665

Plan activities that will help a child develop the skills that they may be learning at a slower rate.
Ideas for activities may be found at:

- Growing Together Calendar
  https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dms/epqc/birth3/files/growingtogether_rev083017.pdf
- Delaware Early Learning Foundations
  https://dieecpd.org/early-learning-foundations
  https://dieecpd.org/static/uploads/files/elfpreschool9-10.pdf

The Center for Disease Control also provides a simple child tracking app that can be found at
https://www.cdc.gov/mobile/

Share your observations with others

If – after observing and working with the child to develop the new skills – you note that a child is not doing some of the activities that most children are able to do at their age, discuss your observations and your notes with the program director and/or the curriculum coordinator of your early childhood program. If you are a family child care provider, discuss your concerns directly with the family.

Involve the family

Parents are the ones who will need to take action. Parents may be seeing the same behavior, yet not know how to discuss it with someone else.

Sometimes, we would prefer to avoid or delay these discussions hoping that the child will grow out of it. Remember that helping the child and family find the resources they need in a timely way is an important goal.

Be prepared for the discussion.

- Ask to talk with the parent at a convenient time for both you and the parent.
- Prepare to share information from the developmental screening (ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE:2) , Teaching Strategies Gold, or other curriculum based assessment you may use.
- Ask parents questions about behaviors they may have noticed in their child, but perhaps have not addressed at home.
- Refer to notes, based on your observations; be ready to describe the child's abilities and your concerns.
- Consider using a developmental checklist, the *Early Learning Foundations,* or *CDC Developmental Milestones* to focus the discussion on the child's abilities.
- Talk to one another about what you each see the child doing. Ask questions like:
  - "Do you see that your child is able to do the same activities or different activities?"
  - "Do you see that your child is doing activities that are appropriate for the age of your child?"

Remain sensitive to a family's feelings

- Realize that having a discussion about your observations may be hard for parents to hear, understand, and accept.
- Give parents time to talk about their experiences, concerns, and feelings. Remember that parents have special knowledge and a special relationship with their children.
- Be aware of various cultural expectations and how they may impact the child's development.
- Support parents as they contact health care providers, Child Development Watch, Child Find in their school district, and others to have the developmental concerns assessed. Offer to share your observations of the child on any questionnaires that the parent may need to complete.
- Be prepared for parents to disagree and to deny your concern for their child. It may take several discussions with the family to help them see what you are observing.
- At the end of each conversation, encourage the family to plan an activity that will help them better understand or prepare for assessment of a potential developmental delay. A family could:
  - Watch what a child does in a certain situation and compare it to what a child of his or her age usually does. This helps parents recognize that the child is not doing the activities one would expect of a child this age.
  - Practice a skill with a child by playing with them. This helps the family provide opportunities for skills to be developed.
  - If the child is younger than 3 years old, make an appointment to discuss concerns with the child's health care provider, or Child Development Watch.
  - If the child is 3 years or older, contact the school district's Child Find Coordinator or Special Education Supervisor. This supports the family in making the first step toward assessing their child's abilities.

This is a stressful time for the family

No parent wants to hear that their child is struggling. Parents often fear the worst when they hear concerns. When a family is concerned or when someone suggests that their child has a disability or developmental delay, families may become angry, defensive, or may not realize the extent of their child's needs. This is normal and should be expected. Do not take their concerns or emotions personally.

When a parent takes steps to have their child screened to determine if there is a developmental delay, they are beginning a very difficult journey. There are many appointments to be scheduled and arrangements to be made. The support and encouragement of the early childhood professional is crucial to keeping a parent moving through the process. Remind the family that the sooner the child is assessed and involved in the program if he or she is eligible, the easier it will be for the child to be the best that he or she can be. Waiting to see if the child makes progress without supports may waste valuable time in these early years.

If you are a person whom the parent sees every day, you may take some of the "blame" for the child's difficulty. Realize that this may be part of the family's denial that this is happening to their child. Let parents know that you see their child's abilities and special qualities also. While you may already do so, this is a time to be sure to share something positive about their child every day.

Treat this family as you do other families who are going through stressful times, such as a divorce, a new baby, or a death in the family. During these times, a child usually needs a great deal of attention and comfort. Parents need support, encouragement, and patience.

