

## Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs

Before a service can clarify what inclusive practices are occurring within our service it is important to take a look at staff's understanding of what inclusion means.

Ask yourselves these questions and compare answers.

What is inclusion? Provide words/sentences that define the meaning of inclusion.

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Think about being included into other areas of your life. As human beings we all want to "belong", "be accepted". Our life is organised around inclusion into many aspects.

Inclusion within your own community

Inclusion in a sporting club

Inclusion within your family

Inclusion within your work environment

Inclusion within your group of friends

A definition of inclusion within childcare could be:

**"Inclusion** is the process which enables each individual. Opportunities for acceptance, belonging and participation within the childcare community"

Using this definition, staff may now need to put into context the process of inclusion. Each children's service requires reflecting and defining the goals of inclusion to ensure that their service actively promotes inclusion within the program and compliments and embraces the philosophy of inclusion.

The main descriptive words within the definition are:

**Belonging**

**Acceptance  
Participation**

**Individual**

**Opportunities**

Using the above words to assist, how can we identify the inclusive practices within the service?

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A sense of **belonging** and involvement of the family

**Acceptance** of individuality

**Participation** in all aspects of the childcare day

Program planning which caters for all **individual** children

**Opportunities** for the child to interact with other children and adults

### **Identify supporting regulations/guidelines and principles for inclusive practices**

The development and implementation of an inclusive service does not occur in isolation. As well as agreed and understood values of each individual within a service environment there are a number of regulations, policies, guidelines and principles that support inclusion.

Identifying these not only assists in providing rationale for providing an inclusive service but also provides the benchmark for implementation

### **Assessing the services current program planning**

Each children's service brings to the community differing values and styles. Although the service is guided by regulations and standards (Accreditation principles) the service will bring a flavour of its own, based on philosophies and policies developed by the service. The values and styles of service delivery will vary. There is no one right style. We live in a diverse community and children's services need to be diverse to meet the needs of the community.

There are a number of differing service styles and frameworks. It is not important for childcare staff to know them all but what is important is that staff recognise the style and framework of the service they work with and how it affects the programming and inclusion process for each child that attends the service.

### **Program/service styles**

#### **Formal settings:**

#### **Underlying values and beliefs**

- Acquisition of skills and knowledge important
- Content important
- Children need external motivation
- Direct instruction is necessary so that children learn what they need to know
- Children should meet set standards of achievement and behaviour

#### **Practices**

- Emphasis on skills such as counting and letters of the alphabet
- All children required to complete set activities
- Focus on large group experiences
- End products that conform to adult standards are valued
- Large amount of time is spent in direct teaching

### **Informal setting:**

#### **Underlying values and beliefs**

- Exploring the environment and curiosity important
- Process important
- Children are internally motivated
- Children will choose what they need from a wide range of experiences
- Development of independence and self esteem emphasised

#### **Practices**

- Children are encouraged to develop at their own pace
- Children choose own experiences and complete to their own satisfaction
- Focus on individual and small group experiences
- Creativity and problem solving valued
- Adult seen as facilitator and guide

## **Frameworks**

### **1. Developmentally Appropriate Practice ( DAP)**

A staff's understanding of the range of children's characteristic growth and development patterns in different areas assist them to present appropriate learning experiences. Staff respond to the uniqueness of children in terms of their individual development, personality, family/cultural/community background, learning styles, strengths, needs, experiences and interests.

### **2. Traditional Lore and Practices**

Sometimes carers ignore children's development as well as individual strengths, interests, and family and community cultures. Presentation of a program passed on from one carer to another may encourage a childcare worker to base her program on the transmission of knowledge that they think is suitable for that particular age group because it is what other staff do. This may show up as restricted driven experiences such a story time, music time, outdoor time, indoor time that often does not address children's learning across all areas of development in an integrated fashion. In some instances children are required to sit still, stop talking and walk in straight lines. There can often be silent support from proprietors and parents for these traditional practices.

### **Child centered/adult centered**

The organisation of the environment can be adult or child centered. This greatly influences the child's interaction with equipment, other children and adults.

### **Structured by adult**

- Adult decides on equipment
- Adult decides on place for equipment to go
- Equipment stays in one place
- Equipment set up with a particular concept in mind e.g. classification

The problem with the above approach is that children may never get much experience in decision making i.e. deciding what experience to undertake, how to go about it, what to do when stuck, what to do next, how to approach and interact with others.

