Inclusive Child Care Toolkit

Supporting Children of All Abilities

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ABOUT THE INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE TOOLKIT

PURPOSE

The **Inclusive Child Care Toolkit** is a user-friendly resource intended to support high quality, inclusive practices in child care settings throughout British Columbia. **Inclusion** in this context is supporting all children to participate fully within child care regardless of their abilities. The purpose of this toolkit is to guide you, as child care staff, to reflect and expand your understanding of inclusion in your child care programs.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed for all child care staff, including, early childhood educators, early childhood educator assistants, support workers, and managers/directors and owners of child care programs.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit holds content to help you understand and work towards inclusive child care. Within the toolkit, you will find materials that encourage you and your team to reflect on your child care program and support you in responding to the individual abilities and needs of each child. These materials include:

- Information on how to develop an inclusion policy for your child care centre
- Resources to help you and your team broaden your understanding of inclusive child care practices and how to use them in your child care centre

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this toolkit or need assistance in developing and implementing inclusive practices in your program, please contact your local Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) or Supported Child Development (SCD) program. ASCD and SCD programs are a resource that can help you and your team with strategies to maximize support for children with support needs and their families. Your local ASCD and SCD consultant is available to support you in using this toolkit to develop and implement inclusive practices in your program.

KEY TERMS

Accessibility: All sections of the population have access to quality services within reasonable reach, especially vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities and Indigenous populations, women, children, people with diverse abilities and/or support needs, including in rural areas. [1]

Care Plan: Care plans are created by the child care provider and a parent/guardian of the child requiring support. Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) and Supported Child Development (SCD) consultants may also help in the development of a care plan. The *Child Care Licensing Regulation* (CCLR) outlines the legislated (legal) requirements for a care plan, which includes:

- The diagnoses relevant to the child's requirement for support, as made by health care professionals
- The courses of action recommended by health care professionals to address the needs of the child requiring extra support
- The resources to be made available to the child requiring support, including any adaptation of the community care facility (physical environment of the child care site) necessary to ensure the child's safety or comfort, and any modification to the program of activities necessary to enable the child to participate in or benefit from the program

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[1] *Accessibility (n.d.). WHO. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/accessibility-definition/en/*

Care plans are created with the mindfulness of the child's unique strengths and ideally include much more detail than required by the CCLR including proactive strategies.

Children with Diverse Abilities: The term "diverse abilities" may be used in place of "disabilities" based on the personal preference of a child and their family. Diverse abilities is inclusive of all children and positively focuses on all children being different, but able.

Children with Support Needs: Children who are experiencing, or at risk of, developmental delay or disability and require support beyond that required by children in general. The developmental delay or disability may be in one or more of the following areas: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, communicative, or behavioural. Children may be experiencing, or at risk of, developmental delay or disability as a result of neurobiological factors (such as genetic, metabolic, or other biological factors) or as a result of social/environmental factors.

Cultural Safety: A transformation of relationships where the needs and voice of children, youth and their families take a central role. It is a theory and practice that considers power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships as they apply to social policy and practice. Cultural safety involves actively exploring and challenging complex power relationships including the way that bias, stereotyping, discrimination and racism impacts how services are delivered and received. [2]

Developmental Delay: Children reach developmental milestones at their own pace, as delays may not be permanent for some. A developmental delay is a significant delay in achieving age-expected "norms" or milestones within the domains of gross and fine motor skills, speech and language, social and personal skills, activities of daily living and/or cognition. There are many factors that may contribute to a developmental delay (e.g., biological, environmental), and can sometimes help to identify children with an increased risk of disabilities. [3]

Equity/Equitable: A value or goal that recognizes individuals and groups have different circumstances which may require different treatment. An equitable system strives to reduce barriers so that everyone may access resources, opportunities, power and responsibility to lead full and healthy lives. This providing support when needed so that Individuals and groups can participate fully in society. [4]

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[2] *BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (n.d.), Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework*

[3] *World Health Organization. (2007). International classification of functioning, disability and health: children and youth version: ICF-CY. World Health Organization. Retrieved from https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43737*

[4] *BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (n.d.) Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework. Retrieved from: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/supporting-communities/child-family-development*

Family: A term that is inclusive of diverse family structures including (but not limited to) single parents, adoptive parents, same-sex couples, step-families, married/common-law couples, intergenerational families and more.[5] A family is broadly recognized to ensure the inclusion of all families and family experiences, including the variety of relationships bonded by genetic relations, marital/legal status, cultural identity, and kinship systems. This broad identification acknowledges different uses of terminology, diverse household membership, and diverse social ties to caring for a child.

