TYPES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
Providers and Environments

Programs operating as child care facilities or schools are required to include children with disabilities and special needs. Below are various child care settings in which families can enroll their children with disabilities or special needs. For information about other types of programs, please visit http://www.childcarenj.com/Parents/Types.

Family Child Care
These are neighborhood programs offering children a small home-like environment. Usually 1 or 2 adults provide a mixed age group of children with a flexible child care schedule.

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Child Care Centers and Preschool Programs
A program with a school-like environment that cares for six or more children under the age of 13. Children are grouped in programs by age and cared for by a larger staff than family child care providers. They follow a structured educationally enriched environment using an early childhood curriculum.

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Head Start and Early Head Start
Federally-funded programs that promote school readiness for children, birth to five years of age from low-income families.

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Faith Based
Faith-based preschool programs generally use a curriculum that includes religious values and teachings.

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Public Preschool Special Education Programs
Federally-funded public programs offering developmentally appropriate education to eligible children ages 3-5 with a disability or developmental delay. If eligible, children receive special education and related services in the least restrictive environment, which could include a Head Start or typical child care program.

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Before/After School and Summer Programs
These programs offer parents the opportunity to have their child, up to age 13, attend a child care program before and/or after traditional school and/or program hours.

"Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of the individual to participate in or contribute to society." ~IDEA 2004

Today an ever-increasing number of infants and young children with and without disabilities play, develop, and learn together in a variety of places – homes, early childhood programs, neighborhoods, and other community-based settings.

Providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments, is a defining feature of high quality early childhood inclusion. Even if environments and programs are desgned to facilitate access, some children will need additional individualized accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning activities with peers and adults.

This guide was created to help families identify indicators and characteristics of inclusive early childhood programs in their journey to locate programs that best suit their child and family needs.

Excerpt from the Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs
www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/inclusion

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This pamphlet was designed by the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network New Jersey Inclusive Child Care Project (NJICCP) under a grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Family Development (DFD).

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NEW JERSEY
INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE
PROJECT

QUALITY INDICATORS OF INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES SEEKING AN INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Quality Indicators of an Inclusive Child Care Program

"Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities and society…The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports." (Division of Early Childhood and National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009)

SOME EXAMPLES OF QUALITY INDICATORS ARE:

Access
Removal of physical and programmatic barriers, and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development.

- A written policy on access for all children.
- A program's guidelines/parent handbook describes commitment to inclusion.
- The program adheres to legal provisions to include children with disabilities and special needs in the program.
- Universal Design for Learning and differentiated teaching practices are used throughout the program.
- A program's discipline policy and procedures consider the age and development of young children. Staff seek to teach acceptable behavior rather than punish children for unacceptable behavior.
- The participation of children in various activities and routines is supported throughout the day.
- Lack of toilet training does not keep a child from being accepted into a program.

Participation
Using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child.

- Activities and learning materials are modified and adapted for children with disabilities, any special needs, level of interest, and functional level.
- Children receive individual attention when needed.
- Children have opportunities to control objects or events in their environment.
- A range of activities and environments are offered to promote development.
- Visual aids and learning schedules are used to support all children.
- Children are paired as "buddies," giving them an organized way to get to know each other.
- Schedules are posted, and there are opportunites for large group, small group, and individual time activities.

SUPPORTS
Broad systems such as professional development and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.

- Staff are familiar with concepts of modifications and adapations to ensure children have access and opportunties to participate in the full-range of learning experiences, such as:
  - Modifying and adapting routines and schedules
  - Medication administrative strategies
  - Inclusive strategies
  - Techniques to support all learners' social emotional development
- Staff use diverse teaching methods to ensure all children participate in the learning experience.
- Staff are familiar with a formal process to screen and monitor the development and growth of all children, which includes the families' perspective, and share the results of screening with families.
- Staff are knowledgeable of community resources, welcome community partnerships, and connect families to other needed supports and services including their Parent Training and Information Center.

Other Quality Indicators of Inclusive Programs

People-first language that emphasizes what the child has, not what the child is.
An attitude and philosophy of inclusion that welcomes all children.
Parent participation is encouraged.
Program collaborates and communicates with community partners.

State and Federal Laws that Protect Children Against Discrimination

The benefits of inclusion are strongly supported by research (Barton & Smith). In addition, a robust legal foundation supports the right of children with disabilities to inclusive child care and education.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

- Places open to the public may not treat a person with a disability less favorably than others, such as refusing to admit a child to a public place like a child care center, registered family child care home, or after school program. Programs must provide "reasonable accommodations" to include people with disabilities.

The New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD)

- Requires places of public accommodation to take "reasonable steps" to make sure that a person with a disability can enjoy the goods, services and facilities that are available to the public, including early childhood programs.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA/IDEIA)

- IDEA supports equality of opportunity and full participation for eligible children with disabilities birth through 21 by providing funds to states to assist them in developing and implementing systems of early intervention (Part C) and special education (Part B) and related services for all eligible infants and toddlers and children and youth with disabilities. IDEA also requires schools to provide access to a full range of services they offer students without disabilities, such as before and after-school programs.

Head Start and Early Head Start Act

- Since 1972, Head Start has required that no less than 10 percent of its enrollment opportunities are available to children with disabilities.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Act 2014 (CCDBG)

- Requires states to develop strategies to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children with disabilities. The law also allows states to use funds reserved to improve the quality of child care on professional development opportunities and specialized training on serving children with disabilities and their families.