

*inclusion* in family child care





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# ready?

## *Are you ready to serve a child with special needs?*

Many Kansas child care providers already have a great deal of experience working with children who have special needs. For others, however, this experience is new, and they may have some questions about their knowledge and skills.

If you are wondering if you have the expertise to care for a child with disabilities, it may help to remember three very important things...

### *You know more than you think you do...*

Chances are, you already make changes and adapt to the needs of the children in your care. You may hold one child in your lap during group time and offer another a special spoon to use while she is learning to feed herself. You may send daily notes home for an infant's parents and provide a special nap time blanket for a toddler. Creating an inclusive family child care home begins with what you already do when you individualize your attention and daily activities so that all children can participate and feel loved.

### *There is little you will have to change...*

For the most part, children with disabilities don't require providers to change much about what they are doing. You won't have to start all over planning your program. In fact, one of the benefits of inclusion is that children with special needs get to experience the natural day-to-day routines of their typically developing peers.

Enrolling a child with special needs may mean making room for a wheelchair or learning a new way to position a child so she is comfortable. It may involve using a few new picture cards to help a child communicate, or meeting with another adult from time to time who also works with the child with special needs.

### *You have help!*

You don't have to do this alone. Families are a great resource. After all, they have been teaching their child since birth! Children who enroll in your program also may have speech and language therapists, physical therapists, and early interventionists who will want to become partners with you in serving the child and the family. Just as their ideas and expertise will help you, your daily observations and insights about the child will be valuable to them.

ERC Resource & Referral can provide you with wonderful resources and ideas that can support

# action steps



you and all of the children in your program. Look to ERC for training opportunities and consultation about caring for children with special needs. ERC staff is available to give you ideas and strategies about room arrangement, equipment, daily schedules, and guidance techniques that will build a high quality program that will support every child in your care, including those who may have special needs. ERC's Resource Lending Library gives you access to books, videos, prop boxes for dramatic play, and information specifically about caring for children with special needs. These support services are available because of funding received from both the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (KACCRRRA) and the Capital Area Smart Start initiative.

## Action steps to get you started with inclusion

In order to serve children with special needs, a family child care home first must be prepared to meet the needs of children who are typically developing. This requires finding out about and using local and state resources designed just for providers.

### *If you are just getting started with your business...*

In order to care for children in your home who are not your relatives, you must first be licensed or registered by the state. Here are the first steps in starting a family child care home:

1. Contact your county health department. They will help you get started with the paperwork you will need to complete and submit. Some area health departments conduct group orientation sessions to guide you through this process.
2. Contact ERC, 785-357-5171 or 1-800-279-2ERC (if you live outside of Topeka), and let us know of your interest. We will add you to our mailing list for *Bright Beginnings*, the newsletter we publish for the child care professionals in our area.

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# enrolling

*An increasing number of early childhood professionals are enjoying the personal rewards and satisfaction that comes from getting involved in the lives of young children with disabilities and their families.*



# Children



## *If you are already in business and now want to enroll children with special needs...*

First of all, pat yourself on the back! An increasing number of early childhood professionals in Kansas are enjoying the personal rewards and satisfaction that comes from getting involved in the lives of young children with disabilities and their families. Here are some strategies you may consider:

- Contact ERC and let us know your interest in providing care for children with special needs. Find out about upcoming training opportunities that may support you as you gain new knowledge and skills. Consider requesting an on-site visit to help evaluate your environment and answer your questions about room arrangement, daily schedules, and activity planning.
  - Review the *Kansas Core Competencies* magazine (call ERC if you need a copy). This is a wonderful tool to help you determine your current areas of knowledge and where you might want to focus future professional development efforts.
  - Access area training opportunities, or enroll in a class through your area community college or university.
3. As a way to prepare for the licensing process, ask yourself the following questions:
    - Is my home safe indoors and out for young children?
    - What do I know about how children learn and develop?
    - Do I have a back-up plan for coverage in case of an emergency?
    - What additional knowledge and resources do I need to operate a business in my home?
  4. To prepare for serving children with special needs, ask:
    - Is my house accessible to persons with physical disabilities?
    - Do I have the space for any special equipment that may be needed?
    - What training will I need to receive?

