



Phone Link Ups

How to Access Inclusion Support for your Program

Defining Inclusion

As currently defined by the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA):

“inclusion means access and participation of all children including those with particular needs into the child care environment”.

Inclusion is a value system that is evidenced by practices that provide each and every individual with the opportunity to feel accepted by others, to develop a sense of belonging and to participate in the community. The philosophy of inclusion informs the policies and practice of quality service provision.

Child care that is inclusive of all children assists staff, children and the broader community to learn and grow together in a setting, which values diversity.

Inclusion Support provides for all children in care to access and participate in a positive and nurturing environment where they can learn and interact with children of a similar age.

Key principles underpinning the provision of inclusion support

- All children and families have a right to access and participate in child care services
- Family centred practice is a foundation for quality child care service and delivery
- Strength based approaches build capacity of both services and Inclusion Support Facilitators
- Inclusion support is a shared responsibility of all stakeholders in the child care services sector
- Flexibility needs to be maintained to respond to local/regional demographics.

Key features of effective inclusive practice in child care settings

A review of research and practice reveals that inclusive child care settings include the following characteristics:

- They provide welcoming and engaging environments that are responsive to all children and their families
- They work in partnership with families and their extended networks
- They respect and respond to families cultural values, needs and circumstances

- 🌈 They recognise and build on the unique contributions of each child and family
- 🌈 They use flexible programming approaches that are responsive to individual needs
- 🌈 They build on the strengths of the child care community (child, family, staff and community)
- 🌈 They work in partnership with specialist service providers
- 🌈 They adopt a team approach
- 🌈 They allocate time for reflection and planning
- 🌈 They demonstrate a high level of commitment, positive attitudes and a pro-active focus
- 🌈 They are adequately resourced, including sufficient, appropriately qualified staff
- 🌈 The staff are well supported and provided with ongoing professional development and supervision opportunities
- 🌈 They link with other relevant services and supports through networking activities
- 🌈 They provide high quality child care.

Inclusion and Professional Support Program

The **Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP)** is an integrated and consolidated approach to meeting the professional and inclusion support needs of eligible child care services. It is a part of the larger Child Care Support Program and has been informed by the findings of the Child Care Broadband Review conducted in 2002-03.

The Inclusion Support Program is one element of the IPSP. It involves the establishment of Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) that operate on a regional basis and coordinate the assistance provided by a network of field workers, known as Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs).

The Inclusion Support Program aims to build the capacity of eligible child care services to include children from the following groups who require additional support to access mainstream child care services:

- 🌈 children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugee children
- 🌈 children with ongoing high support needs including children with a disability
- 🌈 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Some of these children will have multiple additional needs.

Child care services eligible for support are:

- 🌈 Australian Government Approved Child Care Services, such as private and community centre based long day care, outside school hours care, including vacation care, family day care, occasional care, and in-home care;
- 🌈 Australian Government funded non-mainstream child care services (non-Child Care Benefit) such as flexible/multifunctional services, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) and non-mainstream outside school hours care, non-formula funded occasional care (100 per cent Australian Government funded) and mobile child care services.



Inclusion Support Agencies & Inclusion Support Facilitators

In NSW there are eighteen ISAs. Of these, nine are located in the Sydney metropolitan area and nine in regional and country NSW. Further information, including contact details, about NSW ISAs can be found on the Children's Services Central website.

ISFs provide a range of supports and strategies to eligible child care services to build their capacity to provide high quality care environments that are inclusive of all children, including children with ongoing high support needs.

ISFs also assist services to link with other community organisations and agencies to identify professional development needs and to access information that can assist eligible child care services to develop, implement and sustain flexible inclusive practices.

A key role of the ISF is to facilitate the process of developing AIR plans and SSPs:

-  **Assisted Inclusion Readiness (AIR)** plans identify practical strategies that a service can implement to provide a high quality inclusive environment for all children.
-  **Service Support Plans (SSPs)** are developed to identify how a child or children with additional needs will be supported in the service.

The needs identified by the child care service will inform which process to use. Where the need relates to a child or group of children in a specific setting or care environment, a SSP is used. Where the need relates to the review and improvement of policies, procedures and daily practice, an AIR plan is used.

The process of developing a SSP assists the child care service to identify the range of resources and support options available to assist them to provide for the ongoing access and participation of all children. Where a service has exhausted the range of existing and/or local resources and supports available to them, they may consider additional support options available through the Inclusion Support Program.





Additional Inclusion Supports

Additional Inclusion Supports include the following:

Bicultural Support

The Bicultural Support Pool provides time limited support to child care services to assist the inclusion of children from cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Indigenous backgrounds, including language assistance. The support may include onsite or telephone assistance at the time of enrolment, including advice for child care staff or carers on culturally appropriate practices.

The roles of the Bicultural Support workers include:

-  To assist in the initial settling-in period of children from CALD, refugee or Indigenous backgrounds for a limited period;
-  To provide initial language assistance to children, parents and staff, in order to help families and the service communicate;
-  To introduce the child's culture to the service by assisting children, staff and parents to develop and present multicultural games, songs, food and culturally appropriate activities;
-  To assist staff to understand diverse cultural practices and child rearing practices in Australian society;

- 🌍 To promote children's self-esteem about their cultural heritage
- 🌍 To encourage maintenance of, and support the development of the child's home language.

Staff of the Bicultural Support Pool can speak the following languages:

- 🌍 Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Assamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Triechau, Taiwanese, French, Greek, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Persian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Samoan, Spanish, Turkish, Vietnamese, African, Bahasan, Malaysian, Sudanese, Fijian, Aboriginal, Filipino, Tagalog, Mauritian.

