

PROVIDING INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE



**GEORGIA QUEST FOR
QUALITY INCLUSION**

Quote.....

“As different as we are from one another, as unique as each one of us is, we are much more the same than we are different.” Fred “Mister” Rogers

Acknowledgements

The vision of Georgia Quest for Quality Inclusion is a strong, integrated, statewide early childhood professional development system that provides and supports high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive inclusion for all children with disabilities and their families. For more information: <http://decal.ga.gov>.



Booklet adapted from *Open Heart, Open Doors: Providing Inclusive Childcare*
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Parent to Parent of Georgia: A statewide nonprofit organization that provides support, information and resources to parents of children with disabilities ages birth through twenty-six. 1-800-229-2038 www.p2pga.org

Peachcare for Kids: Affordable health insurance for uninsured children birth to 18. 1-877-GA-PEACH. www.peachcare.org

Project Healthy Grandparents: Support and resources for grandparents raising their grandchildren. <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwalh/>

Tech-Able: Provides access to assistive technology through a lending library, training and a resource and referral network. 770-922-6768. <http://www.techable.org/>

Wrightslaw Yellow Pages for Kids: Listing of Georgia-based therapists, support groups and other resources for children with disabilities and their families. www.yellowpagesforkids.com



Resources (continued)

Georgia Learning Resource System: A network of 17 Georgia Department of Education sponsored centers throughout Georgia that provide training and resources to educators and parents of students with disabilities. www.glr.org

Georgia PINES: State funded program that provides support and training to parents of infants and toddlers with sensory impairments as well as training to professionals who deliver specialized services focused on hearing and/or vision impairments to families. www.gapines.net

Georgia Tools for Life: Mission is to increase access to assistive technology devices and services. 1-800-497-8665. www.gatfl.org

Georgia Health Law Partnership: An interdisciplinary community collaboration among the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Georgia State University College of Law . Offers public health legal services to eligible families of children with health care issues. <http://healthlawpartnership.org/>

Kids Health: Information and resources related to health and nutrition. <http://kidshealth.org/>

Lekotek of Georgia: This program will loan adapted and traditional toys to families to use at home and provides individualized support and resources. <http://www.lekotekga.org/>

Understanding Inclusive Child Care

There are good reasons for all children to be cared for together.

It is beneficial for all children.

- Research tells us that regardless of their abilities, children in high-quality child care programs are better prepared to enter school and more likely to develop social and emotional skills.

Your professional services are in demand.

- Most communities need quality, inclusive child care. By providing inclusive child care, you are supporting parents with children with disabilities to work or study or just take time out for themselves.

It is the law.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination. The ADA affords people with disabilities the chance to participate in all activities and opportunities of community life—including child care.

Every child is full of possibilities.

Benefits of Inclusive Child Care

Everyone benefits from inclusive care.

Inclusive child care provides **families** with:

- Greater child care choices
- Opportunities for their children to learn and make friends
- Links to community resources and services
- Contacts with other families in the community
- Greater awareness and understanding of people with disabilities
- The opportunity to teach their children about individual differences

“Accessible child care frees parents from being forced to choose between keeping their jobs to provide for their families or caring for their children.”

Georgia Advocacy Office: GAO is a private non-profit corporation. Its mission is to work with and for oppressed and vulnerable individuals in Georgia who are labeled as disabled or mentally ill. www.thegao.org

Georgia Council for the Hearing Impaired: A statewide nonprofit organization that provides a variety of assistive services to children and adults with hearing impairments. <http://www.gachi.org/>

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities: Provides information and advocacy activities, program implementation, funding, public policy analysis and research to influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families. www.gcdd.org

Georgia Department of Education / Division for Exceptional Students: Provides special education services to children with disabilities from age 3 to age 22. www.doe.k12.ga.us

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services: Information on food stamps, TANF, Child Care Assistance Program. www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/

1-800-ALL-GA-KIDS: Toll free line that provides families with information and referrals to licensed child care, group and family providers.