The words we use to describe the situation – our language – can help

Be aware of your communication and practice using "people first language." The children in your care are children first, who can be described in many different ways. Describe the child by what the child can do rather than what they can't do or the disability. Instead of saying "the Autistic boy", say "the boy on the Autism Spectrum." Describe the person first and then the characteristic about them.

By talking about the person first, the focus is first on the person, not the disability. By using "people first language," people become more comfortable talking about people and their unique needs.

Share resources with the family

Help parents become aware of resources and services to aid them and their child. With help, many children are able to develop their skills and abilities. Getting help early allows a child to learn ways to be successful.

Child Development Watch

Delaware early intervention for children birth to age 3.

MISSION: To enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities or developmental delays and to enhance the capacity of their families to meet the needs of their young children.

New Castle County referrals ..... (302) 283-7140
New Castle County Toll-free ..... (800) 671-0050
Kent and Sussex Counties..... (302) 424-7300
All other inquiries..... (302) 283-7240

Child Find

At age 3 and older, Delaware services for children with disabilities or developmental delays are managed through each of the public school districts.

School District	Child Find Contact Number
Appoquinimink	(302) 376-4404
Brandywine	(302) 479-2600
Caesar Rodney	(302) 697-4145
Cape Henlopen	(302) 645-7210
Capital	(302) 857-4241
Christina	(302) 454-2047
Colonial	(302) 429-4088
Delmar	(302) 846-9544
Indian River	(302) 732-1343
Lake Forest	(302) 284-9611 x123
Laurel	(302) 875-6100
Milford	(302) 424-5474
Red Clay	(302) 892-3227
Seaford	(302) 629-4587 x1635
Smyrna	(302) 659-6287
Woodbridge	(302) 349-4539 x263

PART 5

Inclusion Resources and Supports

Services for Children

Birth to 3 years old
Part C Coordinator
Birth to Three Early Intervention System
Division of Management Services (DMS)
Delaware Department of Health
and Social Services.....(302) 255-9134
http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dms/epqc/birth3/directory.html

IDEA Ages 3 through 5
Section 619 Coordinator
Office of Early Learning
Delaware Department of Education ..(302) 735-4295

Parents as Teachers
www.parentsasteachers.org
New Castle County ..... (302) 454-5955
Kent County .....(302) 697-4545 x482
Sussex County.....(302) 856-5239

Autism Delaware
https://www.delautism.org

Delaware Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
https://kids.delaware.gov/pbhs/pdfs/pbh-brochure-ecmhc.pdf

Services for Families

Child, Inc.
Shelters, domestic violence treatment programs, and specialized foster care, parenting classes, assistance, and community advocacy for children and their families.
Statewide .....(800) 874-2070
New Castle County ..... (302) 762-8989

Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.
Free legal assistance to disabled, low-income, and elderly citizens in civil areas of law.
New Castle County ..... (302) 575-0660
Kent County .....(302) 674-8500
Sussex County.....(302) 856-0038

Delaware Family Voices
www.delawarefamilytofamily.org
Family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities.
Toll-Free .....(877) 235-3588

Delaware Helpline.....211
Information about parenting programs, subsidized childcare, and services, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Medicaid.

Delaware Stars for Early Success
www.delawarestars.udel.edu

Domestic Violence Hotline ..... (302) 762-6110

Parent Information Center of Delaware
www.picofdel.org
New Castle County ..... (302) 999-7394
Kent and Sussex Counties .....(302) 856-9880
Statewide toll-free .....(888) 547-4412

Runaway Youth Hotline..... (302) 762-6373

Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program
New Castle County ..... (302) 283-7570
Toll Free .....(800) 222-2189

Information about breastfeeding
LaLeche League .....(800) 525-3243
Nursing Mothers..... (302) 733-0973

For help in finding a doctor
Medical Society of Delaware ..... (302) 366-1400

For children who could be eligible for Head Start
Delaware Head Start Collaboration Director
Office of Early Learning
Delaware Department of Education ..(302) 735-4295

