

Provider's Guide to Inclusive Child Care

Frequently Asked Questions



Supplement to
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Selecting Quality Child Care

**Child Care
Services**

Frequently Asked Questions

How will I be able to find appropriate child care?

What is Inclusive Child Care?

- Inclusion is for everyone. No one likes to feel left out. Inclusion means welcoming and including all children, regardless of their ability or disability. Families look for a place where their child is treated as an individual with unique needs, likes, dislikes and abilities. All children need a safe, comfortable environment that allows them to learn and grow. Is this the care you give to young children?

What if I've never worked with a child with special needs before? What do I need to know?

- Families will be searching for care that is the most appropriate for their child – the same as any family. Learning what a child needs is important. The family should share information with you so you are able to give the best care possible.
- Some child care providers may feel like they do not have the knowledge or skill required to care for a child who may have an emotional, health, intellectual or physical need. Try to think about what you'd want to know if the child needing care was your own child.
- Teachers want to include all children, but may fear they won't be able to care for a child with a special need due to the amount of attention that child may require. Remember, every child shares the same basic needs: acceptance, care, love and support.
- Consider enrolling the child on a trial basis to see if your program is able to meet the child's needs. There are resources available including training and technical assistance to support child care providers. Don't forget the family is the most important resource for you.
- Resource agencies offer information to assist providers in giving quality, inclusive child care. The child's school, the state health

department, the Warmline and the Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral may offer just the information you need.

Are there subsidy payments that might be available if a child in my care has a special need?

- The Child Care Subsidy Program is available to help pay for all or part of the cost of child care for children up to age 13 while the parent(s) work or go to school. Eligibility is based on income and need. Child Care Subsidy benefits are also available for children age 13 through 18 who meet the DHS definition of a child with a disability and are income-eligible. Applications for the program are made through the local county DHS office. Programs and families can work together to apply for a Special Needs Subsidy rate which offers an increase in subsidy payment to the provider when caring for a child with special needs. For more information about the Child Care Subsidy Program, please call 405-521-3931.

What other options might I suggest to parents looking for child care if I have no current openings?

- The eligibility criteria that Head Start programs use might allow a child with a special need to attend even if the family is over the income priority. Parents will need to contact the local Head Start program for additional information.
- SoonerStart may be able to offer resources to children from birth to three years of age with qualifying conditions.
- The local public school system may be able to offer resources to children who are 3 to 21 years of age with qualifying conditions.
- In-home care is an option that involves the parent choosing a caregiver who comes into the child's home to care for that child. All prospective in-home providers must meet all policy requirements including background checks prior to being approved by DHS to receive subsidy payments.

I've heard about programs that offer extensive care for children with disabilities. Should I tell parents to look for those?

- Programs such as Head Start, Easter Seals and other experienced, specialized child care providers have received additional training to meet the needs of a wide range of children's abilities and disabilities. These programs may have a waiting list, so it is recommended parents search for care as early as possible.
- Remember, many children with a special need may not need anything other than what typically developing children need. Inclusive child care programs that utilize best practices in early care and education already provide all children with opportunities to interact with each other in an environment that offers many choices of activities, adapted to meet all children's abilities. Your program may also have well-educated staff, adaptive equipment and space to include children who may have special needs. You may be the family's solution for their child's caregiver.

What if the care needed is for an older child who is not able to stay alone?

As a child care provider, you will need to decide the ages of children you will accept. Providing care for school-age children and youth ages 13-18 with a special need is in high demand by families. Talk with your licensing specialist to determine what you would need to do in order to care for older children and/or youth with a special need.

Inclusion is more than creating a physical space where students with and without disabilities are brought together. All children have strengths and challenges. Working as a team can increase the strength of the teacher and family bond. The child benefits from that relationship.

- Not all children with a special need require individual care. Like all children, a child with a special need may occasionally require individual care such as with toileting or eating. Talk honestly with the family about what supports their child may need. Working in partnership with families provides fantastic results for children.
- Not all children with special needs have challenging behaviors, just like not all children with challenging behaviors have special needs. Some behaviors may be the result of the child feeling frustrated because they are unable to communicate effectively. Learning ways to help children express their needs and wants may decrease challenging behaviors.
- Not all disabilities are visible, and some may not be obvious. The goal for families and caregivers is to not judge a child by a diagnosis. Child care providers will need to take time to get to know each child as an individual. Parents can help providers by sharing information about a child's likes, dislikes, need for structure and routine, etc.

Should I be worried that typically developing children will copy behaviors of a child with special needs?

- Young children sometimes copy behaviors of others, including adults who care for them, siblings, and things they see or hear from television, etc.
- Inclusion of children with a special need in a supportive early childhood setting has been shown to be beneficial to the child without a disability. Inclusive child care allows all children to learn from each other and develop sensitivity toward others by appreciating individual differences. The benefits outweigh the negatives.
- Providers, families and the community can support each other by offering every child a sense of belonging; encouraging every child's development of self-esteem and confidence in their abilities; and giving opportunities for a wide variety of friendships.

What resources could I use to find out additional information?

- 2-1-1 is a statewide resource hotline, information and referral line for health and human service needs; you can dial 2-1-1 by phone or access them online at www.211.org
- Center for Early Childhood Professional Development (CECPD) <https://cecpd.org/> or 1-888-446-7608 for professional development opportunities
- Child Care Warmline at <http://warmline.health.ok.gov> or 1-888-574-5437 for taped or live response (live M-F 8-5) related to young children; including caring for a child with a special need
- Early Head Start & Head Start at <http://okacaa.org/resources/annual-directory/> or 405-949-1495, for families looking for care for children 5 and younger
- Easter Seals Oklahoma at <http://eastersealsok.org/> or 405-239-2525, for families looking for care for a child 2 years through kindergarten or adult care, developmental and autism screenings, professional development for parents and providers
- National Research Center, caring for children with special health care needs in early care and education at <http://nrckids.org/index.cfm/products/cshcn/> (free download 101 pages)
- Oklahoma Autism Network at okautism.org or 1-877-228-8476 central point of contact for autism services, family information, provider training

- Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association at www.oklahomachildcare.org or 1-800-438-0008, Spanish calls 1-405-942-4179, families searching for child care 1-888-962-2772, for providers seeking training or technical assistance, and for employers and community information related to child care
- Oklahoma Department of Human Services, child care benefits at <http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/asst/default.htm> or 405-521-3931, for families needing help paying for quality child care, and for provider contracts for subsidy approval; for licensing information related to choosing childcare at www.okdhs.org/childcare
- OU Child Study Center at <https://www.oumedicine.com/pediatrics/department-sections/developmental-behavioral-pediatrics/child-study-center> or 405-271-5700, for families with a child or young loved one who faces developmental, educational, behavioral or medical needs, and for professional development for care providers
- Sooner Success at <http://soonersuccess.ouhsc.edu/> provides statewide information and referral for Oklahomans with special needs at (877) 441-0434
- SoonerStart at <http://ok.gov/sde/soonerstart> or 405-521-4880, for special needs 405-522-4513, Oklahoma Parents As Teachers 405-522-4513, for preschool programs 405-522-4499

Other resources are your local school district and community organizations.



Child Care Services

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