Resources

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning offers supports for inclusion through the Inclusion Program with inclusion coordinators available in every community. These inclusion coordinators link families, child care providers and others to community resources to ensure that children are successfully included in early care and learning environments. www.dec.al.ga.gov

Babies Can't Wait: Georgia's Early Intervention program which provides supports and resources for children (birth to age three) with significant developmental delays or qualifying medical conditions and their families. 1-888-651-8224 www.health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw

Children's Medical Services: State and federally funded program which provides a statewide community-based, family-focused, care coordinated, culturally appropriate, comprehensive system of medical/health care for eligible children, birth to 21, with chronic medical conditions. (404) 657-4855. <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/cms/>



Children who are cared for together (whether or not they have disabilities):

- Feel a sense of belonging
- Have better self-esteem and confidence in their abilities
- Experience a wide variety of friendships
- Learn from and share experiences with other children
- Develop sensitivity towards others
- Appreciate differences in others and themselves
- Are encouraged to be resourceful, creative and cooperative

Caring for children with disabilities helps YOU:

- Build on your experience and skills
- Appreciate the differences and unique qualities in all individuals
- Enhance your child care business through new partnerships
- Tap into available community resources
- Strengthen your reputation as a child care professional
- Demonstrate your belief in equal opportunities and rights for all

Getting Started

Follow these steps to make yours an inclusive child care program:

1. Check your policies and procedures to make sure they are open and inclusive to all children. Your policies must not screen out children with disabilities.
2. Remove physical barriers to allow all children to participate. This can be as simple as rearranging a few pieces of furniture.
3. When you get a call from the family of a child with disabilities, ask about the child's specific needs and arrange to meet the child and the parents.
4. Make decisions about your ability to serve each child on a well-informed, individual basis. Children cannot be excluded from a child care setting simply because they have a disability.



Misconception:

All children with disabilities require one-to-one care.

Fact:

Most children with disabilities can be cared for in a group setting without one-to-one assistance. Like all children, a child with disabilities may occasionally require individual care (such as with toileting or eating.) Anticipate when extra care or attention is needed, and plan ahead for those times.

Misconception:

All children with disabilities have challenging behaviors.

Fact:

Having a disability does not necessarily result in behavior problems. Just like any child, some with disabilities will also have challenging or aggressive behaviors. Such behavior is often the result of frustration at not being able to communicate effectively. A patient, understanding teacher can help by learning the child's signals, routines, and likes and dislikes.

Misconception:

All disabilities are visible.

Fact:

Some disabilities are easily recognized such as physical impairments. Other disabilities may not be as apparent. These include visual and hearing impairments, behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities. Children must not be judged by a diagnosis. It is important that teachers take the time to get to know each child as an individual.

Common Misconceptions

Misconception:

All children with disabilities require complicated care.

Fact:

Some children who have disabilities will need special care. Most will need little or no additional care. Like all children, children with disabilities have unique personalities, strengths, interests, and abilities. They are as diverse as any other group of children. There are many types of disabilities. A child can have delays or disabilities in some areas and be very healthy and well-functioning in others.

Misconception:

Children with disabilities should associate only with other children with disabilities.

Fact:

All children benefit from associating with a wide range of people. All children gain valuable learning experiences by being together.

Misconception:

Children with severe disabilities cannot learn.

Fact:

All children are capable of learning. How much and how fast they learn varies. Learning may require extra patience and repeated exposure to activities and concepts.

5. Establish good communication with parents. Find out if others, such as the child's special education consultant, early intervention service coordinator, a member of the child's health team or particular therapists that support the child, are also available for information and advice.
6. Acknowledge your own discomfort about working with children with disabilities. It helps to talk to support people, such as family members or other child care providers.
7. Other children will be more comfortable when they see you model positive interactions with children who have disabilities. As you gain experience and information your comfort level will increase.
8. Consider the professional development needs of your staff. Contact your Inclusion Coordinator for assistance in meeting professional development needs.

Putting the *Person* First

SAY:

<i>John has a disability</i>	rather than	<i>Disabled John</i>
<i>Susie has Down Syndrome</i>	rather than	<i>Susie is Downs</i>
<i>Jose has autism</i>	rather than	<i>Jose is autistic</i>

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Inclusive practices create an environment in which children can work and play to their potential and are better able to understand and accept differences among themselves.

- Use activities and materials that are well organized and accessible to all the children in your care.
- Make sure there is enough space for children to move around (including children with wheelchairs or other assistive devices).
- Use furniture and bathroom fixtures that are child size and durable.
- Encourage each child to join his or her peers. Give children support to join others when it is needed.
- Treat all children with respect. Don't assume that children with disabilities can't understand what you are saying about them to others.
- Speak clearly when talking to children.
- When talking to a child, allow time for him/her to respond to requests. Some children may need extra time.
- Point out strengths and successes of all children. Emphasize similarities among children.
- Be consistent in routines and interactions.

