

Writing a Quality Inclusion Policy

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High quality childcare is indicated by the maintenance of a safe learning environment in which all children in care have equal opportunity to explore, to participate in a meaningful way, and to interact with other children and adults in the care setting. Inclusion is not simply about children with special needs; it is responsive care to individual abilities and needs of each child in care. We know that inclusion benefits children, their families, and childcare providers. How do we actively and effectively include all children in our child care settings? A written inclusion policy can help.

The first step to writing a quality inclusion policy is to think about the principles of inclusion that you need to address specifically in your policy. Principles of inclusion that you will want to consider are access, participation, and support.

When considering access, ask yourself the following questions:

- How does my program make reasonable efforts to enroll all children, especially those with special needs?
- In looking at my learning environment, do all children have access to all learning centers, materials and activities?

When considering participation, ask yourself the following questions:

- How do I encourage all children to participate in meaningful ways with their peers?
- How do I build on each child's strengths to provide for his individual needs?

When considering support, ask yourself the following questions:

- How do I encourage all families to take part in making decisions about their child?
- How do I collaborate with parents and other partners to provide for each child's needs?
- What support do I offer my staff to have the skills to attend to each child's needs?

Another consideration to writing a quality inclusion policy is language used to promote appropriate inclusive practice in your setting. Always use Person-First Language when describing anyone. This focuses on the child and his abilities rather than challenges. For example, use "a child with autism" rather than an "autistic child" or "a child who bites" rather than "a biter." Focus on the strengths rather than challenges. For example, "We welcome children of all abilities" rather than "We welcome children with disabilities."

Finally, write and implement your inclusion policy. Ensure that all of your staff know the policy and guide them to fully include all children by providing for each child's individual needs and strengths while making accommodations for any challenges.

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