For information about immunizations
(800) 282-8672

Professional Development for Staff on Inclusion

www.dieec.udel.edu
Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood
(302) 831-3239

www.dec-sped.org
Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children offers Special Education Intervention Professional Standards with CEC Common Core

http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/cape
National Association for the Education of Young Children offers position statements on "Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation" and "Promoting Positive Outcomes for Children with Disabilities: Recommendations for Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation"

Internet Resources on Inclusion:

www.inclusivechildcare.org
Resources, technical assistance, professional development opportunities, and training

www.circleofinclusion.org
Practical site for information on inclusive programs, methods and practices with interactive lessons, forms, and other materials

www.headstartinclusion.org
Information, professional development, materials, and other resources to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in Head Start programs

http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu
National Professional Development Center on Inclusion offers planning guides, measures, wikis, blogs, discussions, free e-newsletter, and other resources to support quality inclusive practices

http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners/module-1
Embedded Intervention Module provides training on the legal foundations of inclusion and integrating supports into daily routines

http://ectacenter.org
Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center has resources on policies related to inclusion and strategies for implementing policies

http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecrii/
Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion has resources for supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in typical preschool, child care, and community settings

https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov
Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center supports Head Start programs with evidence-based practices for all children including specific information for children with disabilities

www.zerotothree.org
Information and resources about child development from birth through age three

www.earlyliteracylearning.org
Evidence-based early literacy learning practices to support young children, birth to five, who have or are at risk for disabilities and delays

http://ecmhc.org/advisors.html
Strategies for strong mental health foundation for children, families, and early childhood professionals

https://fpg.unc.edu/resources/snapshot-55
Making Friends: Assisting Children's Early Relationships

Internet Resources for Parents and Families

www.supportforfamilies.org
Resources for families of children with disabilities

www.beachcenter.org
The Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas offers materials on family support in early intervention

www.fathersnetwork.org
For fathers of children with special health care needs and developmental disabilities

www.fcsn.org
Federation for Children with Special Needs

www.kidstogether.org
Information and resources for children and adults with disabilities, with a mission to promote inclusive communities

www.parentcenterhub.org
Central "hub" of information and products created for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities

www.our-kids.org
An organization of parents devoted to raising special kids with special needs

www.familyshade.org
An alliance of family partners/organizations committed to improving the quality of life for children with special health care needs, and their caregivers.

Books on Inclusion

Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs, 2nd Edition
By Susan R. Sandall and Illene S. Schwartz
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore 2008
Provides educators three types of practical, research-based inclusion strategies that promote progress in critical areas like behavior, emergent literacy, and peer relationships

An Administrator's Guide to Preschool Inclusion
By Woolery and Odom
FPG Child Development Center Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000
Practical strategies for addressing common administrative barriers and challenges to inclusion

CARA's Kit: Creating Adaptations for Routines and Activities
By Suzanne Milbourne and Pip Campbell
Missoula, DEC. 2007
Adaptations that can support each child's full participation

Engagement of Every Child in the Preschool Classroom
By R.A. McWilliam and Amy M. Casey
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore 2008
Provides practical, simple ideas for adjustments in the classroom environment to increase children's level of active engagement

Making Preschool Inclusion Work
By Anne Marie Richardson-Gibbs and M. Diane Klein
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, 2014
Textbook identifying how to collaborate among team members to provide evidence based strategies and practices for a successful preschool experience

The Preschool Inclusion Toolbox – How to Build and Lead a High-Quality Program
By Erin E. Baron and Barbara J Smith
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, 2015
A how-to book for preschool administrators, school district leaders, and child care professionals on increasing inclusion through big picture, systems level change

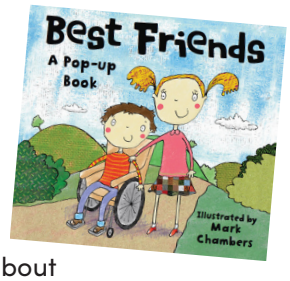
The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children's Learning
By A.S. Epstein
NAEYC, Washington, DC 2011
Strategies to support the learning of all children

Books for Children

We're Amazing 1, 2, 3!
By Leslie Kimmelman and Beth Nelson
Golden Book, 2017
A Sesame Street Big Book about friendship and autism

