



## Social Inclusion & Choice

*BQIS Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life. This document provides general information on the topic and is not intended to replace team assessment, decision-making, or medical advice.*

## Intended Outcomes

The reader will understand why social inclusion and choice are important for the well-being of an individual with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). The reader will learn ways to help individuals with IDD be socially included in their community and have choice in their everyday lives.

## Definitions

**Social inclusion:** Although a clear definition has not been agreed on among authors, social inclusion generally has the following main components: 1) involvement in activities (e.g., employment, social), 2) having mutual relationships, and 3) a sense of belonging.

## Facts

- Individuals with IDD often have few friends outside of other people with disabilities, staff, and family members.
- Compared to the general community, children and adults with IDD report more loneliness.
- Staff attention and assistance influence the level of social engagement and community activities of individuals with IDD. More staff attention is related to more involvement in community activities and social engagement.
- A positive staff attitude, greater family involvement, and availability of social support is also related to increased community participation.
- Not all individuals with IDD prefer the same level of social inclusion. Therefore, individual choices should be respected.



## Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

Help an individual with IDD be socially included and make choices by actively engaging them in:

- **Presence in the community:** The individual should be involved in the community they live in. They should be seen in the community participating in the same activities that others living in that community engage in as they choose.
- **Community participation:** The individual is involved in a growing network of a community, which includes others who are not disabled, their paid staff, or family members.
- **Choice:** Allowing the individual to make as many choices about their day as possible, and as appropriate to their ability. These choices may include smaller choices (e.g., what they might like to wear, bedtime routines) and bigger choices (e.g., where they would like to volunteer, activities to engage in).
- **Respect:** The individual is respected and valued by others persons in the community, not just paid staff.
- **Continue to listen** how the individual wants to interact socially and make choices and change activities as appropriate.
- **Allow the individual to redefine themselves** by their relationships with others in the community and what they are able to give back to those around them.

## Learning Assessment

The following questions can be used to verify a person's competency regarding the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. True or false: Having an individual participate in a sheltered workshop daily allows them to be socially included.
2. True or false: Individuals with IDD should only spend time with others with IDD, paid staff, and family.

## References

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## Learning Assessment Answers

1. False
2. False