

CHILD CARE PLUS+ RESEARCH REPORT #6 INCLUSIVE CHILD CARE IN MONTANA

Child Care Provider Survey: Next Steps



Background

As described in Research Reports #1 through #5, the following statements can be made about the results of the Montana Child Care Provider Survey:

- Child care programs in Montana are caring for children with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities are enrolled in family child care homes, group child care homes, and centers.
- Programs most often use typical early childhood strategies to support inclusion.
- Participants are familiar with many resources but do not always see them as accessible.

These findings and their implications were used to identify next steps for supporting inclusion.

The implications of these findings were discussed by a group of Montana's state and local early childhood and early childhood early intervention/special education leaders at a symposium in August 2002. Four specific areas of support for child care programs who include children with disabilities were identified:

1. ways to enhance community collaboration
2. ways to provide community supports and resources
3. ways to develop professional development opportunities to increase child care provider's knowledge and skills related to inclusion strategies
4. ways to expand professional development delivery options

Within these four areas, the group discussed ways that professionals working in early childhood education (ECE) and early childhood special education (ECSE) could connect with each other and assist one another in gaining greater access to community resources and professional development opportunities to support inclusion of young children with disabilities. The discussion also identified ways that both of these service delivery systems can promote their services more widely to benefit young children in Montana and their families. The outcome of this brainstorming session can be found in the lists below.

Two common themes emerged across the different areas of support.

Two common themes emerged no matter which area of support was being discussed. In the lists below, the common themes have been repeated within the categories where they were recommended. In general, the common themes are:

- Collaboration is needed both within and without the early childhood education and early intervention and special education systems. It was frequently recommended that agencies work better together in both their local communities and the state to systematically plan activities, set inclusion goals, and provide relevant training and resources for early childhood practitioners, children, and families. Providing linkages to child-find activities and other existing activities (such as Montana's parent training and information center, PLUK) came up again and again.
- Use every means possible to bring inclusion information, education, and resources to child care providers and other

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:

Child Care plus+

The Center on Inclusion in Early Childhood

The University of Montana Rural Institute

634 Eddy Avenue

Missoula, MT 59812-6696

1-800-235-4122

(406) 243-6355

www.cplus.org

early childhood professionals. This includes a shift to embedding inclusion issues in existing professional development and using experienced child care providers and specialists to provide training and mentoring as well as the recommendation to offer training in accessible formats (in workshops in local communities and online).

1. Ways to enhance community collaboration to support inclusion

- Promote better outreach about early intervention and special education services; increase visibility broadly especially with tribal agencies; include information about programs and services in publications and newsletters.
- Advertise training across agencies; co-facilitate workshops/classes; include each other in training and inservice and special (education) events for information/networking; plan reciprocal training; form ECE/ECSE Coalitions.
- Use pediatric nurses/public health and invite to early childhood training; Indian Health Service providers are an untapped resource.
- Offer credits/topics for school district personnel and elementary teachers.
- Serve together on collaboration councils and advisory boards; add new people to existing collaborations.
- Work to eliminate differences in specialists' involvement in inclusion, especially between Part B and Part C programs; increase collaboration for over three-year-olds in child care programs; address the special ed preschool teachers' need to communicate with the child care provider and get the IEP into child care programs. Many Family Support Specialists currently collaborate with child care programs regarding IFSP.
- Find ways to include child care providers in IFSP/IEP planning, without their attending meetings.
- Bring EC/ECSE together in professional organizations (NAEYC, DEC) and at local and state conferences.
- Create an Internet Resource Directory for early childhood "one-stop shopping" with links to other resources.
- Build/maintain ongoing personal relationships across ECE and ECSE agencies.
- Create a children's forum in local communities.

2. Ways to provide community supports and resources to support inclusion

- Use letters of agreement to describe more formal ways in which agencies work together. If left informal, these agreements need to filter down to staff and transfer when new staff are hired.
- Conduct joint meetings and special events.
- Invite child care resource and referral (CCR&R) and child and family service provider (CFSP) staff members to serve on each other's Boards.
- CCR&Rs could promote linkage by including CFSP announcements in newsletters and on web sites.
- Promote information sharing about other agencies in the community.
- Conduct open houses (like at schools) to highlight each agency.
- Host "coming together" events like informal gatherings to meet staff and exchange ideas; conduct joint events around disability awareness month and/or Week of the Young Child; set aside time to meet regularly.
- Schedule quarterly soup/bread lunches and invite others to "break bread together."
- Use the Internet to link agencies and post announcements; educate child care providers to use the Internet.
- Use the PTA structure to communicate about ongoing events.
- Get involved with non-traditional groups (girl scouts, support groups-not human service).
- Provide training to staff and encourage them to make presentations in the community.
- Communicate with high school students because they are future parents.
- CCR&Rs have regional conferences and could invite CFSP to exhibit and disseminate information.
- Both agencies could produce and disseminate useful marketing items (e.g., letter opener).
- Both agencies should be linked to child-find activities throughout the state.

