

Inclusion: Meeting a Very Special Need



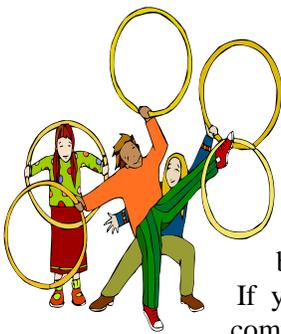
INCLUSION

Is a relatively new term for some very old ideas: Fairness, Acceptance, Equality. In short, the Golden Rule.

What Are “Special Needs”?

Sometimes the idea of caring for kids with special needs can be overwhelming, but try thinking of the kids you already know and love. Picture your grandchild, godchild, niece, nephew, child, or step-child. Would you refuse to care for them if they:

- Took medicine every day?
- Wore glasses or hearing aids?
- Were allergic to some foods or pets?
- Learned more slowly than their friends?
- Wanted all their toys in a row?
- Needed help dressing or bathing?
- Not likely? Well then, you would be caring for a child with special needs!



You CAN Do This!

The goal of inclusion is for ALL kids to be able to do their personal best, feel successful and truly be members of their group.

If you offer a safe, secure and comfortable place where kids grow and learn at their own pace, you already have the basics for inclusion! An open mind, caring heart and some background in how kids grow and learn go a long way. All kids are kids first! By focusing on their strengths, you may find not much has to change in your space or program. Often, little training is needed to provide truly excellent care. In most cases parents have valuable ideas to share—and know where you can get more. Your local Child Care Resource and Referral Office can also help make inclusion an easier process for everyone involved.

BUT...But...but...

“I don’t know about medical equipment...”

No problem: Jared, the knee-high mini-tackle, will very cheerfully show you how he uses his breathing machine. In fact, he’d rather do it himself, thank you!

OR

“It’s too hard to have kids in wheelchairs...”

You mean like Juan (The Dude), who can argue politics, fix your computer, and balance on his rear wheels?

OR

“Taking those kids will disrupt all the others...”

Yes, Tasha will want to help. And Ming will ask questions. And Cloud has to try out everything!

But won’t that all be...educational?!

Change Is Inevitable; Growth Is Optional!

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed in 1992, assures that all kids have the same rights to quality child care. That means any child care provider must consider every request for enrollment, even if it means a few changes in program, staffing or layout. Studies have shown that ALL kids benefit from inclusive programs. You will likely hear that and other positive things; if you talk to providers you know who welcome kids with special needs. Try to spend some time in those settings, watching how others include their kids with special needs—but don’t be surprised if someone has to point them out before you can tell they are there!



Resources:

Child Care Law Center:

www.childcarelaw.org or 415-558-8005. ADA information

Indiana Child Care Resource and Referral Agency:

Inclusion Specialist: for local information contact: 800-299-1627 www.iaccrr.org