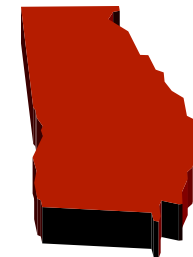
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Department of Justice provides information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) through a toll-free ADA Information Line. This service permits businesses, state and local governments, or others to call and ask questions about general or specific ADA requirements including questions about the ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

ADA Specialists are available Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) except on Thursday when the hours are 12:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m.. Spanish language service is also available. For general ADA information, answers to specific technical questions, free ADA materials, or information about filing a complaint, call: (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

The U.S. Department of Justice publication "Commonly Asked Questions about Child Care and the Americans with Disabilities Act" is online at www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/childq&a.htm.

The Georgia ADA Statewide Coordinator's office is also available to answer questions or provide advice. Their telephone number is (404) 657-7313.



Child Care and the ADA

What the ADA requires:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that protects people from discrimination based on disability. This law says that public accommodations must be accessible to people with disabilities. Privately-run child care centers and family day care homes are considered public accommodations and must comply with the ADA.

When changes are needed:

In order to include children with disabilities, the ADA requires child care providers to make reasonable modifications required to accommodate that particular child. This means making changes that are accomplished without excessive difficulty or expense. The changes must be based on individual needs.

Whether a change is unduly burdensome is determined by the type and cost of what is needed in light of the resources available to individual child care centers and homes. Some possible accommodations may include:

- Revision of policies and procedures
- Curriculum adaptations
- Additional professional development for staff
- Removal of physical barriers

- Be clear about rules and expectations. Provide logical and natural consequences that relate directly to a child's specific actions.
- Try different ways to communicate. When you are getting ready to read to the group, show a photo of children sitting together for story time, or use a picture of the outdoors to let children know that the group is going outside.
- Answer children's questions in a straightforward manner. For example, if a child asks you, "Why doesn't Susie talk?" say, "Susie doesn't talk because she doesn't hear like you. She hasn't had a chance to learn to talk with words. Susie is learning to use her hands to talk."
- Give positive attention to children when they try new activities, play well with others, show creativity, or make progress in learning new concepts and skills.
- Take time to build a relationship with each child in your care.

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them."

Lady Bird Johnson

Families As Partners



The best sources of information about a child are her family and professionals who work with her. You will want to learn the child's preferences, routines, and medical needs.

Form a partnership with family members based on cooperation, respect and the goal of bringing out the best in each child. It is easier to work out conflicts when a good, working relationship already exists. These tips might help:

1. Enlist family members to help you create a care book for their child with helpful information:
 - * Emergency contacts, procedures and phone numbers
 - * Medications, allergies and special health care needs
 - * Visual or verbal instruction that works well with their child
 - * Activities their child enjoys

Q. Will including children with disabilities mean extra costs for me?

- A. *For some children necessary changes may involve higher costs. The following are some examples of such changes:*
- * *Changes in the physical environment such as building a ramp or widening a doorway*
 - * *Adding a staff person at certain times (such as meal time) for a child who needs very close supervision.*

The ADA prohibits charging higher fees to someone or his/her family just because the person has a disability. If you think caring for a child would bring extra expenses, first look closely at the child's individual needs. Before making your decision about accepting the child find out if any changes are needed. Ask about the types of resources that may be available to help you make the changes.

When you have this information you can make the best decision about your ability to appropriately include the child within your current rates. If the child's family is served by a child care subsidy program, the child may be eligible for a higher rate. Typically, higher rates must be justified by an individual assessment of each child's needs.

Q. How do I answer questions from other children about a child's disability?

A. *Children are naturally curious and may ask questions about people's differences. Give them honest and straightforward answers. Always use the child's name in your answer. For example: "Joey gets food through that tube, just like you use a spoon." Families of children with disabilities often become experts in dealing with questions from children and adults. Ask them how to answer questions you're not sure about.*

Q. Can I get a tax break for making special accommodations?

A. *You may be eligible for federal tax breaks to small businesses that make special accommodations for persons with disabilities. IRS Publication #907 provides information on these provisions. Obtain the publication by calling 800-829-4966 or visiting the www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html?portlet=3*



- * Positive behavior support plans
 - * Specific accommodations that may be needed
 - * Special education or other services their child receives and names and contact information of specialists who can share information
2. Make time for regular conversations with families to discuss their child's development. Be sure to share positive things as well as concerns.
 3. Find different ways to communicate with family members. For example, keeping a notebook or a simple checklist about the day's activities that can go home with the child encourages the family to stay involved and write notes to you, too. Other ideas include quick notes on 3x5 index cards, attendance sheets with notes on them, email, phone calls, or conferences.
 4. Support and respect the connections between children and their families in a non-judgmental manner. Respect each family's culture and community.