Family-centred: "A set of values, attitudes, and approaches to services for children and youth and their families. Family-centred service recognizes that each family is unique; that the family is the constant in the child's life; and that they are the experts on the child's abilities and needs. The family works with service providers to make informed decisions about the services and supports the child and family receive. In family-centred service, the strengths and needs of all family members are considered."[6]

Inclusion: Supporting all people to participate fully within society regardless of their abilities. People of all abilities have equal access to, and the supports needed to fully participate.

Meaningful Participation: A child's role is valued by all those involved in the activity including the child themselves. Meaningful participation is more than being present in various environments and activities. Children must be actively engaged, and their involvement must be more than an appearance of equity in activities and environments. [7]

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[5] *Family (n.d.). Vanier Institute. Retrieved from https://vanierinstitute.ca/definition-family/*

[6] *CanChild (n.d.). Family-Centred Service. Retrieved from https://www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/family-centred-service*

[7] *Adapted from New Brunswick Association for Community Living, New Brunswick Government, Inclusion Program Support Guide: Achieving Quality Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care in New Brunswick 2016.*

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS INCLUSION

Inclusion is a fundamental human right. Inclusion means supporting all people to participate fully within society regardless of their abilities. A key factor in making inclusion a success is diversity which means valuing all unique differences that make us individuals including race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic levels, range of abilities and physical and/or health care needs.

INCLUSION VS. INTEGRATION IN CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

At times, inclusion can be confused with integration. It is important to understand the difference between these terms:

INCLUSION   VS.   INTEGRATION
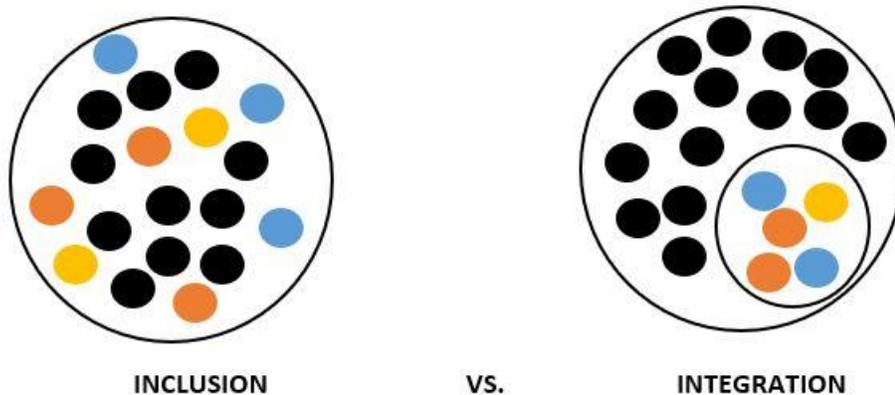
Integrated child care occurs when programs have children of all abilities but do not adapt to meet the specific needs of children with support needs. In integrated programs, children with support needs share physical space with their typically developing peers but may be unable to fully participate without direct one-on-one support or activity modifications.

Inclusive child care occurs when programs support the individual strengths and needs of each child. All children are welcomed, supported, and valued, which allows them to participate meaningfully in all aspects of the child care program. In inclusive programs, children of all abilities have equitable access to quality child care and are provided supportive opportunities to learn through play with other children in the program. All child care providers work together as a team to collectively meet the needs of all of the children, including children with support needs in their care.

An inclusive child care environment has connections to help families access early intervention and family services when needed. For example, child care providers may offer families the contact information of local early childhood intervention services providers such as a Child Development Centre, Indigenous agency, or other organization to clearly link services. Early intervention programs include Aboriginal Supported Child Development and Support Child Development programs, and Early Intervention Therapies such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech-language pathology. These early intervention services may also be provided in the child care environment to assist child care providers in supporting children with support needs and their families.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

Everyone benefits from an inclusive environment. Research on inclusion shows the positive impacts of inclusive child care on children with support needs, their family, their peers, and child care staff (see table below for details). This is because inclusive child care settings provide a higher quality of care compared to non-inclusive settings.[8] Further, research shows that gender equality and social health outcomes improve with inclusive child care.[9]

The positive impacts of inclusive child care also benefit our society as a whole. Increased access to quality and inclusive child care means that families with children that require some level of support can increase their participation in the labour market and take advantage of education opportunities, which promotes a healthier economy.

