

# CHILD CARE PLUS+ RESEARCH REPORT #1 INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE IN MONTANA

## Child Care Provider Survey: Overview



### Background

In March 2001, Child Care plus+ asked child care program owners and directors in every licensed and registered program in Montana (1,744 programs) to complete the Montana Child Care Provider Survey. The survey, funded by the federal Child Care Bureau, was prepared by Child Care plus+ to discover answers to one important question from the child care provider's perspective: what works for children with disabilities in child care programs?

Individuals from 609 programs (35%) responded to the survey, providing information about child care options for young children with disabilities from the perspective of practicing early childhood professionals. To make sure there was a common reference for participants in the survey, "children with disabilities" was defined as children who currently are receiving early intervention or special education services or those who have been identified to you as having a delay or disability by their parent or other professional.

ABOUT MONTANA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

SIZE ..... 147,138 square miles  
 POPULATION ..... 902,195  
 CHILDREN AGES 0-4 ..... 54,869  
 CHILDREN AGES 5-14 ..... 131,261  
 CHILD CARE PROGRAMS ..... 1744  
 PROGRAM CAPACITY 22,531 children

### About The Survey

Montana Child Care Provider Survey	
Part 1: All about you and your program	Part 2: Your experiences and thoughts about caring for young children with disabilities
The items in this section provided the information necessary to accurately describe the group of child care providers who responded to the survey and the range of programs they represent.	These items investigated providers' experiences and thoughts about inclusion—meeting the individual needs of children with and without disabilities in their programs. Providers' perspectives were encouraged even if they had not provided child care services for a child with a disability.

### About the Providers Who Responded to the Survey

Providers from every corner of Montana shared their perspectives on inclusion. About half of the survey participants lived in rural areas of Montana (48%) and half lived in more urban communities (52%). The fact that the largest county in Montana, Yellowstone County, has a population of only 127,258 people illustrates the rural nature of the state.

Over half (51%) of the participants represented family child care programs (one caregiver with up to 6 children). Group home programs (up to 12 children with two caregivers) accounted for 30%, and centers accounted for 18%. These percentages correlate directly with percentages of each type of program in the state as a whole. Most of the participants (60%) reported more than four years experience in early childhood programs.

**ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE IN MONTANA:  
 EXPLORING PARENT AND PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES  
 ON INCLUSION**

For information about this research, other topics related to inclusive child care, or copies of this report, contact:

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## Overview of Survey Results

The Montana Child Care Provider Survey looked at 282 aspects of meeting the needs of young children with disabilities in the context of typical early childhood practice. It was discovered that Montana child care programs were already meeting children's individual needs, many had a positive attitude about inclusion, AND they described what they still needed in the way of information, supports, and incentives.

### ✦ Child care programs in Montana are caring for children with disabilities!

Many programs had a child with a disability currently enrolled (45%)! Most of these were child care centers (77%), 56% were group child care homes, and 28% were family child care homes. Not only did many programs currently have a child with a disability enrolled, but 67% said their program had provided care for a child with a disability at some point in time. And, in this case, 92% were child care centers, 80% were group child care homes, and 51% were family child care homes. These results show that children with disabilities in Montana are being included in all types of programs. For more details, see *Child Care plus+ Research Reports #2 and #3*.

### ✦ Programs most often use typical early childhood strategies to support inclusion.

Basic strategies most often associated with typical early childhood practice were used by at least half of the programs represented, with three exceptions. A basic licensing requirement, "focusing meticulous attention to health/safety practices, including the use of Universal Precautions" was used by only 37% of the programs. "Completing focused observation and documentation of behaviors" and "maintaining current developmental information for use in program planning" were used by 43% and 44% of the programs respectively. Other examples of strategies included in this category are encouraging social interactions, simplifying directions for a child, modifying the daily schedule, etc., the very strategies recommended for all children by the early childhood field. For more details, see *Child Care plus+ Research Report #4*.

None of the basic strategies were perceived as very hard to implement. "Completing focused observation and documentation of behaviors" was rated as having slightly above average difficulty to implement.

### ✦ Participants are familiar with many resources.

On the questions about types of support and resources important to them, such as parents, training, written materials, and therapists/specialists, the participants rated all the sources as at least moderately important, with a majority of the ratings as very important. In contrast, virtually none of the supports were judged to be very easy to access.

On questions about awareness of outside resources, participants were most familiar with resources associated with child care in general. They were much less familiar with resources specific to children with disabilities. On the questions about the use of these same resources, it is apparent that familiarity with a resource does not always result in a high level of usage of the resource. For more details, see *Child Care plus+ Research Report #5*.

I have found over the years that I just treat all children as individuals and do my best to meet the needs of the child. I've never found that I've not been able to find answers or help to meet these needs.

Montana Family Child Care Provider

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