

Inclusive Enrolment Processes in Early Childhood Education and Care Services



All children have the right to participate in early childhood education and care services. A positive and effective enrolment process for all children, could be supported by the following ideas and strategies:

Enrolment Process

- ▶ Ensure your enrolment form for all children includes questions to gather useful information about children's interests, strengths, language and/or cultural background, areas of importance to the family, allergies, any support needs, medication to be administered, medical procedures that would need to occur in the care environment (e.g. peg feeding).
- ▶ Offer orientation visit/s prior to children starting at the service to support their transition into your care environment. Introduce the family and the child to the educators and invite them to visit the environment for short periods of time. This will help make your service a more familiar and comfortable space.
- ▶ Talk with families about your service's program and philosophy around inclusion and about how you support and include all children.
- ▶ Ask families about any strategies or language they use to support their child e.g. use of particular comfort objects, behaviour support strategies, ways of communicating (e.g. any key words in the child's home language, signs, visual supports or communication devices) and ways to calm and settle their child when stressed.

Getting to know the child and family

- ▶ Find out about this child's interests, strengths and needs, including specific information about any developmental concerns, additional needs or important background information. Invite parents to provide copies of any relevant reports and assessments.

For example:

- Interests – What does this child enjoy doing? Does he or she have any favourite toys?
- Communication – Are there any particular words or non-verbal cues that would be helpful for educators to know?
- Mobility – How can educators best support this child's mobility?
- Any behaviour concerns? How does the family support their child in this area?
- Self-help skills – How does this child usually eat and drink? Is there any information about toileting needs that would be useful for educators to know?
- Social – How does this child interact with other children and adults?
- Emotional – What is calming and soothing to this child when they are upset?
- Sensory processing – Are there any sensory sensitivities or strategies in place that educators should be aware of?

All conversations should be handled sensitively, in a way that respects each family and what they choose to share with you at this time. As you develop trusting and collaborative relationships, families may feel more comfortable to share additional information.

Begin to think about how you could support this child's inclusion in your service

Think about:

- ▶ The environment
 - Accessibility – toilets, stairs, nappy change facilities, excursions, wheelchair access
 - Program/ routines – appropriateness of activities offered as part of the program, flexibility of routines and transitions and group times
- ▶ The children
 - Group dynamics, enrolment numbers and combinations of children; and
- ▶ The staff
 - Educator skills, knowledge, experience, practices; workplace health and safety issues such as lifting, any professional learning priorities identified around inclusion

Building relationships with children and families is important for all children enrolled in your service

Think about:

- ▶ How do educators usually get to know new children at the service?
- ▶ Are there any different strategies required to develop these relationships e.g. do educators need to communicate in different ways (using visual supports, key word signs or interpreters)?
- ▶ Setting up ways to communicate regularly with families which work for everyone

Find out from the family about whether any early childhood intervention (ECI) professionals/therapists are working with their family. What strategies do they use? How can they work in partnership with you? Ask for parent permission to contact these professionals/therapists. [The Working Together Agreement](#) can be used to clarify roles and responsibilities and promote inclusive practice during visits to your service. See also Working with Early Intervention Practitioners resources on the Inclusion Agency websites (see weblinks below).

Your Next Steps

Contact your Inclusion Agency (IA) to identify any barriers to inclusion and to develop a Strategic Inclusion Plan for your service. For free support around inclusion in NSW or the ACT phone: 1800 703 382 or email: inclusionagency@includeme.com.au or in Queensland, phone: 1800 811 039 or email: inclusionsupportqld@ku.com.au.

- ▶ Develop a Strategic Inclusion Plan. This can help you to:
 - Discuss any thoughts, feelings, questions, ideas and strategies around including all children within your service
 - Discuss ways to promote every child's participation in daily experiences, activities and excursions
 - Consider any relevant information such as reports and plan for any adjustments to the program and environment

- Consider if it would be helpful to apply for any specialist equipment
 - Identify resources and professional development needed to help educators to successfully include all children
 - Support educators and children in the group to understand the benefits of inclusion
- ▶ If you wish to discuss a specific child, parent consent will be needed, and an Inclusion Professional can send you a parent consent form or you can access a form from the Inclusion Agency website.
 - ▶ Regularly check with the family for new information, resources and reports that may support you to include the child.
 - ▶ As a team, regularly discuss how things are going and evaluate your practices, strategies and program activities (including excursions) to ensure you continue to include all children. Make changes to your planning, strategies and activities as needed.

Additional Considerations and Resources

- ▶ Be aware of your responsibilities and the rights of children in relation to the Discrimination Act. A document has been produced by Early Childhood Australia and the Australian Human Rights Commission called Supporting Children's Rights. This can be downloaded [here](#).
- ▶ The ECA and ECIA Joint Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disability may be helpful. Download [here](#).

If you would like some help to work through any of these points, call the NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency on 1800 703 382 or visit www.inclusionagencynswact.org.au or Inclusion Support QLD on 1800 811 039 or visit www.inclusionsupportqld.org.au