The benefits of inclusion listed below are by no means exhaustive, as inclusive child care uniquely benefits each child care centre, but it does illustrate some of the key benefits established in research:

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[8] *Grisham-Brown et al., 2010; Weglarz-Ward & Santos, 2018*

[9] *Wiart et al., 2014*

Benefits for Children	Benefits for Families
• Promotes social skills and peer interactions, improving language/communication skills • Establishes new and diverse friendships among all children, strengthening social and emotional development • Improves self-esteem, confidence, autonomy, and leadership skills • Provides children with the opportunity to fully and meaningfully participate in their program • Provides children with the opportunity to learn about the value of diversity	• Increases access to quality and accessible child care • Improves relationships with child care staff • Provides parent(s)/guardian(s) with the opportunity to remain employed or attend school • Provides families the opportunity to see positive changes in their children • Provides families with the opportunity to learn about early intervention services • Provide families with the opportunity to better advocate for their children
Benefits for Child Care Providers	**Benefits for Communities**
• Increases the ability to problem-solve and develop new solutions to support children • Improves parent/guardian and staff relationships • Improves interactions between children and child care staff • Provides staff with the opportunity to gain new skills, knowledge and competencies • Provides staff with the opportunity to build connections with early intervention services • Provides staff with the opportunity to think more about a strength-based model to understand how each child can contribute to the learning environment and social community	• Enriches relationships within the community • Provides the opportunity for increased diversity and inclusion • Provides community members with the opportunity to learn about early intervention services • Promotes social inclusion for all people

WHY IS CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE IMPORTANT?

CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

Cultural competency is a central part of inclusive child care. We all have individual and collective responsibilities under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is important that child care providers ensure that Indigenous children are able to fully participate in culturally safe and respectful programs. Providers may need support and meaningful resources to provide culturally safe and respectful care to the many families they serve from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds including Indigenous children, families, and communities. Offering culturally safe care does not require staff to become experts in cultures different from their own, but instead encourages people to reflect on how personal values and biases may affect their interactions with others.

Cultural competency is the ability "to provide care to individuals with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviours…[to} meet their social cultural and linguistic needs."[10] To be culturally competent, it is necessary to be aware of and respectful towards the culture and belief of the communities where you work. Cultural safety stems from the practice of cultural competency and means creating a space where all cultures are respected and upheld. Whether a child or family feels culturally safe in their child care setting is dependent in part on whether the child care provider is culturally competent.

Cultural competency and safety are important when two or more cultures interact within the same space, as one culture is often dominant. This means that the values of the dominant culture are placed above those of another group. This is true in Canada and British Columbia, where many Indigenous cultures and traditions regarding child care and growth have historically been marginalized and devalued by individuals and policies. In BC, there are approximately 200,000 Indigenous people, including First Nations people living on and off reserve, Métis and Inuit. There are 203 First Nations, and 39 chartered Métis communities in BC. Knowing the territories you work and live on and the needs of the communities nearest you is an important first step in practicing cultural competency.

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[10] *BC Ministry of Health (2014). Health Care Assistant Core Competencies. Retrieved from* *https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2014/HCA-Core-Competency-Profile_March2014.pdf*

To learn more about cultural safety in child care, please see: the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, Early Years Indigenous Cultural Safety Resource Guide.[11]

LANGUAGE MATTERS

A WORD ABOUT LANGUAGE

What we say and how we say it influences those around us. In your program, you may notice that the language people use changes based on their backgrounds and world views. In an inclusive child care environment, all staff use the same language and clearly understand the meaning of common words to develop a fully inclusive child care setting. Increased staff awareness of terms and definitions used in your centre and the importance of language is key to inclusion.

The way you speak about diversity in your program matters. Consider how your assumptions may influence the way you think about someone and recognize how they may be incorrect. Talking to families and children directly about their preferred terms and language is significant to honouring inclusion and diversity in your child care centre.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Inclusive language is free from words and tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped, or discriminatory views of people. It ensures that people feel included and accepted by others. The use of inclusive language is key to inclusive child care.

Person-first language puts the person first. For example, in identifying children who are living with various conditions or disabilities, you would say "children with disabilities" - this focuses on the person first, not on their traits.

Identity-first language refers to a person with a condition as a descriptor. Rather than referring to something that a person has (e.g. child with autism) this focuses on the core of the person's identity (e.g. autistic child). People who prefer identity-first language may feel that their condition or disability is not something that has happened to them, rather it is a strong part of who they are.

As language evolves, preferred terms change. Not everyone will have the same preferences. For example, a "Deaf person" often prefers to be referred to that way rather than a "person who is Deaf" due to significance of the connection it implies to Deaf culture. It is important to talk openly with families and children to understand their preferred language.

