

Project EXCEPTIONAL Training

What does Project EXCEPTIONAL training provide?

Project EXCEPTIONAL training provides activities and materials in workshops that are designed for individuals who are interested in expanding their knowledge about inclusion in early childhood and school-age care settings. The training is based on a set of core belief statements with a primary philosophy that all children have a right to grow up, play, and live in their own communities. Workshops are designed with activities to be experiential and strength-based. Project EXCEPTIONAL Training is also provided in Spanish.

What are the “core belief statements?”

- When children with special needs are included in community early care and education settings, everyone benefits: all children, all families, all professionals, and all communities.
- All children have a right to grow up, play, and live in their own communities. They have a right to feel included, welcomed, and accepted in every aspect of their lives.
- Early Care and Education professionals are in favorable positions to bring young children together. They have an opportunity to influence significantly the lives of individual children as well as tomorrow’s generations of adult decision makers.
- Childcare is a need every family has. Families who have children with special needs often have additional or greater needs because their options are often limited or nonexistent.
- Childcare agencies act responsibly when they demonstrate the willingness to collaborate on local levels and provide services that address family need and support family focus.
- Every professional who works in community services should understand the nature of discrimination and its effects on the lives of those with limited access.
- At the heart of successful childcare placements is willingness to assist families, build relationships with those families, and trust their capabilities as quality caregivers.
- Children accept diversity more easily when they are young. Each of us is responsible for providing greater access and inclusion in our communities for children with special needs and their families.

Primary content of core beliefs taken from Project EXCEPTIONAL, A Guide for Training and Recruiting Child Care Providers to Serve young Children with Disabilities, California Department of Education, Sacramento, 1996.

Project EXCEPTIONAL Workshops

- Provide practical information about inclusion
- Focus on ways to include young children with special needs in everyday care and educational activities
- Provide childcare providers and educators with assistance in modifying their environment to fit the needs of all children
- Provide information on local resources for families and early childhood professionals.

Trainings are available for all early care and education programs and caring for children on out-of-school time:

- ✓ Family Childcare
- ✓ Center-based Childcare & School-Age Care
- ✓ Special Education
- ✓ Foster Care
- ✓ Preschool
- ✓ Head Start
- ✓ Early Childhood Family Education
- ✓ Community Settings

Finding a Project EXCEPTIONAL Trainer in your community

Training Teams

Project EXCEPTIONAL Training Teams are community-based trainers who seek to serve the community by

- ✓ Providing practical information about inclusion
- ✓ Focusing on ways to include children with special needs in everyday play activities
- ✓ Helping members of the community to recognize that all children are individuals with special strengths and needs.
- ✓ Providing childcare providers and educators with assistance in modifying their environment to fit the needs of all children, and making adaptations for children with special needs if necessary.
- ✓ Providing information on local resources for families and early childhood professionals.

Training teams are a combination of early childhood and childcare professionals, early childhood special education professionals and parents. Most training is provided with a team, although individual trainers may provide some components.

To find a training team in your area go to the “Consultants and Trainers” section of this web site.

Who is the training for?

The training is for early childhood and school-age care professionals interested in increasing their knowledge and awareness about the special needs of children and how to include all children in their settings. The training is available statewide in all regions of Minnesota for early childhood and school age programs including, but not limited to, family childcare, childcare centers, preschools, school districts, foster care providers, families, Head Start programs, Early Childhood Special Education, and Early Childhood Family Education. Training is offered as inservice hours but may be offered for credit as well. Training can be customized to fit a group's needs.

Training Components that are Available

COMPONENT I: A Philosophical Framework for Inclusion

Who Will Care for Our Children?