- Continue to train staff needed to ensure that all value collaboration.
- Invite child care providers to key meetings; pay substitute care.
- Include child care providers in early intervention/special education intake processes.
- Recognize that child care providers work long hours and are really busy during the time most agencies are open. Try to schedule unusual office hours.
- Send survey to get information from child care providers if they cannot attend planning meetings.
- Use speaker phones and other technology to include child care providers in meetings.
- Find creative ways to gather information from providers.
- Use IEPs and IFSPs as a vehicle to connect child care providers and families.
- Recognize that parents may not automatically think to include child care providers in educational planning for their child and CFSP and others may need to provide education to families. Early intervention agencies and special educators can teach parents how to translate info to child care providers.
- Train CFSPs to help family disseminate information to the child care providers
- Child-find activities could use the CCR&R programs to locate centers to "host" development screenings.
- Volunteers can help establish links in community.
- Keep legislators (county commissioners, state, national, school board members) informed of local collaborative activities via mailing lists or by hosting a legislative coffee.
- Go to local federal representatives offices to inform them of agency purpose and services.
- Use professional organizations to get the word out about services.
- Use CCR&R newsletters to disseminate information about events.
- Develop and disseminate a local resource directory with contact information.
- Providers may need training to implement developmental goals for children.
- Provide the task analysis of expected child outcomes because that may help the child care provider know how to carry out the activities planned for the child.
- Family objectives could be written for activities conducted or provided with child care providers.
- Just share relevant portions of the IFSP or IEP to protect the family's privacy.

3. Ways to develop educational opportunities to increase knowledge and skills related to inclusion strategies

- Collaborate with other agencies (CCR&R, early intervention, Head Start, etc); encourage "cross" training; share trainings.
- Provide specific training on the features of Montana's Special Needs Subsidy.
- Form stronger connections with PLUK (Parent's Let's Unite for Kids).
- Offer sessions at state conference facilitated by people providing inclusive care.
- Train trainers and early childhood educators to embed inclusion in early childhood professional development (without calling it that!)
- Use newsletters as a source for disseminating resources.
- Use providers already caring for kids with disabilities as guest speakers and co-facilitators in training.
- Look at local needs for knowledge and skills so they can be addressed specifically.
- Train child care providers about the law (ADA).

4. Ways to expand professional development delivery options

- Provide ongoing and regular training on inclusion in local communities (road show,

PROJECT STAFF

Principle Investigators

Gail McGregor, Ed.D.

Sarah A. Mulligan, M.Ed.

Project Directors

Susan Harper-Whalen, Ed.M

Sandra Morris, B.A.

Research Coordinator

Frances Coover, M.Ed.

Graduate Assistant

Charity Buck, B.A.

circuit riders).

- Organize a child care provider camp or retreat to counter isolation; find a way to pay for substitutes for these events.
- Offer college-level distance learning on disabilities/inclusion.
- Develop distance learning (on-line and correspondence) to provide immediate help on specific topics. Workshops on biting, for example, are not as effective as on-line help that is immediately available. When a provider needs training on biting, he or she needs it right when the problem arises.
- Link professional development to local CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development.) via special education teacher.
- Promote provider-to-provider mentoring.
- Provide better training linkages for CCR&Rs to CFSP resources.
- Agencies should invite each other to their own agency in-house or out-of-house training sessions.
- Gather regionalized data to support agencies (CCR&R) as they prepare their training topics.
- Develop a list of "expert providers" who can be called on to provide training on specific topics; solicit more professionals and specialists to do trainings, such as psychiatrists on ADHD and physical therapists on mobility.
- Provide guidance on including inclusion issues in new provider orientation.

I personally would love to care for children with disabilities. But a few things would cause concern for me. I would want the proper training and support. I would want to downsize in order to be able to accommodate all of the children adequately. And I'd want to be able to have all of the right accommodations. I also feel as though there would have to be extra charges in order to downsize and accommodate. I fully feel the US government or the state should help provide for the children's needs and accommodations. Our children in daycares are our future. They need the highest care available while being nurtured and guided. Isn't our future, as well as theirs, worth it?

Montana Group Child Care Provider