Be considerate in the language you use. Chronic conditions, disabilities, and mental illness can be both visible and invisible.[12]

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[11] *BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (2019.). Early Years Indigenous Cultural Safety Resource Guide. Retrieved from: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/child-care/ics_resource_guide.pdf*
[12] *Government of BC (n.d.). Inclusive Language and Terms. Retrieved from https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/home/accessible-government/toolkit/audience-diversity/inclusive-language-and-terms*

INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE PARTNERS & SUPPORTS

The following information, supports, and services can help build a wholistic picture of the systems that influence and support inclusive child care. It is important to understand each of these before considering how you might implement inclusive child care in your centre.

CHILDCARE BC

BC is moving toward a universal child care system that delivers quality and affordable child care accessible to all families who want or need it. This plan includes a vision of inclusive child care, where children with support needs participate alongside their peers in a regular program. For more information on Childcare BC, please visit https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children.

SUPPORTED CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND ABORIGINAL SUPPORTED CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) and **Supported Child Development (SCD)** are community-based programs that offer a range of consulting and support services to children, families and child care centres so that children with support needs can participate in fully inclusive child care settings. With the philosophy of inclusion, ASCD and SCD programs help each child in the program successfully participate in the child care setting of their family's choice. ASCD and SCD programs are responsible for determining the eligibility of a child for the support and services provided by ASCD and SCD, through consideration of the child's strengths and needs and the capacity of the child care provider to meet those needs. This is to ensure that access to ASCD and SCD services and supports is fair and equitable.

ASCD and SCD consultants may provide training, support, resources and consultation to children, families, and child care staff. These supports strive to help children achieve their developmental goals, ensure that primary caregivers have an increased knowledge of child development and growth and an awareness of the supports available, and to increase child care providers' knowledge and skills to practice inclusion incorporating best practices and current research.

ASCD was developed with Indigenous culture values, beliefs and traditions in mind. The design of the program specifically meets the needs of Indigenous children who have support needs. Values held by ASCD are relationships, respect, and culturally relevant and safe support. This recognizes that relationships are integral to the effectiveness of programming and the wellness of the children and families.

ASCD and SCD Supports

For most children...

ASCD/SCD Consultant Support to Families and Child Care Programs
- Assistance with subsidy *(if eligible)*
- Assistance with developing resources including strategies and suggestions
- Assistance in planning for an early learning program and child care centre including staff training

For some children...

Further Inquiry and Planning
- General developmental assessments
- Kindergarten transition support and planning
- Assistance to child care providers to develop care plans

Referrals to Other Services
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Pathology
- Child and Youth Mental Health

For few children...

Funding for Support Staff
- The goal of extra staffing support is for a child to successfully participate in all parts of a program
- Frequently support is shared between two or more children in a centre and is in place for the short term

To find a Supported Child Development Program in your area, ask your Health Authority, Community Care Facilities Licensing program, licensing officer, public health nurse or physician, local child care Development Association, or contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office.

To find an Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program in your area, visit http://ascdp.bc.ca/ or ask your public health nurse.

EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY

The **Early Intervention Therapy (EIT) Program** provides community-based occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology and support services for eligible children and their families. These services support optimal growth and development for children who have – or who are at risk of – developmental delay or disability. These services are provided from birth up to school entry.

EIT services may include assessment, therapy, family education and support, support for children in child care and home environment, and training community members. The EIT Program accepts referrals from all sources, including families and any professionals (including child care providers) involved with the child and family. If a family has any development concerns, they may reach out to their family physician to share their concerns and request a referral to a pediatrician and appropriate EIT providers. If the family is not the referral source, their permission must be sought prior to initiating the referral.

To find an EIT Program in your area, ask your public health nurse or physician, or contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/find-services-for-children-teens-families.

AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE BENEFIT

The **Affordable Child Care Benefit** is a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of child care. Factors like income, family size, and type of care determine how much support families can get. Children who have a designated special need and require extra support may be eligible for an additional $150 per month towards the cost of child care. An authorized professional (e.g. psychologist, physician, SCD/ASCD consultant) is required to confirm a child's designated special needs. Families can find more information on how to apply, including links to the special needs form, at **Childcare BC - Affordable Child Care Benefit** : https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-funding/child-care-benefit/apply

AUTISM FUNDING

Autism Funding can help families pay for eligible services and supports that promote skill development for children with living autism. Families may apply online at **Apply for Autism Funding**: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/special-needs/autism-spectrum-disorder/autism-funding/apply

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE

WHERE TO START

Now that you understand what it means to be inclusive in a child care setting and the supports available within a setting - where do you start? This section outlines the three key elements of providing a quality inclusive setting: Access, Participation, and Support.[13] Quality in inclusive child care is based on the capacity of the child care provider to provide equal access, participation, and support, to children of all abilities so that they may fully engage in their child care program. Think about how these elements may influence quality inclusion when implementing an inclusive child care environment in your child care centre.