What Is It Like To Be Me?
By Alenka Klemenc
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, Philadelphia, 2013
A book about a boy with Asperger's Syndrome

My Brother Charlie
By Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete, 2010
Written by a mother and daughter who is the fraternal twin of a brother with autism



Best Friends
By Sheri Safran, 2011
A story of a boy and his best friend who utilizes a wheelchair

Don't Call Me Special
By Pat Thomas, 2012
Explores questions and concerns about physical disability in a simple and reassuring way

Just Because
By Rebecca Elliott, 2011
The story of a brother and his older sister with special needs

We'll Paint the Octopus Red
By Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, 1998
This book tells the story of Emma and her brother who is born with Down syndrome

Seal Surfer
By Michael Foreman, 2007
Story of the relationship between a boy with disabilities, his grandfather, and a seal that saved him while surfing

Yes, I Can! : A Girl and Her Wheelchair
By Kendra J. Barrell, 2018
Carolyn is a happy, energetic, and caring first grader in her new school

Meet Clarabelle Blue
By Adiba Nelson, Elvira Morando and Ilene Serne

El Deafo
By Cece Bell

Janine
By Maryann Cocca-Leffler, 2013
First of a series of books that shows kids with special needs and how they can relate

Looking After Louis
By Lesley Ely, 2003
Highlights the advantages of inclusion for both children with autism and their classmates

Emily's Sister: A family Journey with Dyspraxia and Sensory Processing Disorder
By Michele Gianetti

My Belly Has Two Buttons
By Meikele Lee, 2016
Nico talks about his feeding tube and all it does for him

Hip, Hop, Hooray for Brooklyn Bunny
By Jill Harold and Betsy Miller, 2016
About a rabbit with a can do attitude who loves to hop and wears a night brace

What Are Your Superpowers?
By Marget Wincent, 2017
Nalvana learns how she is unique and special

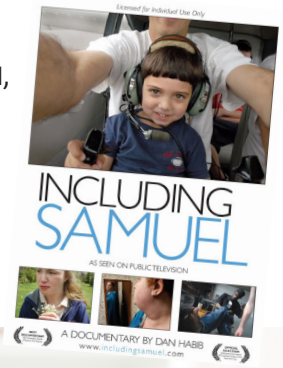
Suzie Book Series for Autistic Kids
By Charlotte Olson, 2013
One in a series of social stories for children with autism and all kids who are anxious about new situations and trying new things

White Cane Day
By Kristin Grender, 2015
Cute picture book for young children explaining blindness and the white cane

We're Not So Different After All
By Lissette Lent, 2015
A playful story of acceptance and understanding featuring a little girl with special needs

Videos and DVDs:

I'm Tyler
By Tyler Green
Ability Awareness, Waterloo, IA, 2006
http://www.imtyler.org
A young man's account of how "ability awareness" has led to opportunities to be included in school, sports, and community experiences



Including Samuel
By Dan Habib, D. Author, Concord, NH, 2007
http://www.includingsamuel.com
An award winning film describing a family's journey of supporting their child in inclusive settings

Glossary and Resources

ASQ:3 – Ages and Stages Developmental Screening: 3 – Parent completed questionnaire that screens to determine if a child is at risk in the areas of communication, fine motor, gross motor, personal – social, or problem solving skills.

ASQ:SE:2 – Ages and Stages Social-Emotional Screening: 2 – Parent completed questionnaire that screens to determine if a child is at risk in social/emotional development.

A.T. – Assistive Technology – Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether bought, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functioning of a child with a disability.

CDW – Child Development Watch - Agency that provides early intervention services to children birth through 2 years 11 months with developmental delays, such as difficulty hearing, seeing, talking, moving, and learning.

DATI – Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative – Funded by the Administration on Community Living, DATI helps Delawareans find and try tools that support learning, communication, personal care, employment and leisure pursuits. DATI raises awareness of assistive technology (AT) and offers training to people with disabilities, families, and professionals and operates several programs that help people acquire the tools they need through lending libraries in all 3 counties. (**http://www.cds.udel.edu/at/dati**)

DIEEC – Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood – University of Delaware program that oversees professional development, Delaware Stars, and Early Head Start. (**http://www.dieec.udel.edu**)

DELAWARE THRIVES – Website that provides resources for families to maintain a healthy lifestyle. (**http://dethrives.com**)

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS – A quick snapshot of a child's development used to determine if a child is at risk for a delay and may require further testing.

