

## DO I NEED SPECIAL TRAINING TO CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

Caring for children with special needs requires the same basic skills that are needed to care for any child. If caring for a child does require additional skills, often parents can give you the guidance and information you need. The other professionals on the child's team can also offer support and advice. Training is also available through your local child care resource center.

## DO I HAVE TO ACCEPT A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INTO MY CHILD CARE PROGRAM?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifically identifies child care programs as public accommodations and therefore child care programs are responsible for addressing the needs of people with disabilities just like a restaurant or a theater. Children with special needs can no longer be excluded from child care because of a disability. Under the ADA, child care programs are required to make reasonable accommodations in order to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. For more information on the ADA, contact the ADA Information Line at 800.514.0301.

## RESOURCES

### **LOCATE: Child Care Enhanced Special Needs Service**

800.999.0120  
[www.marylandfamilynetwork.org](http://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org)  
LOCATE helps parents of children with special needs to identify appropriate regulated child care and helps child care providers gain a better understanding of inclusive child care. MFN also coordinates the Maryland Child Care Resource Network which provides training and technical assistance on inclusive child care.

### **PACT: Helping Children With Special Needs**

410.298.7000  
[www.pact.kennedykrieger.org](http://www.pact.kennedykrieger.org)  
PACT's Inclusive Child Care Training Program provides training to child care providers to help them adapt their programs to meet the needs of children with medical, developmental and behavioral issues

### **The Maryland Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project**

Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Development, Office of Child Care  
877.605.1539  
Offers help for families and child care providers of children birth to age five who have developmental and behavioral needs.

### **Child Care Plus**

800.235.4122  
[www.ccplus.org](http://www.ccplus.org)  
Child Care Plus, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, provides training and technical assistance for early childhood professionals.

### **Maryland's Learning Links**

[www.marylandlearninglinks.org](http://www.marylandlearninglinks.org)  
A resource for providers and families of children with disabilities including disability specific information, family support resources, educational activities, and information on Maryland's Early Intervention System as well as the Preschool Special Education process and School Age Support.

### **Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC)**

651.603.6265  
[www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org)  
The CICC is a comprehensive resource network for supporting inclusive care for children.

### **Abilities Network**

800.492.2523  
[www.abilitiesnetwork.org](http://www.abilitiesnetwork.org)  
Abilities Network provides training and technical assistance on inclusive child care.



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## INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE



## A Guide for Child Care Professionals



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# nurturing individual strengths

## What is Inclusive Child Care?

Inclusive child care is dedicated to giving the best early childhood education and care to all children, including those with special needs and disabilities, by insuring each child feels welcomed and important. Inclusive child care allows all children to learn together in an atmosphere that supports and nurtures the individual strengths of each child and allows participation in the daily routines and activities of the program.



### HOW DO I BECOME AN INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE PROGRAM?

If you currently follow early childhood education best practices, you are already meeting the needs of all children by evaluating and planning for each child based on developmentally appropriate practices. Including children with special needs can be accomplished through making changes, often at little or no cost, that would allow a child to actively participate in your program. Modifications can be made to policies, procedures, schedule, environment and/or materials.

For example:

- Keep your schedule consistent.
- Avoid sudden transitions.
- Allow extra time for the child to practice new skills.
- Create a picture schedule.
- Move a child physically through a task so he/ she can feel what to do.
- Laminate books for easier page turning.
- Lower items for easier access.
- Move tables or bookshelves to ensure a path is wide enough for mobility equipment.
- Have a “quiet area” with soothing music and books where children can go when upset or overwhelmed.

### HOW DO I TALK TO A PARENT ABOUT A CHILD’S SPECIAL NEEDS?

- Ask about the child’s strengths, likes and dislikes.
- Talk to the parent about how the child’s special need may affect his or her ability to play, follow a routine and/ or have needs met.
- Discuss any assistance with daily activities that the child may require, including: feeding, toileting, mobility, medication or special diet.

### HOW CAN I PARTNER WITH PARENTS TO HELP SUPPORT INCLUSION?

- During the first few days or weeks in care, ask the parent to spend a little extra time at child care to help transition the child into the program.
- To become more familiar with the child’s specific needs, ask to review the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the Individual Education Plan (IEP), the behavior support plan or the special health care plan.
- It is important that everyone working with and caring for the child be on the team. Ask for written permission to talk with and receive support from other care-team members such as the pediatrician, physical therapist or speech therapist.
- Ask the parent to demonstrate and give you written instructions on any special techniques or equipment that may be needed.
- Be willing to ask the parent to help you solve problems as they arise.