ACCESS

All children are able to participate in typical activities offered at the centre. There should be no barriers to any child's enrollment in offered programs. The hours and days of attendance need to be available to all families and their children regardless of their support needs.

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[13] *Adapted from New Brunswick Association for Community Living, New Brunswick Government, Inclusion Program Support Guide: Achieving Quality Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care in New Brunswick 2016*

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Inclusive environments consider the unique needs of all children in the set up of the physical environment, to provide full and meaningful participation. Environmental considerations involve reflection of the physical environmental and materials such as wheelchair accessibility to sensory putty in a child care centre. Reviewing the environmental considerations of your child care improves the inclusivity of your program.

INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Physical Considerations
- All classroom and learning areas are accessible to all children
- Efforts to meet sensory needs are met with softened noise and lights, quiet spaces and active spaces
- All play areas inside and out are accessible to all children
- Wheelchair access is available and adequately maintained
- Wide pathways between furniture to allow for a wheelchair and walker
- Adaptations are made to equipment and furniture to reduce or remove barriers for children, such as adjusting table heights

Learning Experiences
- Learning experiences respond to the children's unique needs (e.g. culture, interests, strengths, and passions)
- Accessible communication is visible (e.g. American Sign Language visuals, picture schedules, emotion/feeling images)
- Learning materials includes people of diverse abilities and diverse cultures
- Books in the space reflect all children's interests, strengths, and passions
- Learning materials are visible and at the children's level so that every child can access items independently
- Adjustments are made to routines and transitions to make learning experiences positive for all children
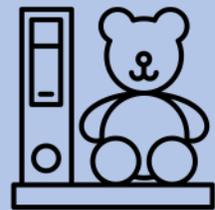
Social Learning Materials
- Accessories and equipment span the interests and skills sets of all children in the space
- Play accessories represent diverse cultures
- Accessories and equipment encourage solitary, parallel and cooperative play and promote social interactions among children of all abilities

Multisensory Learning Materials
- Multisensory learning materials are included in the centre to encourage gross and fine motor skills, and to meet sensory needs(e.g. sensory putty, finger paints, textured objects, fidget toys, clay, small and heavy blocks, and sand)
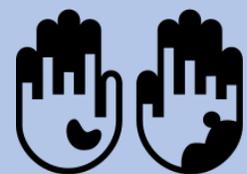
STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS

Now that you have learned about environmental considerations – you may be wondering what structural modifications can be made to the environment improve the inclusivity of your program. Some structural modifications are straight forward such as installing a wheelchair ramp at all entrances to your centre, while others are vague such as considering the colour of the classroom, lighting, sound, and opportunities for movement/sensory input to meet sensory needs. It is important to discuss with your team both big and small structural modification that can be made to your centre to better support all children.

Structural modification to consider…
1. Classroom Aesthetics
   - Colour
   - Lighting
   - Texture
   - Clusters
2. Furniture
   - Heavy furniture
   - Removing rugs (or tapping them down)
3. Spaces for eating
4. Developing quiet spaces
5. Toileting modifications
6. Areas for movement

All children are able to fully and meaningfully participate to encourage the developmental of real relationships which foster belonging for all children. This involves nurturing belonging for all children, allowing them to develop respect for diversity, dignity, and equity.

PROGRAMMING & PRACTICE

Programming and practice strategies can range from the curriculum and content offered in your program to actual ways staff interact and promote social inclusion of children with support needs.

The activities offered in your program, such as free play, are essential to inclusion. Free play and group activities can promote different interactions among children. Free play activities that involve making a choice, such as building blocks, role playing materials, and art and craft materials, increase the opportunities for peer interaction. This allows children with support needs to choose which activities to participate in with peers. Group activities are also valuable but require more consideration to ensuring that all children are rested and alert to fully participate in the activity. By providing smaller group activities, children with support needs are better able to engage and be included.

How you interact with children at your centre is another key part of inclusion. Staff may promote peer interactions by helping children interact with their peers, facilitating play, and fostering relationships. This may involve encouraging fairness and equity in play among all children, as well as supporting children to encourage their peers with support needs to join their play. Staff may share the value of reinforcing positive behaviour and praising children while respecting the unique strengths and needs of all children.

