

When children attend high-quality, child care programs that are inclusive, both children with and without special needs understand and appreciate each other and their differences. Inclusive programs prepare children to be part of your community.

Are There Benefits to Inclusive Programs?

- Your child will grow and learn physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially alongside his or her peers.
- Your child will be better prepared to enter elementary school.
- Your child may learn the skills to be more independent sooner.
- Your child will make friends and learn from a diverse group of children.
- Your child will learn in a natural environment.

How Do I Identify a High-Quality, Child Care Program?

The first step to finding the right program for your child is to go for a visit. Ask questions and closely observe the program. If you like the program after visiting, ask if you can stop by again to observe at a different time and try to be there during a transition period like lunchtime, after time outside, or at drop-off.

It may also be helpful to talk with families whose children attend the program. If you don't know any families, ask the program staff for names and then follow up with parents at a time when they can be honest about their thoughts and opinions on the program.

Ask, Look and Listen

These questions will help you decide if a child-care program is high quality and inclusive.¹

Overall Program Environment

- Is the atmosphere bright, cheerful and child-focused, without being overwhelming?
- Is the facility safe, secure and physically accessible, including the playground and bathrooms?
- Is there a daily balance of active and quiet activities?
- Is there ample time and prompts to transition between activities for children who need a little extra time?
- Do the materials, books and pictures reflect diversity, including children with special needs?

¹ United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Dane County, *Guide to Finding an Inclusive Child Care Program*.

Partnering with Families and Therapists

- Is there open communication between child-care providers and families?
- Are the child-care providers willing to work with you to develop goals for your child and make plans to achieve them?
- Do providers seek family input?
- Are there opportunities for families to meet each other and attend events and celebrations?
- Are therapists or other outside providers welcome to visit and give input?

Training and Materials

- Are child-care providers trained and experienced in CPR, first-aid, early-childhood education and special needs?
- Are there enough learning materials and toys?
- Are the toys and other materials safe, clean and within reach of every child?

Funding for Supplemental Supports and Staffing

Children’s Long-Term Support (CLTS) and the Children’s Community Options Program Funds: Families whose children are enrolled in the CLTS Waiver Programs may use these funds to support and benefit their children while in a childcare setting. Families should work with their service coordinator to make the service or supply part of the child’s Individual Service Plan (ISP). Be aware that CLTS funds **can’t** be used to pay the tuition for a child-care program if the child is under age 12.

Examples of CLTS funded supports include extra staffing and supervision to meet a child’s exceptional needs (see the *Waiver* manual); buying special toys, art supplies, communication devices, safety equipment or other materials that support a child’s goals and exceptional needs.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy—Special Needs Inclusion Rate: Families with a child who has a disability or other special needs, and also receives support through the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy program, should know that they may be eligible to get some financial support for child care. The Wisconsin Shares Special Needs Inclusion Rate form can be requested by a parent who needs a higher subsidy amount to help a provider meet the care needs of a child with a disability. For more information about this program read the brochure [Together Children Grow](#) and contact your county or tribal child care coordinator. **All decisions about higher subsidy amounts are handled on a case-by-case basis.**

Think Creatively! Remember that modifications don’t have to be expensive. Some examples are moving furniture around to make a room more accessible, turning the lights down at certain times during the day to decrease stimulation, or adding picture cards for labeling toy boxes and shelves.

Still Have Questions? Need Help Finding Services?

- [Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm)
dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm
- [Well Badger Health Resource Center](https://wellbadger.org)
wellbadger.org or 800.642.7837

