

GROWING IDEAS

Let's Grow Together: Laws that Support Early Childhood Education for All

It's the law!

While inclusion, as a value, suggests it is the right of all children to be included, there are federal laws that ensure the rights of children with disabilities are protected. Early childhood educators should be familiar with these laws.

What laws relate to early childhood education and child care for children with disabilities?

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law. It prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. Among other things, ADA says that children with disabilities are entitled access to all child care facilities (center-based and in-home family child care) and other early childhood programs such as Head Start and preschool programs.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act says programs cannot discriminate against children and adults based on their disability. Section 504 applies to public and private schools, Head Start, child care centers, and family child care homes that receive any federal funds either directly or through a grant, loan, or contract.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an education law that ensures children with disabilities have the same access to education as children without disabilities. IDEA requires states to provide a free, appropriate, public education to eligible children. IDEA states that special education services will be provided in the least restrictive environment, including community settings in which children without disabilities participate.



What can early childhood educators do to make sure that these laws are being met in their settings?

- Review written materials, including parent handbooks, enrollment policies, and employment practices to be sure they are nondiscriminatory.
- Evaluate the physical space to be sure that everyone can access the building and use materials, equipment, and toys.
- Provide ongoing staff development opportunities to support inclusive practice.
- Join a professional organization such as the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).
- Learn about and use community resources to make accommodations and/or to support individual children.
- Meet and plan regularly with families.

To access technical assistance, information, and training resources on this topic in Maine, early childhood educators can contact:

Maine's Network of Child Care Resource Development Centers (RDC), 888/917-1100.

Child Development Services (CDS), 207/624-6660.

The University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (CCIDS), 866/230-4520.

Maine Disability Rights Center (DRC), 800/452-1948, for clients and their families; all others call 207/626-2774.

Maine Parent Federation (MPF), 800/870-7746.

Where to learn more:

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC). (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2005, from <http://www.nectac.org/topics/inclusion/legis/fedlegisl.asp>

Council for Exceptional Children. (2006). Retrieved May 9, 2006, from <http://www.cec.sped.org>

Child Care Law Center. (2002). Retrieved October 6, 2004, from <http://www.childcarelaw.org/>

"Commonly Asked Questions about Child Care Centers and the Americans with Disabilities Act." (1997). Retrieved October 6, 2004, from <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/childq%26a.htm>

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. (n.d.). Retrieved October 6, 2004, from <http://www.nichcy.org/idea.htm>

The Division for Early Childhood and National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2002). *Including All Children: Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*. Washington, D.C.: Author.



Maine's Network of Child Care
Resource Development Centers

C E N T E R F O R

COMMUNITY INCLUSION & DISABILITY STUDIES

Maine's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service

<http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/ec/growingideas/>



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