INDIVIDUAL PLANNING & GOAL SETTING

It is important that individual planning and goal setting is guided by family concerns and priorities. This ensures that families are involved in all decision making processes. As a child care provider, you will work with families and consultants to develop child-centred approaches to guarantee a joint approach in setting goals within the context of your unique centre and community settings. When working with children with diverse abilities, individual planning and goal setting is a key way to ensure that the childcare environment is accessible and meets the needs and priorities of the family and child. This involves working with families and other professionals (e.g. SCD Consultants, Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, etc.) to develop individualized approaches that are guided by family concerns and priorities and ensure meaningful participation in your childcare environment. This can help you and your team develop relationships with families to create personalized care plans that meet the support needs of their children.

POLICY

Developing a policy outlining how your centre supports the inclusion of children with diverse needs can be a big step on the journey towards providing inclusive child care. Inclusion policies establish a vision of what your centre wants to achieve, sets out how the centre plan to do this, identifies any limitations to inclusion (if there are any), and identifies how staff will work with parents/guardians to support their child's inclusion. This toolkit is here to guide you with suggestions for creating an inclusion policy. Your policy may include guiding principles of inclusion, a policy statement, definitions/language for clarity, procedures and practices, required support documents, and accountability measures for all child care staff. When you implement your inclusion policy it is important that it is understood and practiced by all child care staff to facilitate inclusive child care. ***See page 23-25 for guidance on developing an inclusion policy.***

All children and their families are supported with a family-centred approach. This involves understanding that the family is key to a child's safety and well-being. Staff should willingly engage and collaborate with families when making any decisions about supporting their children. Positive relationships between staff and parents/guardians help to create a link between home and child care, while promoting inclusion of all children.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Early childhood educators (ECEs) and child care staff are central to the success of the planning and delivery of inclusive child care. [14] Research Suggests that increased education leads to higher quality child care, as educated child care staff are better able to facilitate increased inclusion of all children regardless of their diverse abilities. Training and education about cultural competency and working with children with support needs can also improve inclusion of all children. ECEs and child care staff who are experienced with facilitating an inclusive environment can improve inclusive child care, as they can mentor, support, and help other staff understand the benefits of inclusion by sharing their past and current experience with supporting children with support need. All staff should also be encouraged to share what they have learned from training and education opportunities.

COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS

Staff in child care centres work with parents, community service providers, and school staff to ensure supports for child care programs are coordinated and complimentary. Each partner is respected for their knowledge and expertise with open and positive communication. Community service providers may include professional from the Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development, Early Intervention Therapy, and other professionals on the child's support team. Reach out to your community service providers to learn about supports in helping families with their transition to kindergarten.

You can also contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development Children and Youth with Special Needs office to discuss what services may be available and for other useful information/support.

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[14] *Philpott et al.* 2019

INCLUSION ASSESSMENT

This section is intended to guide you through statements for reflection and questions to assist you in building a stronger understanding of how children are supported and included in your programs. The assessment looks at the perspectives of all staff, individual staff, and child care managers/directors. Use this assessment to build individual and team approaches to strengthen ways of supporting children in your programs. It's recommended that all staff and supervisors complete the assessment individually and compare answers in a staff meeting to promote discussion on inclusive in your centre. You may also want to share with your Board if appropriate.

General Questions for All Staff
Review and Reflection
o   My program welcomes children of all abilities
o   Activity areas are arranged so that all children may access and use all materials in them
o   Activities are planned so all children fully participate with their peers
o   Equipment and the room is positioned so that it can be used by all children
o   All modifications and accommodations are observed and documented
o   All children have the ability to play and learn together
Questions

How does your program make all reasonable efforts to enrol children with support needs, to provide optimal access?
How does your program support the needs of children who require support?
How do you modify program routines to respond to the various needs of children?
How are each child's interest and strengths considered when planning activities and routines?
What learning materials are offered at your centre? Are there any learning materials missing that could improve inclusion at your centre?
How do you modify the physical environment of your centre to meet the various needs of children?
What do you do to support the cultural needs of children? Does your process include consulting with families?

Direct Service Questions for Individual Staff

Review and Reflection

o Contact is consistent with families and local service providers

o An inventory of all children's needs is accounted for and the physical environment and program are modified to meet all children's needs

o Participation in ongoing professional development opportunities on inclusion and inclusive child care

o Mentor and support other staff in developing their competency with inclusive child care

o Works with school to plan for transition into kindergarten

Questions

What personal efforts do you take to meet the needs of children requiring support?

How do you maintain relationships with families and local service providers?

Do you review all child specific documentation to support all modifications and accommodations?

How do you support your child care team in caring for all children, including children with support needs?

You have a team member who believes that integration is the same as inclusion. How would you support them in learning the difference between integration and inclusion? How would you support them in changing their approach to be more inclusive?
If they do not agree with this information or refuse to change their approach, how would you resolve this conflict?