TEAMWORK

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act allows for supports and services for children with disabilities ages birth to twenty-two. Children with disabilities receive support from a team that includes the child's family, and may include an early intervention specialist (for children birth to three) or an early childhood special education teacher (for those aged three to twenty-two), a physical or occupation therapist or speech/language pathologist, nurse, behavior specialist or other professional.

As an early childhood professional, you are an important part of this team. You are with the child in his or her most natural environment. You observe the child interacting with other children, growing and developing, and you see signs of illness or distress. Your insight helps team members better understand and set appropriate goals for the child.

Specialists may ask for specific types of information, such as changes in a child's behavior or times when the child's energy levels are very low. Writing down brief notes will help you remember and share this information. You can also help team members to remember the positives. Since therapists often focus on challenges, you can play an important role by pointing out the child's strengths and the progress the child has made in your care.

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

Q. I've never cared for a child with disabilities. Shouldn't I leave inclusion to the bigger, better-equipped centers?

A. Inclusion is about opening the doors to child care for all families. Inclusive child care is needed in every neighborhood in all types of settings, including family day care homes. Your talents and experiences are valuable. No child should be excluded from benefiting from your skills and your program simply because of a disability.

Q. What if other children's families are concerned that a child with disabilities will take time away from their children?

A. It is not unusual for families to fear that a child with disabilities will take time and attention away from their children. Make families aware that their child also benefits from the additional expertise coming into the classroom. Invite families to be involved in your program and to participate in various activities. Remember to respect the privacy of all families in your program. Do not share any personal information without first getting permission from the child's parents.

“The time is always right to do the right thing.”

Martin Luther King

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will I need special training to care for a child with disabilities?

A. *It will depend on the child. For most children, good basic child care skills and a safe, enriching environment are enough. If caring for a child does require added skills, often the family can give you the guidance and information you need. Professional specialists who work with the child can also share tips and advice. If you would like to have more training, contact your Inclusion Coordinator. (See Resource Section for contact information)*

Q. Will I need to make major changes in my child care program to serve children with disabilities?

A. *The answer will depend on each individual child. First find out about the child's needs. Then see what, if any, changes you will need to make to include the child in your setting. Here are some examples of typical changes:*

- * Changing equipment, such as lowering or raising an activity table to include a child using a wheelchair*
- * Modifying rules of a game so that all children can play*
- * Having more frequent contact with a child's family*
- * Diapering a child who is older than most children who use diapers*

How the team helps you

Teaming with families and specialists is an extra benefit of caring for a child with disabilities. With the parent's permission, service providers can help you know the following:

- * How to respond to certain behaviors*
- * What a child can or cannot do*
- * How to handle special health care needs*
- * When you need to be especially careful with a child*
- * Where to find other helpful services and resources.*

A specialist may also be able to provide services and supports in your child care setting. For example, a physical therapist might come in to assist with ensuring that the child can fully participate in your program. Obtain the parent's permission before you talk to a specialist. Agencies will usually require written permission prior to discussing a child with you.



Individualized Plans

Each child from birth to three who is receiving Early Intervention services has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). A school age child (ages 3-21) receiving special education services will have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Families are an important part of the team and work with the specialists to develop these plans. Both types of plans include goals and resources to increase the child's ability to learn. With parents' permission, you can ask for a copy of the IFSP or IEP. Knowing what the plan says will help you assist a child in meeting his or her goals. In addition, children may have behavior plans or medication schedules. Parts of the IFSP, IEP or other plans may be implemented in your child care facility.

The family may request that you be involved in developing a child's IFSP or IEP. If you can't go to meetings, ask what information you can send with the family or call other team members. Ask them to keep you updated, especially about any decisions made at the meeting that relate to your time with the child.

IFSP and IEP meetings usually take place once or twice during the year. If you are able to attend, take notes during the meeting so you can refer to them when needed. You can also bring your notes about what you've observed. This will help you share the child's accomplishments. Families can request that meetings take place at times and locations that are accessible to you, even at your center. If there are certain terms you don't understand, ask for clarification or an explanation.

Building Trust and Confidence

Keep confidences.

- Always remember that all information about a child or family is confidential.
- Never share anything you see or learn about a child or family with *anyone* unless you have specific permission. It's best to ask parents for written permission to speak to a service provider. Most agency providers will have a form that parents can sign to allow you and the service provider to share information.
- If you are unsure what should be kept quiet, you should ALWAYS error on the side of caution. When people share confidences or intimate information with you, it's a sign of TRUST and RESPECT.

***Always consider that you can LOSE
trust easier than you can GAIN trust !***