

Inclusion Policy Development Resource

Intent: This resource is a tool to support service providers in developing their Inclusion Policy. An Inclusion Policy outlines how the service provider will include all children in their program and remove barriers that may prevent children from actively participating.

Inclusion: Inclusion includes, but is not limited to, age, education, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, family income, parent occupation, parent marital status, parental status, language, physical and mental ability, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation.

- **Legislation/Best Practice:** Include references to legislation and other key documents about inclusion such as: [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#), [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), [College of ECE's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#), [How Does Learning Happen?](#) Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years¹
- **Definition of Inclusion:** Define the term "inclusion" as it relates to your program's inclusion policy. Key words to consider: celebrating uniqueness, abilities, belonging, diversity and acceptance for every child
- **Policy Statement:** The statement explains what the program is trying to achieve. Outline how the program will be welcoming, flexible, fair, promote active participation of all children, and maintain community partnerships. You can use relevant inclusion points from your program statement on belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. For example: "We support all children to reach their full potential."
- **Guiding Principles:** The guiding principles section will list 3 to 5 beliefs that support inclusion and have a direct link to the policy statement. For example:
 - Welcome and are inclusive of all children and families
 - Promote a sense of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression
 - Participate with others who have different goals and abilities in ways that are most comfortable for them

¹ Reference: Inclusion: Policy Development Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Programs, Toronto Children's Services, Toronto Canada. 2007; How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years

- **Procedures:** Procedures are actions that the program staff will take to implement the Inclusion Policy and should be consistent with the program statement, guiding principles and work well with other program policies. Please include the following:
 - Flexibility to make reasonable program changes to make sure every child can participate fully in the program in ways that are most comfortable for them
 - Commitment to support new and existing placements (Reference to PIRS New Placement Process and Continued Placement Process)
 - Professional learning for staff about inclusion and special needs
 - Importance of strengthening relationships and ensuring social inclusion, participation and a sense of belonging. Please see the belonging section (p.24-28) of [How Does Learning Happen](#) for more information.
 - Importance of connecting with community partners to better support the mental health and well-being of families and children. For example: Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS)

- **Accountability:** “Supervisors, owner operators, directors, managers, board members, staff, parents and volunteers play the single most important role in achieving inclusion success” (Lero, Irwin, Hope). The accountability section of the policy demonstrates how the service provider will require all staff/board members to support the policy and inclusive programming. Please include how often:
 - The service provider will review the inclusion policy to make sure its language and legislation references are up-to-date.
 - Staff will be required to review the inclusion policy

- **Supporting Documentation:** All policies referenced in the Inclusion Policy must align with its language and intent.

Does Your Policy Include:

- ‘People first language’ puts the person first and special need second by focusing on the person rather than the special need. For example: a child with special needs vs. special needs child.
- Realistic and attainable guiding principles