### **Structured by child**

- Child decides on equipment
- Child decides on place for equipment to go
- Children are free to move equipment around
- Children interact with equipment spontaneously

The above approach enables the child to have some control over their lives, build a sense of competence and self esteem. The adult's role becomes more interactive

### **Individualised approach**

Program provides for children as individuals with childcare workers acknowledging that each child develops at different rates in different areas and regards the experiences as providing different things for different children.

### **Whole group approach**

Regards that all children in the group develop as at the same level of developmental skills e.g. they are all four years old so all have scissor skills therefore need the same experiences at the same time and at the same rate.

### **Learning through Play**

An approach that recognises that children learn through play with opportunities to develop and practice skills in all developmental areas.

### **Learning through Work**

Drill and practice, rote learning, chalk & talk, work in silence is often seen as learning through work and may be very passive for the children. It may be difficult for some children to become enthused and involved in this type of approach and may often be viewed as something the child has to do before he/she can get on to enjoying the rest of the day.

### **Integrated learning**

Different learning experiences are brought together to create meaning and understanding of how things come about.

### **Correlated learning**

Experiences that relate to a central idea such as using the colour red to develop knowledge of colours, numbers, shapes, science and language.

### **Segregated learning**

Experiences are provided in isolation from each other. This may provide some opportunity for short and focused learning tasks for a particular child.

### **Bilingual and bicultural learning**

Acknowledgment of differing languages including signing and is embedded into the whole program.

### **Monolingual/mono-cultural learning**

One language is only used throughout the program and one style of childcare practice predominates across the program. This may alienate some children by re-enforcing that differences aren't good. This may give a false message of inclusion

### Identifying the concerns and issues regarding the delivery of an inclusive service

Providing an inclusive service is rewarding knowing that you are giving each child and family the opportunity to belong and be accepted within a community. However it can at times be difficult and sometimes very overwhelming. Therefore it is important that we identify and are alert to the possible barriers and concerns of delivering an inclusive service. The concerns and issues that do arise can often be placed under three headings:

- **Prejudices, stereotypes and negative attitudes**
- **Environmental barriers**
- **Impairments associated with a disability**

### Identifying some issues

What are the difficulties that you as a team and as an individual have when including a child with an additional need into your service?

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What strategies have you already put in place to address your concerns and issues?

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How do you feel about those strategies? Identify those that seem to be working.

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The concerns and issues raised are very real and we have already taken the first step forward in addressing these issues by identifying them and bringing them out in the open. It is not until we have a good look at our own attitudes, beliefs and opinions that we can then really find strategies to move forward in the delivery of an inclusive service.

Every setting is a source of learning for young children with the home acknowledged as a particularly powerful influence. Developing a program for each child as an individual as well as part of the group (inclusion) is an integral part of Early Education and Care services.

Program planning is a means of ensuring that the decisions we make about the program will help achieve the aims, goals and objectives that we have for the children and ourselves.

Inclusive program planning involves decisions about how children learn, when learning takes place and what is to be learned. An inclusive program needs to be individually appropriate to the needs and interests of the children of the program. In addition it must be culturally and locally relevant and meaningful in the context of the specific community.

### **Resources for Childcare Workers**

Childcare workers need a variety of resources to be able to provide quality inclusive childcare. Resources are expensive and in some services limiting.

What do we mean by the term "resources"?

Think about the variety of "resources" that you have access to in your service.

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**Toys:**

Bought or homemade

**Books:**

Children's books, reference books

**People:**

Childcare workers

Director

Parents

People in your own community

Support workers (Inclusion Support Agencies)

**Using the resources to their fullest potential**

- ❖ The types of resources (toys, posters, books and equipment) tell children how we feel about ourselves and our own values.
- ❖ Resources need to acknowledge the differences between us all.
- ❖ Resources should represent the every day life of people.
- ❖ Resources are a way of children understanding what is real and what is unreal in their world.
- ❖ All resources developed by the adult need to be safe for the child.
- ❖ It is important to recognise the developmental skills of the children using your resource.
- ❖ Natural materials are more likely to be safer than man made ones, which may contain chemicals.
- ❖ The adult needs to be sensitive to families using the service when using materials normally for other means (e.g. rice, food collage).

### References and Recommended Reading:

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