You recognize that a child is having difficulties with their fine motor skills. The family has newly immigrated to Canada and speak limited English.
How would share with the family that their child is experiencing difficulties? How would you modify the program to meet the child's needs? How would you help the family support their child's needs?

You have a child with limited mobility in your program. You recognize that this child's peers are not including them in daily play.
What would you do to ensure that this child is fully included in the program? How would you support the other children in understanding diversity and inclusion?

Management Questions

Review and Reflection

- Review ongoing training needs of staff on an annual basis
- Search for training and education opportunities for child care staff to participate in
- Maintain relationships and consistent contact with families and local service providers
- Ensure all child care staff are aware of inclusion policies and procedures
- Facilitate team building opportunities to ensure consistency with inclusive child care practices

Questions

How does your centre support child care staff to participate in professional development (e.g. training and education) opportunities? What resources may be available to support educators/staff in providing inclusive care?

Do you have a termination policy that may influence your ability to provide inclusive child care? How would you change this policy to encourage inclusion? What actions are taken to best support the child and family needs in this decision?

What are the barriers to providing inclusive care in your program? What are the resources to support you/your centre if inclusive care cannot be provided for a child? How is that decision made and why? What factors are considered?

On behalf of the centre, how do you take accountability for inclusive child care?

How do you enable team building to strengthen team unity to facilitate inclusive child care?

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSION POLICY

Developing an inclusion policy at your child care centre is an important step to facilitating inclusive child care. Inclusion is a unique process to each child care centre's program that develops inclusion policies, practices, and standards of services. However, there are fundamental key principles that can help guide each and every child care centre to ensure that a consistent level of quality for inclusion is provided.

Key Principles of Inclusion[15]

> **1. Best Fit**: Programs work to their best ability to meet the needs of each child (e.g. qualified staff in sufficient numbers, structural modifications). Some programs may not be able to meet a child's needs due to staff skill and ability or resources available. In this case, it is important that parents/guardians and child care providers work together to find a solution, and mutually agree if the program is the best fit for the child and family.

> **2. Natural Proportions**: Programs include children with diverse abilities and support need in approximate proportions to their presence in the population.

> **3. Full Participation**: Activities and routines are modified and adapted to include all children.

> **4. Same Range of Program Options**: Parents/guardians of children with disabilities and support needs have the same options that other parents/guardians have (e.g. full day, part day, and flexible hours).

> **5. Maximum Feasible Parent/Guardian Participation**: Parents/ guardians are actively encouraged to participate in the child care program.

> **6. Pro-Action for Community Inclusion**: Staff and parents/guardians promote inclusion of the whole community.

In developing an inclusion policy for your child care centre, it is valuable to think about three key elements to quality inclusion, **access, participation, and support.** Involving all staff from the beginning is also important so that staff may take ownership of the policies and put them practice to meet high quality inclusive standards.

Step 1: Developing Guiding Principles[16]

The first step is to develop your guiding (or core) principles that are central to your program. This can involve working together as a team to develop examples of guiding principles. Next, determine which are core principles for your centre in providing quality inclusion. With this step, you may want to consider establishing a small advisory group including parents, staff and directors to ensure that your core principles resonate with all people involved. It is important that your core principles address children, their families, and other team members from early intervention services and the community.

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[15] *Sharon Hope Irwin in SpeciaLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale (2009)*

[16] *Adapted from Toronto Children's Services, City of Toronto, Inclusion: Policy Development Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care 2007.*

Step 2: Policy Format [17]

- **Policy Statement:** This should include (but is not limited to) the following: partnerships, flexibility, equity, and belongingness
- **Definitions/Language for Clarity:** Define language used in your policy to ensure understanding for all staff and families
- **Procedures:** Inclusion polices must be supported by procedures that are consistent with your guiding principles and congruent with other program policies (e.g. professional development, programming, confidentiality, partnerships, admission and withdraw procedures, hiring policies, and transitions)
- **Supporting Documentation:** This may include a behaviour policy, medication/health policy, code of conduct, admission policy, withdrawal policy, transportation policy, and incident reporting policy
- **Accountability:** Review other polices and procedures to ensure they reflect current inclusion language, access, and equity

Step 3: Approval and distribution of your inclusion policy

When you have finished drafting your inclusion policy, the next step is presenting it to your child care centre owner(s), director(s), and/or Board for review. Changes may be made before approving the final statement. Once approved, send a copy of your policy to each staff member and the families in your program. This will ensure that they receive a copy of the policy as an update to the package they received when they enrolled.

The policy should also be readily available at the child care centre, in a location known/accessible to staff and families so that it is easy to reference and review.