ECMH SERVICES – Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is a free service that addresses supporting young children's social and emotional development in early care and education settings. (**https://kids.delaware.gov/pbhs/pdfs/pbh-brochure-ecmhc.pdf**)

ECKLC – Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center – A website administered through the US Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families provides a variety of resources to support early childhood educators. (**https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov**)

ELFS – Early Learning Foundations – Delaware's standards for young children.

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE – Evidence-based practice refers to the use of research and scientific studies as a base for determining the best practices in a field.

FABRICATE – Initiative that brings volunteers together to design, adapt, modify, create, and donate no tech/low tech assistive tools and materials for individuals with disabilities. (**www.fabricate4all.org**)

FAMILY VOICES – Provides support for families navigating health care systems and statewide family network working to enhance systems for children with serious emotional disturbances. (**http://delawarefamilytofamily.org**)

FAMILY SHADE – Network of organizations that provide support for families of children with disabilities, connect families, and providers to information, resources, and services. (**http://www.familyshade.org**)

FAPE – Free and Appropriate Public Education – Section of IDEA that guarantees the right of all children with disabilities to be educated at no cost, based on their individual needs and supported through public education.

HELP ME GROW/211 – Assures that families with children, birth to age 8, have knowledge of and access to appropriate community resources. Also provides developmental screenings free of charge. (**http://dethrives.com/help-me-grow/2-1-1**)

IDEA – Individual with Disabilities Education Act – Law that ensures all students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education.

I.F.S.P. – Individualized Family Service Plan - Written plan for children birth through 3 identified as having a developmental delay or disability. The IFSP is a legal document that lists the child and families' strengths, needs, priorities, interests, and activities in order to identify a system of supports to enhance the caregivers' competence, confidence, and ability to meet their child's needs in the natural environment.

I.E.P. – Individualized Education Program - Written plan developed by the school's special education team, including the parents, that specifies the child's educational goals, the special education, related services and method to obtain these goals in the least restrictive environment. An IEP is a legal document that children can receive at age 3, or earlier if eligible, due to a child being identified with a birth mandates classification, which include autism, hearing impaired, deaf/blind, and visually impaired including blindness.

L.R.E. – Least Restrictive Environment – Refers to educating children with typically developing peers without special needs.

My Child Delaware.org – Delaware's Child Care Consumer website that provides information for families, resources, and providers (**https://www.mychildde.org**)

Natural Environment – Refers to educating children in an environment in which they would participate if they did not have a disability.

PCIT – Parent-Child Interaction Therapy – Short term specialized behavior management program designed for young children experiencing behavioral and/or emotional difficulties and their families.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS – (PAT) – Free, voluntary program for families of children birth through Kindergarten entry, designed to foster strong relationships between parents and their children through home visiting, and Stay and Play groups. (**https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/3626**)

PARENT INFORMATION CENTER – Provides information and support to parents of children with disabilities from birth to 26 to help them access appropriate education and related services for their children. (**https://picofdel.org**)

PART B of IDEA – Federal grant that assists states with implementation of special education and related services for children 3 through 21 years.

PART C of IDEA – Federal grant that assists states with implementation of early intervention services for children birth through age 2 and their families.

PICTURE SCHEDULE – Series of pictures used to communicate the activities or steps of a specific activity. Often used to help a child understand and manage daily events.

TRAUMA–FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY – Evidenced based treatment proven effective for children ages 3-17 who have experienced traumatic events. (**https://kids.delaware.gov/pdfs/delaware-tf-cbt-roster.pdf**)

VISUAL SUPPORTS – Concrete items, pictures, symbols, or printed words that support a child in their ability to maintain attention, understand spoken language, express themselves, sequence and organize their environment.

WIC – Supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children of low-income families. Provides education on general health, nutrition, physical activities, tobacco prevention, diabetes, and breastfeeding support.

DELAWARE EARLY CHILDHOOD

Inclusion Guide

Research has shown that including children with disabilities in the same activities and educational settings as their typically developing peers benefits all children.