



**Some very
special
children will
be arriving
at your
program
soon....**



***ARE YOU
READY?***



WHY?

Why must my program take in children with special needs?

You think you're not ready. You think you aren't trained to meet their needs. You think you can't afford to pay for additional staff to be with only that child. You think you don't have the proper equipment. You don't want the liability of lifting or carrying children, assisting with toileting or administering medication. There are lots of reasons expressed by good people who love children, but are afraid to take on the challenge of children with special needs.

Why should you put aside your fears and take up the challenge?

Because...

...the law requires it ...



The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed in 1990, states that public and privately run child care providers (except those actually run by religious entities) must provide children and parents with disabilities with an equal opportunity to participate in the child care provider's programs and services. They cannot exclude children with disabilities unless their presence would provide a direct threat to the health or safety of others, or would require a fundamental alteration of the program. Programs must make reasonable modifications to accommodate children or parents with disabilities, provide appropriate aides and services and make their facilities accessible, unless doing so would constitute an undue burden.

The State of NJ passed a Law Against Discrimination, which is even broader than the federal ADA in some cases. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination based on mental or physical disability by any program that receives federal funds. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that all children age 3-21 be provided with a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. If you are part of a district sponsored program, IDEA may apply to you. Remember: a lawsuit brought by a parent on behalf of a child who you refused to enroll could bankrupt your program - even if you win!



... parents need it ...

Even though they may have a child with a disability, single parents and families who need a dual income to get by still need access to affordable, dependable care. Makeshift arrangements, which can quickly fall apart, are not an option for families with children who have very unique needs. Special transportation services make the issue even more difficult and complex.

... and it's the right thing to do!

NSACA Standards and our professional ethics tell us that children deserve developmentally appropriate, quality care, in safe environments, surrounded by warm, caring and well-trained adults. Do these most vulnerable children deserve it any less?

HOW?

How can I adapt my program to accept children with special needs?

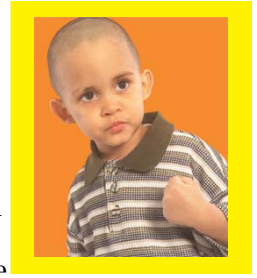
It's not as difficult as you think!

You probably have the foundations of an inclusive program already in place. If you currently follow best practices as defined by the NSACA or NAEYC Standards, you are already meeting the needs of all children by evaluating and planning based on developmentally appropriate practice.



Making an Individualized Assessment

If you and your staff already look at each child, and see that he or she is different and unique in some way, you no doubt find a way to meet that child's need. The active girl who gets antsy when you're taking attendance - don't you quietly position a staff member next to her, to see that she doesn't jump on the highly sensitive child sitting next to her? Isn't that "one-to-one" care for a certain period of time? The boy who only eats bland foods - don't you make sure to have Saltines every day, while trying to introduce him to new foods? Isn't that making an "accommodation" to make him feel comfortable and secure? If you can make these daily alterations in your program to meet the needs of a typical child, why not take it a step further?



"Reasonable accommodations" and "individualized assessments" are the legal terms you will hear regarding the changes your program is expected to make to enroll a child with special needs. If you and your staff begin to recognize that you make "reasonable accommodations" every day for children, the solution to the inclusion dilemma will become easier to understand. The law doesn't expect you to fundamentally change the nature of your program, or spend so much money to accommodate a child that you will have to shut your doors. It expects that you will make every effort to find a way to include a child.

*And, as
national
expert*

Dale Fink noted:

"My research shows that the more programs address the needs of children with disabilities, the better programs become at meeting the needs of all children."

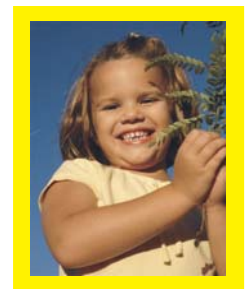
This may mean you will seek additional funding sources, such as local civic organizations, to help you pay for reasonable added costs. Or contact societies or associations related to a child's disability to request volunteers to help out, or to provide adaptive equipment on loan.

Haven't you held special fundraisers or called on your local women's club to help pay for a special project you wanted to do? Haven't you ever rearranged your activity schedule or staff assignments a bit just because a less mature child needed a quick nap each day? If the answer is "yes", then you're already flexible enough to make "reasonable accommodations"!

WHO?

Who will help me include children with special needs?

Don't worry - you are not alone! There are plenty of people willing to help you. Many resources are only a telephone call away. State agencies, training specialists and medical and legal counselors have already had experience making inclusion happen. And all agree: the results will be more successful for all concerned if you take advantage of the assistance they are willing and able to give you. Whether you already have a child in your program who you are attempting to accommodate, or you are preparing your program for the possible enrollment of children with special needs, there are some people you will definitely want to contact.



For legal advice ...

Of course, if your agency has its own attorney, he or she should be part of the discussion. But if you need outside counsel, there are attorneys who specialize in ADA and child care issues. The US Department of Justice has an information line and a website you can access to ask questions and request documents.

The NJ Division of Civil Rights can answer some of your questions regarding the ADA and the NJ Law Against Discrimination.

For health issues ...

The Child Care Health Consultant Coordinator (CCHCC) affiliated with your county Unified Child Care Agency (UCCA) can assist you in preparing a health care needs assessment and plan regarding special care and medication a child may need related to his/her disability.

For program related assistance ...

A variety of agencies can provide you with low-cost technical assistance to make the inclusion of a child with special needs run more smoothly. The State of NJ has funded both the NJ School-Age Care Coalition (NJSACC) and the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network (SPAN), through its Inclusive Child Care Project, to assist child care programs in meeting the challenges of inclusion. Associations related to the child's specific disability may also provide you with low- or no-cost training, adaptive equipment, etc.

Where ?

NJ School-Age Care Coalition (NJSACC)

*for training and technical assistance
specific to safterschool care*

231 North Avenue West, #363
Westfield, NJ 07090
(908) 789-0259
www.njsacc.org

NJ Inclusive Child Care Project (NJICCP)

*for free information, telephone technical assistance,
referral to training opportunities and free on-site
consultations and support to child care providers
c/o SPAN*

35 Halsey Street
4th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 642-8100 ext. 108
www.spannj.org/njiccp

The U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights Section
*for information and assistance about compliance
with the ADA*

(800) 514-0301 (voice)
(800) 514-0383 (TDD)
www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/chcaflyr.htm

NJ Child Care Help Line Unified Child Care Agencies

*for child care health consultant coordinators and
other assistance related to the needs of all children*
(800) 332-9CARE

The NJ Division of Civil Rights

*for information and assistance about compliance
with the NJ Law Against Discrimination*
(609) 292-4605
www.njcivilrights.com

The Center for Independent Living (CIL)

*for assistance with inexpensive solutions to
reasonable accommodation and other services,
locate the CIL in your community through
Independent Living Research Utilization*
2323 S. Shepperd
Suite 1000
Houston, TX 77019
(713) 520-0232
www.ilru.org

MAP to Inclusive Child Care Team

*for information on resources for including
children with special needs in New Jersey.*
Office of Early Care and Education
New Jersey Department of Human Services
PO Box 700
Trenton, NJ 08625
(609) 292-8444

Other possible resources

Various agencies and organizations that are associated with specific disabilities (such as the United Cerebral Palsy Association of NJ, the NJ Speech and Hearing Association, the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired) may be able to provide resources and training geared specifically to their area of expertise. Don't hesitate to seek them out and contact them regarding available services.

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