Unfortunately, the BSP are not always able to provide a bicultural worker in rural and remote areas of NSW although they are willing to recruit wherever possible. The BSP will work directly with the service, negotiating to provide language and cultural support in the following ways: Survival words in the particular language; Child rearing practices; resources appropriate to the culture including music, games and stories; and general information about the particular community to assist staff to gain cultural knowledge to support the child and family.

Advice can be provided over the phone including support from a bicultural support worker in order to communicate with the child and family in home language.

Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative Limited are managing the **Bicultural Support Pool** on behalf of Children's Services Central. Services can contact BSP through CSC's **1800 157 818**, BSP directly, or through their local ISA service. The BSP program has service eligibility requirements; it is highly recommended that services be in touch with their Inclusion Support Agencies and working on their Service Support Plan, demonstrating need for Bicultural Support.

Flexible Support Funding

Flexible Support Funding enables a service to receive immediate short term support to meet their inclusion needs such as:

- 🌍 assistance with settling a refugee child into care;
- 🌍 when a child with ongoing high support needs transfers to another room in a long day care centre;
- 🌍 when a school child doesn't access ISS but extra support is required for activities such as excursions during vacation care; or
- 🌍 where it is unclear if an additional worker is required on an ongoing basis.

Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)

The **Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)** assists eligible child care services to improve their capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs in a quality child care environment. It replaces the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS) and Disabled Supplementary Services Program (DSUPS).

The ISS payment is part of an integrated Inclusion and Professional Support Program and cannot be viewed in isolation from the other support available to assist child care services and child care staff to include children. ISS funding is a contribution towards the costs associated with providing additional support to include a child with ongoing high support needs for approved purposes as specified in the ISS Guidelines. This includes funding towards the cost of extra staff, releasing staff for inclusion training and specialised equipment.

Eligibility of a child for ISS does not mean an automatic entitlement to ISS support. The process of developing a SSP assists a child care service to identify how a child with additional needs (including those high and ongoing support needs) will be supported and which resources and supports will assist this process. The ISS is one of a range of support options available.

The SSP would need to provide evidence that it is beyond the capacity of the service to include a child with high and ongoing support needs without the ISS, i.e. that the service is justified in accessing the ISS in order to provide for the child's ongoing access and participation in the service.

Other supports available

In working towards promoting and maintaining quality inclusive environments, child care services may also identify a need to access other resources and professional supports available through the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC), such as those available through Children's Services Central, a program of the NSW PSC. This includes:

Training



Children's Services Central provides a variety of training for all service types. This training can be provided as a workshop from which people from many services come or available online. Calendared training opportunities will be available to eligible child care services from July 2006. For services in rural locations this will include weekend training events, teleconferencing and video conferencing link-ups.

To access information about (and to make online bookings for) scheduled training events; visit the Children's Services Central website. Children's Services Central is also developing a range of online training packages which can be undertaken by services at their own time and pace.

Specialist Equipment Pool

Children's services across NSW sometimes need access to specialist equipment to meet specific inclusion needs. Specialist equipment includes items for use in the children's service setting that would not usually be purchased by a children's service such as specialist seating, standing, positioning and toileting equipment, visual aids, etc. Access to specialist equipment to enable a child to be included in a service is an issue that should be determined by a service in conjunction with their Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) and in conjunction with any therapists that are working with the child.

Specialist equipment is provided under the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS). Its aim is to support the inclusion of children with disabilities into child care and is available to:

-  Children who are applying for ISS funding and who require specialised equipment
-  Children who are currently receiving SNSS/ISS funding and who require additional equipment.

The need for specialist equipment is identified by the Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) in conjunction with professional support staff (eg. the child's therapist) and the child care service through the development of a Service Support Plan (SSP). Once the need for specialist equipment is identified, a Specialist Equipment Request Form and a Child & Service Details Form will need to be submitted before specialist equipment can be provided. These forms must be attached to the Service Support Plan and the Inclusion Support Subsidy application and submitted to the ISS provider in your region. Both these forms can be downloaded from the Children's Services Central web site. A complete catalogue of the specialist equipment is also available for viewing on the web site.

Lady Gowrie Child Centre is managing the specialist equipment pool for children's services on behalf of Children's Services Central. For further information on accessing equipment contact Lady Gowrie Child Centre on (02) 8345 7633.

General Resource Library

The General Resource Library is a specialist children's services resource pool. It contains books, articles, videos, and a range of other resources that children's services in NSW may wish to access. The library is managed by Lady Gowrie Child Centre on behalf of Children's Services Central. It incorporates resources of the Gowrie Library with some of the resources from previous SUPS teams.

All children's services in NSW are able to borrow from the library after becoming a library member. You can browse the catalogue or search for an item on-line whether you are a member or not. Services that do not have access to the internet should contact Children's Services Central via the hotline number so that sections of the catalogue relevant to their request can be posted or faxed to them to assist with their selection.

You can contact Children's Services Central in the following ways:

Freecall: 1800 157 818

Email: info@cscentral.org.au

Website: www.cscentral.org.au.




Want to know more?

More information about the Inclusion and Professional Support Program can be sourced from FaCSIA at www.facsia.gov.au. Information can also be sourced from Children's Services Central at www.cscentral.org.au.

References

This information paper has been developing primarily using information contained in the *Inclusion Support Agency Guidelines (December 2005)* and the (draft) *Inclusion Support Subsidy Guidelines (June 2006)*. These guidelines have been developed by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Additional information has also been provided by the following PSSPs:

-  Semann and Slattery Training Consultants, regarding the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, and the role of Inclusion Support Agencies and Inclusion Support Facilitators.
-  Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-operative Limited, regarding the Bicultural Support Pool.
-  Lady Gowrie Child Centre, regarding the Specialist Equipment Pool.