

Understanding Inclusion

© Second Edition 2013

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

It wasn't too many years ago that as a society we dealt with anyone who was considered different from the norm, particularly people with disabilities, by **segregating** them (i.e. Institutions). People with disabilities were treated differently and were seen to have different needs to us.

It was not until the early eighties with Commonwealth and State legislative changes that we realised that segregation does not benefit communities as a whole. These legislative changes called for the **inclusion** of people with disabilities into all areas of community life (e.g., community living, leisure activities, social groups, schools & childcare services).

"What is inclusion?" Put your thoughts down here.

Society today supports social justice and has realised that segregation does not benefit communities as a whole. Society is now trying to establish an integrated community. Integration therefore refers to the process of placing children with and without disabilities in the same setting. However this does not mean that the child is included. In the context of an Early Childhood setting, inclusion actively promotes the participation of a child with a disability in all aspects of the day.

Having established a definition of inclusion it is necessary to put into context the process of inclusion. Individual Kindergarten services need to reflect and define the goals of inclusion to ensure that the service actively promotes inclusion within the program and compliments and embraces the philosophy.

The main words or adjectives within the Governments definition of Inclusion are:

**Belonging,
Acceptance
Participation
Individual
Opportunities**

- ◆ A sense of belonging and involvement of the family
- ◆ Acceptance of individuality
- ◆ Program planning which caters for all individual children
- ◆ Participation in all aspects of the day
- ◆ Opportunities for the child to interact with other children and adults

BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

It is very important for the Early Childhood community and parents working with children with disabilities to identify and be alert to the possible barriers to inclusion. When talking about barriers we are talking about physical and attitudinal barriers.

Barriers to Inclusion

- ❖ Prejudices, stereotypes & negative attitudes (e.g. reflected through the inappropriate words that people use like 'spastic').
- ❖ Environmental barriers (e.g. furniture, lighting, glare, design of room).
- ❖ Impairments associated with the disability (e.g. limited language, poor motor control, toileting & self-feeding).

Having recognised the barriers, the Early Childhood community now need to focus on the positive aspects and look towards adjusting, changing the environment and promoting a positive attitude towards inclusion through policy development, program planning and implementing strategies which reinforce the service's philosophy.

INDICATORS OF INCLUSION

How do you know that your child with a disability is being included into your service? What do you need as indicators/guidelines? How do we do this? The following are ideas for parents to assist in ascertaining whether the child is being included. They are designed to help you define whether inclusion is occurring and what areas need working on. Remember, inclusion is a process which occurs over a period of time with the growth and development of the child and increased knowledge and skills of the community and the indicators should not be regarded as needed to be achieved all at once.

Indicators of Inclusion

1. Belonging

The family feels welcome by all members of the community.
The family is given the opportunity and choice to participate in the community.
The child/family indicates that the child is happy and secure.

2. Acceptance

Within the context of the program, the child's needs and interests are included.
Within the context of the program the child's additional needs are provided for e.g. health, safety, equipment and nutrition.
Equipment and resources reflect positive images of diversity e.g. books, posters and toys.

3. Participation

Opportunities are created for the child to participate.
Equipment is within child's reach.
Equipment and resources are safe and ensure opportunities for participation
Resources are used appropriately and inclusively e.g. cut out table to seat 4 children).

4. Individual

The child's needs and interests are included in program planning.
The program is evaluated on regular basis takes place to ensure the child's needs are being met.
Resources used to assist the child's development of daily living skills include the child with her/his peers.

5. Opportunities

All staff relate appropriately with the child to understand and meet her/his needs e.g. sign language, pictures, symbols.
The child participates in a variety of experiences to assist in social development.

Disclaimer

Inclusion Works! provides information to Children's Services upon request. The information provided is obtained from a number of sources e.g. library, other services, resource books and Internet. The information provided is not intended to, nor does it, constitute medical or other advice. Persons access this information assume full responsibility for its usage. Acknowledgement of source of information is required if passed onto a third person.