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- Contact your local SRS office to determine whether you may qualify for a higher reimbursement rate if you care for a child with a disability who receives subsidy support.
- Join your local child care association. Share your interest in including children with special needs with other association members. Networking can help you learn about new resources as well as strategies for inclusive care.
- Get in touch with early childhood providers in your area who serve children with special needs. Ask if you can visit their program to learn more.

- A parent who enrolls their child in your program should be asked if their child has an IFSP or IEP, and then asked to share a copy of the plan with you. Children under the age of three will have an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), which outlines the support services determined to be the most helpful to the child and to the family. The IFSP is developed by a team of professionals led by the area ICC (Infant/Toddler Services). Children over the age of three will have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), which outlines support services determined to be the most helpful for the child and the family. The IEP is developed by a team of professionals coordinated through your local school district. Encourage the parent to allow you to be a part of the planning team. Utilize the expertise of the team providing services. You are a vital support person for the child and the family and can share valuable information with the team about the child, their interests, and abilities. This is a valuable asset in helping to determine services needed and setting goals for the child.

# Strategies

*Get in touch with early childhood providers in your area who serve children with special needs. Request a visit at their program to learn more.*



# daily act



*The most successful child care providers are those who use their own interests and passions as a major part of their curriculum.*

# ivities

## What about curriculum and daily activities?

Each child in your care has a unique set of skills, abilities, knowledge and interests. Meeting the needs of young children to develop and learn is an honorable and challenging goal!

The term “curriculum” refers to the daily opportunities for learning that you offer the children in your care. Some providers utilize a highly structured curriculum plan and others have a very flexible and casual approach. It is important for caregivers to be intentional about their approach and to reflect on the experiences they are offering that are utilized for supporting children’s learning. The most successful child care providers are those who use their own interests and passions as a major part of their curriculum. Providers who love music typically offer a music-rich curriculum, and those that enjoy gardening will often incorporate that passion into their program by offering opportunities for outdoor science through gardening experiences.

Some things to consider ...

- How will you know what each child needs to reach his or her potential?
- How can you tell if curriculum is appropriate to meet each child’s individual needs?
- How can you be respectful of and responsive to children and families of different cultures?
- How can you work with early intervention providers such as therapists and educators who may visit your home to help you serve children with special needs?
- How can you determine whether the activities you plan for the children are developmentally appropriate?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has established guidelines that you can refer to that can help you to determine whether the activities and experiences you offer are developmentally appropriate. There are also nationally respected environmental rating scales to help you to evaluate environmental issues, which include curriculum, activities, and interactions. Call ERC for more information or assistance in using these resources.



If you have questions regarding a child in your care who has a special need or you would like screening information for a child in your care that is birth through three years of age, contact your local ICC agency listed below. For information for children ages 3-5, contact your local school district.

**SHAWNEE COUNTY**

Shawnee County Infant-Toddler Services  
TARC (785) 233-7374

**DOUGLAS COUNTY**

tiny-k Early Intervention (785) 843-3059

**BROWN/DONIPHAN/NEMAHA COUNTIES**

Northeast Kansas Infant-Toddler Services  
Northeast KS Education Service Center (785) 887-6004

**FRANKLIN COUNTY WEST HALF**

Osage County ICC Infant-Toddler Services  
Three Lakes Educational Cooperative (785)528-5003

**FRANKLIN COUNTY USD 289 & USD 290**

Ottawa-Wellsville Infant-Toddler Program (785) 242-0910

**FRANKLIN COUNTY CENTRAL HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Lakemary Center Infant-Toddler Services (913) 294-4343

**JACKSON/JEFFERSON COUNTIES**

Northeast Kansas Infant-Toddler Services  
Northeast KS Education Service Center (785) 887-6004

**JACKSON COUNTY**

Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (785) 966-2707

**OSAGE COUNTY**

Osage County ICC Infant-Toddler Services  
Three Lakes Educational Cooperative (785)528-5003



**Resource & Referral**

1710 SW 10th St., Suite 215  
Topeka, KS 66604  
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
785-357-5171 or 800-279-2ERC [www.ercrefer.org](http://www.ercrefer.org)

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