

Creating an Inclusive Program

Implementing Your Inclusion Policy

Write Your Program's Inclusion Policy Statement Here

Through the creation of an Inclusion Policy Statement, your program has defined what access, participation and support looks like for your program. Now comes the important work of implementing your policy, assuring that it affects your program, as well as the children, parents, staff and board of directors (if applicable). It's now time to make sure that the statements and practices you've worked hard to develop are reflected in all areas and aspects of your program.

Steps for Implementing Your Inclusion Policy

1. Ensure your other policies, procedures, and practices agree with/complement your inclusion policy
2. Ensure that everyone involved in your program understands the Inclusion Policy and how it drives how you see and support the children in your program
3. Review and update this and other policies, procedures, and practices on a regular basis

Step 1: Ensure your other policies, procedures, and practices agree with/complement your inclusion policy

The main features of inclusion, included in your policy statement, should be reflected in your program's other policies and procedures, as well as the actions taken by program staff in their day-to-day practice.

Take time to review your existing policies, procedures, and practices included in your parent and/or staff handbooks to ensure they agree with and complement your inclusion policy. It may be necessary to include further descriptions or make changes to language in order to make sure they support the intent of your inclusion policy. In some cases, you may need to write an entirely new policy/procedure. The following are some suggestions:

- Your program description could include statements such as:
 - Every child will participate in the daily activities and routines
 - Adaptations are made

- Expectations, activities, materials, etc. are developmentally appropriate
- Individualized supports are available
- Your behavior policy should include:
 - Clear and specific descriptions of the positive methods (e.g., social skills, emotional regulation skills, self-control, calming techniques, etc.) your program teaches and uses
 - Developmentally appropriate practices
 - A list of methods that your program will not use (e.g., physical punishment, yelling, shaming, etc.)
- Your enrollment policy:
 - Children of all abilities are welcome to attend your program
 - All families will have the same hours and days of attendance available and will pay the same rate
- Your parent policies and procedures should:
 - Identify the ways in which you will communicate with parents about their children
 - Identify how parents will be included in decision making and goal setting for their child(ren)
 - Identify how you will discuss/communicate with parents about any concerns you might have about their child and the procedures for making a referral, if necessary and agreed upon, to other professionals or specialists
- Your staff policies and procedures should:
 - State that all staff members are expected to be involved with supporting and educating every child in their care
 - Indicate the required annual professional development hours for inclusion training
 - Identify how early childhood educators and assistants will work together to plan and implement the individual goals of the children in their care

Step 2: Ensure that everyone involved in your program understands the Inclusion Policy and how it drives how you see and support the children in your program

It is imperative that the policies and procedures that you develop and adopt are explained to the staff and families that are a part of your program. The staff that will be working with the children in your program need to know and understand your inclusion philosophy and its corresponding policies and procedures so that they understand what is expected of them. Having taken the necessary steps to become an inclusive program, it would be a major setback if your staff didn't understand or follow through with the policies you've implemented.

It may be necessary to include and explain your inclusion policy within your hiring process so that new hires understand, right from the start, what your philosophy is and how it will impact how they do their job. For current/existing staff, you hopefully included them in the development

of the new or updated policies so that they feel they had a say in their creation. This investment, or buy-in, will help staff feel connected to the overall goal of your program. Ultimately, this work will be seen in the care that is provided to the children and families enrolled in your program.

The families who choose to enroll their children in your program need to know how you and your program will care for and support every child that attends your program. For this reason, it is important that your families receive a handbook that details your philosophy and the policies that your program follows. This way they will know what to expect from you, as well as what is expected from them.

Step 3: Review and update this and other policies, procedures, and practices on a regular basis

In order for your policies, procedures, and practices to stay both current and functional, it is important to re-examine them on a regular basis. Any necessary changes or clarifications should be discussed and made with your staff during a scheduled meeting. If changes are made, those finalized updates should be conveyed to both your program staff and the families. Updates will also need to be made to any handbooks that you provide.