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[17] *Adapted from New Brunswick Association for Community Living, New Brunswick Government, Inclusion Program Support Guide: Achieving Quality Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care in New Brunswick 2016.*

INCLUSION POLICY TEMPLATE

Now that you have reviewed the steps to create an inclusion policy - it is time to develop your own policy. This template can be used to create an inclusion policy that meets the specific needs of your child care programs and the families you serve. This section will guide you to use the toolkit and reflect, so that you and your team can develop an inclusion policy.

[Child Care Centre] Inclusion Policy

[Child care centre] is committed to inclusion where children of all abilities are able to participate meaningfully in all aspects of the child care program.

Our aim…. [policy statement] **(refer to page 8 – How does you child care centre aim to create a fully inclusive child care setting that allows children of all abilities to participate meaningfully?)**

We're committed to modeling inclusion for the entire child care centre, and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable access, support, and participation for all children.

This policy reinforces our commitment to providing equitable service to all children regardless of abilities, physical or health needs, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief.

In this policy the following terms are defined as:

- **Insert definitions** *(refer to pages 5-7 and 12 – What terms are important in your inclusive child care policy? What terms will child care staff and families need to know to understand inclusion in child care?)*

To provide inclusive child care, [child care centre] strives to: **(This section should reflect procedures [include supporting documentation by referring to those documents])**

- **Bullet about Access** *(refer to pages 15-16 – How does your child care centre strive to ensure equitable access for all children? E.g. An accessible facility with wheelchair access and space considerations)*
- **Bullet about Participation** *(refer to pages 16-17 – What resources does your team use and/or offer to ensure that children of all abilities may participate meaningfully in their (e.g. Provide individual goal setting for children with diverse abilities to meets the needs and priorities of the family and child.)*
- **Bullet about Support** *(refer to pages 17-18 - What supports does your child care centre strive to provide to promote an inclusive child care setting?) e.g. Support Early Child Educators and staff to participate in education and training opportunities to ensure programs are evidence-based and use best practices)*

[Child care centre] will inform all employees that an inclusion policy is in operation and they are obligated to comply with the requirements and promote inclusion in the child care centre.

[Child care centre] will inform all families we serve that an inclusion policy is in operation and they are welcome to inquire about the requirements for promoting inclusion in the child care centre.

This Inclusion Policy is fully supported by senior leadership. It will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure that inclusion is continually promoted in the child care centre.

SUMMARY OF ONLINE RESOURCES

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
- Identity First or Person First Language: Where Do You Stand?
https://blog.disabilitycanhappen.org/identity-first-or-person-first-language-where-do-you-stand/
- Building a Better B.C. for People with Disabilities
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/accessibility
- Words Matter – Guidelines on using inclusive language in the workplace
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/all-employees/working-with-others/words-matter.pdf
- Video: Ian – A Moving Story
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3Fh60GEB5E
- Video Series to Support Inclusive and Responsible Learning Environments
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/teaching-tools/inclusive-education/videos

CULTURAL SAFETY
- Cultural Safety in Practice with Children, Families and Communities
www.ecdip.org/culturalsafety/
- Indigenous Cultural Safety Learning Series
www.icscollaborative.com/webinars
- Cultural Safety in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Public Health
www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/en/publications.aspx?sortcode=2.8.10&publication=88
- What is Indigenous Cultural Safety - and Why Should I Care About It?
www.heretohelp.bc.ca/visions/indigenous-people-vol11/what-is-indigenous-cultural-safety-and-why-should-i-care-about-it
- Cultural Safety - University of Victoria
http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/courses/csafety/mod1/index.htm
- BC Government Indigenous Relations Behavioral Competencies
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/job-seekers/about-competencies/indigenous-relations
- Course: The Ripple Effect of Resilience by Monique Gray Smith
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3Fh60GEB5E
- Video: Learning about cultural safety from Indigenous Elders (Wabano Health Centre)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b08oTRMV-m8

2SLGBTQ+
- Introduction to GBA+ - Government of Canada
https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/course-cours/eng/mod01/mod01_02_04.html
- Living between Genders - Spectrum News
https://www.spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/living-between-genders/
- Gender Unicorn - Trans Student Educational Resources
https://www.spectrumnews.org/features/deep-dive/living-between-genders/
- Vancouver School Board Q&A Parents and Caregivers of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth
https://www.vsb.bc.ca/Student_Support/Safe_Caring/Documents/QA-Trans-Booklet-English-2017.pdf

- Video: Gender Identity and Pronouns – What Will You Teach the World?
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3Fh60GEB5E

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