

Frequently Asked Questions about Inclusive Child Care

What is inclusive child care?

Inclusive child care means children and youth with different abilities and needs are together in child care or out-of-school programs. Three things are essential for inclusive child care:

- *Access* to the setting,
- *Participation* in the setting's daily routines and activities, and
- *Supports* when needed for safe and appropriate care.

Inclusive child care providers see *all* children as distinct individuals with unique strengths and needs. They continually make creative modifications to routines and activities so that each child benefits from participating.

All child care and out-of-school programs have the potential to be inclusive.

What is the difference between child care and respite care?

Respite care is short-term, temporary care. It's typically provided on an occasional basis. The purpose of respite care is to give parents relief from the demands of intensive, constant care for a child or youth with higher level needs.

Child care is typically used on a regular basis so that parents can go to their jobs, attend school, or participate in activities. Almost all families use child care, regardless of their child's abilities or needs

How do I find inclusive child care for a child or youth with special needs?

Every Oregon county has a [Child Care Resource and Referral](#) (CCR&R) program. This is a good place to start searching for child care. The CCR&R may have information about a provider's training and experience in caring for children with special needs. The CCR&R may also have information about training, financial and other resources that can help with child care.

Finding child care can be a challenge for any parent. It can be even more difficult for a child who has complex care needs or for young people over 13. For this reason parents often use a variety of ways to find care. "Word of mouth" is one of the more effective. Parents can talk with other parents, case managers, school personnel, service providers, disability specific organizations and friends. Parents have also found providers by placing newspapers or online ads.

Click here for some additional tips for choosing child care: [Choosing Child Care](#)

Do inclusive child care providers need to have special skills or equipment?

With very few exceptions, the answer is no. Most child care providers have the basic skills needed for inclusive care. And most toys, play materials and equipment are appropriate for children and youth with disabilities. If necessary, these things can be adapted to work for an individual child. When a provider does need something extra, there are resources that can help—starting with parents. When a new child enters a setting, there are a few things to learn and new ideas to try. Often, these new "specialized skills" are just slightly different ways to do the things the provider does for all children and youth in the setting.

The same applies to special equipment or modifications. Parents may be able to provide necessary equipment or other appropriate materials. They can also share ideas on modifying the environment for the child.

How do child care providers find support when it's needed?

There may be things about a child's care needs that are unfamiliar to the provider. If so, parents can explain how to do most of the things a provider will need to do. Parents can also share ideas for what works and what to avoid. Parents may also be able to connect the provider with specialists who know the child's abilities, interests and needs. Communication between the provider and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, special education, mental health, or other specialists can be very beneficial to the provider and the specialist. It also benefits the child.

In some communities there are trainings, child care consultants or mentors available to child care providers. These resources may offer consultation to support an individual child's care, provide information related to a specific type of disability or be able to connect the provider to other community resources. Child Care Resource and Referral programs can help parents and providers find out if these types of supports are available. The Inclusive Child Care Program may also have information on community supports.

What if costs of care are higher because of a child's care needs? Can parents get help with this?

In most cases, serving children with different kinds of needs does not require any more program resources than caring for other children in the program. There are, though, some situations in which necessary accommodations or supports may involve higher costs of care.

There are two statewide programs that can help with the higher costs of care for eligible children with special needs. Click here to find out more: [Help with Supports and Accommodations in Child Care](#)

Are there laws and regulations related to child care and children with special needs?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is very important to inclusive child care. The ADA is federal legislation that extends civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities. The law prohibits discrimination against children with disabilities by programs and services offered to the public. This includes most child care and after-school care providers. Here is a link to more detail on the ADA and other civil rights laws that apply to child care: [Laws, Rights and Regulations](#)

In Oregon, the state's Office of Child Care regulates most child care providers. Office of Child Care rules say that child care providers must comply with the ADA. The rules for certified family child care and center programs also state that enrollment decisions must be made on an individual basis, not by general categories. The decision must be based upon information from parents and from professionals that are familiar with a child's disabilities. You can visit the [Office of Child Care](#)'s website for more information about child care rules.