

Position Statement on Inclusive Child Care

Adopted by the Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council on June 8, 2005

This position statement was developed by the Inclusive Child Care Action Team (ICCAT) and presented to the Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council (SBCCCPC) for adoption on June 8, 2005. ICCAT is a workgroup of the Santa SBCCCPC. Members include child care consumers, early intervention and special education service providers, child care providers, training and technical assistance providers, and other individuals interested in increasing the availability and improving the quality of inclusive child care in Santa Barbara County. Members do not need to be members of the SBCCCPC.

*ICCAT Mission: Building inclusive, high quality child care opportunities
for all children and their families in Santa Barbara County*

The goals of this position statement are to:

- Reduce and eventually eliminate the barriers to inclusive child care
- Enhance awareness of child care providers, early intervention and special education service providers, and the general public about the value of inclusive child care for all children, families, and our communities in Santa Barbara County
- Strengthen the capacity of the child care community to deliver appropriate, inclusive, high quality service to families of children with disabilities and other special needs
- Increase the participation of child care providers in the IFSP/IEP and service delivery processes
- Create additional inclusive child care options to meet the needs of families with children who have disabilities or other special needs or are at risk for disabilities

Definition of inclusive child care:

Inclusive child care programs are fully equipped and adequately staffed to meet the unique interests, strengths, and needs of all enrolled children. "Inclusion is the full and active participation of children with disabilities with, and in programs for, typically developing children. The goal of inclusion is full involvement based on the belief that children should not have to earn their way into participation with their peers; rather, they have the right to be fully a member of their communities, connoting an "ownership" or belonging of the child in the program" (Lynch, Ballard-Rosa, & Cavallero, 1996).

Definition of children with disabilities or other special needs:

Children who are between birth and 18 years of age and are: (1) protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act; (2) at risk of a developmental disability as defined by the California Early Intervention Services Act; or (3) have or are at risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require developmental, health, mental health, and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. (Adapted from the definition of children with special health care needs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, 2001.)

Family Need:

There are 6,405 children birth through seventeen who receive early intervention or special education services in Santa Barbara County (SBCEO CBEDS & Tri-Counties Regional Center). According to the 2000 US Census 54% of children 0-5 years and 65% of children 6-17 years live in homes where all parents residing in the home are employed. Although data is not collected on the number of children with disabilities in child care in Santa Barbara County, logic tells us that as many as 3500 children with disabilities could spend part of their day in child care.

Child care is provided in the family home, licensed family child care homes, license exempt child care (relatives, neighbors, or friend's homes), or in a licensed child care center. According to the Santa Barbara County Children's Scorecard 2002, the supply of licensed child care meets only a fraction of the demand for all families and infant care and that care for children with special needs is particularly short supply. In addition, a SBCCCPC 2005 Needs Assessment Focus Group found that more than half of working mothers of children with disabilities in Santa Barbara County report child care concerns.

Barriers to Inclusive Child Care:

Barriers to inclusive child care were gathered during the fall of 2004 at meetings and training events with child care providers and service providers in Santa Barbara County.

- Lack of involvement of child care providers in the IFSP/IEP process
 - Child care providers are not invited to IFSP/IEP meetings
 - IFSP and IEP meeting times are during the day when providers cannot attend
 - IFSP and IEP meetings are held at places that providers cannot get to easily
 - Child Care providers are not be able to afford a substitute or substitutes are not available so that child care providers can attend IFSP/IEP mtgs.
- Fear of doing harm to the child
- Fear of litigation
- Lack of available courses, training and/or experience
- Lack of ongoing support and resources
- Lack of knowledge of child care provider and responsibilities and rights
- Lack of resources for additional staffing in child care center or child care homes to care for children with significant disabilities as required adult to child ratios are based on the needs of typically developing children
- Individual, societal, and cultural bias

ICCAT Recommendations:

It is the position of the SBCCCPC and ICCAT that it is the responsibility of service providers to assist families and child care providers in achieving successful inclusion placements. To achieve that goal, the SBCCCPC and ICCAT recommend the following.

- Promote a celebratory attitude towards diversity in our communities
- Value child care as a desirable inclusion setting and natural environment
- Value the knowledge and perspective of child care providers, many of whom spend more than 10 hours a day with a child
- Consider the family's and child care provider's needs when designing service delivery and scheduling IFSPs/IEPs
- Inform families of their right to have child care providers participate in the IFSP/IEP process and provide information to families about why their child care providers' participation would be valuable
- Invite child care providers to participate in the IFSP/IEP process
- Insure frequent and regular communication between families, child care providers, and service providers
- Provide therapy and related services in the child care setting when appropriate for the family, or use a consultative model
- Increase the availability of training on disabilities, inclusion, and related topics. Offer training onsite at child care programs at times when child care providers are available
- Invite child care providers to existing training opportunities
- Insure that child care providers and families are aware of and know how to access local lending libraries
- Offer course work at local community colleges in supporting children with challenging behaviors
- Mentor caregivers
- Increase public awareness of the need for high-quality inclusive child care settings
- Advocate actively for inclusive child care opportunities in the community