A historical perspective of services for young children with special needs

Training activities include

- A Look at the Facts
- Coming Together
- Just a Kid Like Me

More Alike than Different

Ability awareness and respect for diversity

Training activities include

- Getting to Know You
- Invisible Barriers
- Disability Perceptions
- Playing Along
- Selecting Children's Books

Living with a Disability: The Family Perspective

Unique issues that families of children with disabilities face when looking for care and education options

Training activities include

- Do You See What I See?
- Changing Families
- Families More Alike
- Response to Loss: The Personal Perspective
- Family Tasks

Inclusion: Developmentally Appropriate Care for All Young Children

Key concepts of integrated care – The role of the caregiver in creating an environment to enhance the optimal development of all children

Training activities include

- All Children: Making it Work
- Focus on the Children
- In the Middle
- Let's Play

COMPONENT II: Building Skills & Understanding

Family Caregiver Partnerships

Important components of a successful parent-provider relationship

Training activities include

- Building Blocks of Successful Relationships
- We Care
- Joining Forces
- Ensuring Confidentiality
- I Hear You. I See What You Mean.
- Family Concerns/ Family Focus
- Follow the Leader

When Concerns Arise: Identifying & Referring Children with Exceptional Needs

How to identify a child with developmental concerns – and assist parents in seeking help when their child may need specialized services

Training activities include

- Accessing Assessment Services
- Assessment What's, Why's and How's
- Sharpening Our Observation Skills
- Sharing Concerns with Families
- Working Together: Parents and Providers

Caregiving Strategies: Building Resilience in Children at Risk

Practical suggestions for providing positive and nurturing care to children who may be at risk

Training activities include

- Look and See
- Children at Risk
- Caregiving Strategies
- Positive Caregiving

COMPONENT III: Administrative & Specific Caregiving Considerations

Caring for Young Children with Physical Disabilities

Information to help providers better understand children with physical disabilities and tips for helping children participate in play and socialization activities

Training activities include

- Get it Square: Feeling Good about Asking for Help
- Learning about Motor Development
- Positioned for Play
- A Different Point of View
- Mealtime Magic
- Safe Lifting Techniques

Health and Safety Considerations: Caring for Young Children with Exceptional Health Care Needs

General health & safety and specialized health care issues, including legal issues and liability information

Training activities include

- Hand to Hand
- Infection Control in Childcare
- Hazards and Haphazards: Environmental Safety

Nuts and Bolts: Administrative Issues in Serving Children with Exceptional Needs and their Families

Administrative issues in serving children with exceptional needs and their families.

Training activities include

- That's a Fact
- Children and the Law
- Who's in the Know?

Behavior Component

Children's Behavior: Where Do I Fit In?

Whether you've been in child care for one week or for 10 years, at some point you've had to deal with a behavior that disrupts your daily routine. Join us for an interactive look at challenging behaviors, what affects behavior and your role in working through behavior that disrupts your day.

It's All About Environment

What does your environment say to children? Join us as we look at how the physical and social environment affects children's behavior. Learn how to prevent and guide children's behavior through hands on activities.

A Look Inside: Physical, Social, and Emotional Development

Observation is the Key to the Door:

Ever wonder why children do what they do? This interactive training will give you a chance to look at a child's behavior from the "inside-out". We will examine temperament and development in relation to children's behavior.

Understanding the Function of Behavior

Have you ever thought: "They're doing it on purpose"? Join us to discover how through observation, we can see the clues children give us to the purpose behind their behavior. Once we understand the purpose, we can more effectively respond to children's needs.

Tools for Your Toolbox: Intervention Strategies for Children with Challenging Behavior (Part I, II, III)

Part I: Breaking the Code: Measuring Skills for Success

“If all you have is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail”. Bring your mental toolbox and fill it up with additional tools to work with children with challenging behaviors. We will be examining the skills children need for developing problem solving and conflict resolution.

Part II: Sawing Through Your Day: The Magic of Transitions

Have you ever noticed that the children with the most challenging behaviors just seem to fall apart during transitions? Join us as we examine the critical role that transitions play in your day. We will be building your transition skills through this interactive, hands-on workshop!

Part III: Building a Plan that Works: A Blueprint

This class will help you put it all together and build the behavior blueprint for success! We will assist you in developing strategies for children that you spend time with! You will leave with your own new set of tools.

Navigating the Landscape of AD/HD: Understanding the Disability and Effective Interventions

Have you ever wished you had a “map” to use when caring for a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)? Join us in this interactive training as we travel in discovery of the myths and facts of AD/HD and successful strategies for inclusion of children with AD/HD.