

Inclusion Support Services



Program Statement

About our Program

Inclusion Support Services is funded by the Ministry of Education through the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board – Child Care Service Manager. It is a free service for children with differing abilities attending licensed child care settings, EarlyON Child & Family Programs, Ministry of Education funded school age summer camps and recreational programs.

ISS is a referral-based program for families of children 0-12 years to support their participation in all aspects of their day to the best of their ability. We are also a resource and support service for child care and EarlyON program staff. We accept referrals from parents and guardians, caregivers, educators, and community partners and a diagnosis is not needed to access our supports and services. Parental or guardianship consent must be given if the referral is submitted by a third party.

Philosophy

Children are competent, capable, and complex thinkers able to envision their own success. The Inclusion Support Services program supports early learning child care programs in providing a flexible, nurturing, and inclusive environment that continuously builds on families and children's expectations and dreams for their future. We believe in sharing current research and documentation based on each family and child's vision supported by the four foundations on learning (Well-Being, Expression, Belonging, Engagement) as stated in the Ministry of Education's How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. We respect and recognize the importance of collaborating and aligning with families and other professionals to build on children's achievements.

Inclusion: All children can actively and meaningfully participate in licensed child care programs and EarlyON Child and Family Centres and are supported to form authentic, caring relationships with their peers and educators through a class-wide approach.

Capacity Building: Research demonstrates that supporting educator capacity to increase their skills, knowledge, and access to resources helps address the needs of all children in the programs and fosters effective inclusive practices.

Integrated Supports: Children and families benefit from the intentional efforts of educators who collaborate and make relevant, timely referrals and connections to other programs and services to support individual needs.

Foundational Conditions: Ontario's pedagogy for the early years (*How Does Learning Happen?*) articulates a strength-based view of children, families, and educators supported by the four foundations that are essential for all children to grow and flourish: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement, and Expression.

Belonging

Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world. All children will have an opportunity to build relationships and make connections to the world around them.

Resource Consultants support positive, caring and respectful relationships between children, program staff and families by:

- Developing close relationships with children by positioning themselves at child level, listening, being available for individual time and participating in their play. This allows Resource Consultants to better understand each child's emotional and physical needs to then be able to respond in an individualized way.
- Recognizing that relationships are essential for healthy child development. Through the nurturing of authentic, caring relationships, environments are created where each child feels valued, capable and included. Resource Consultants interview adult team members and observe and consider all aspects of a child's day to identify the child's areas of strengths and need within their interpersonal relationships and interactions with the environment. The child is set-up for success by:
 - Adults intentionally adapting the environment where needed
 - Identifying goals to support the child in gaining new skills. Each child is provided access to activities and play that is adaptive to their unique needs and abilities, allowing the child to express themselves and engage in their play to the fullest.
 - Providing the child with opportunities to practice new skills with their peers and adults so they can participate fully and interact and connect in ways that are comfortable for them.
- Collaborating with families and early years staff to design and implement developmentally appropriate environments that promote inclusion and encompass all areas of child development.
- Creating Individual Support Plans that incorporate input from the child, family and program staff to support the child's sense of belonging and well being across a variety of environments. Goals are reviewed every six months and shared with all team members.
- Recognizing a child's cultural identity. This is integral to their sense of well being and recognized as a key component of an authentic and caring environment.

Well-Being

Every child is developing a sense of self, health and well-being.

Resource Consultants promote early experiences that will encourage lifelong physical and mental health and well-being by:

- Recognizing that participating in professional learning and development opportunities builds their capacity to support and mentor program staff's capacity in the design and delivery of inclusive programming. Additionally, participating in professional learning and development is a direct way for resource consultants to support the well-being of children and families. Resource Consultants are committed to continuous learning through their registration with the College of Early Childhood Educators and their Continuous Professional Learning expectations; the ongoing training/development embedded in *How Does Learning Happen?*; "Reaching In ... Reaching Out" (well being, resilience and regulation for adults and children); dysregulated stress states/co-regulation skills and strategies; and broader opportunities to delve into specific training topics such as autism,

cerebral palsy, chromosomal disorders, medical needs, and speech and language delays through virtual and in-person training opportunities; and Standard First Aid and Infant/Child CPR.

- Completing a Vulnerable Sector Check through the local police department every five years. An Offence Declaration is completed every calendar year except for the year in which the Vulnerable Sector Check is obtained.
- Abiding by the *Child and Family Services Act-Duty to Report* to report suspected cases of child abuse including physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or neglect. They must notify the local Children's Aid Society directly and immediately if abuse or neglect is suspected and if the child may be in the need of protection.
- Completing referrals to the appropriate community partners and programs to better support the needs of the child and family. This includes referrals to Coordinated Service Planning (Muskoka/Nipissing/Parry Sound) to link families to the services they and their complex special needs child require.
- Considering the importance of children participating in a wide variety of gross motor orientated activities within ISP content and general capacity building conversations with program staff and families, including the addition of engaging adventurous play into a child's daily routine. Resource Consultants also recognize the crucial need for children to develop connections with their natural world, where they can explore and connect with nature and the physical and mental wellness benefits it offers.
- Supporting children to practice self-care and self-help skills within their overall development and skill building. This includes solutions focused conversations with program staff and families, the creation of visual schedules and the use of verbal cues, ample time and space to complete the tasks, independence within washroom routines based on capabilities, and support with calming ones' body at rest time.
- Creatively working through needed program adaptations and physical accommodations to allow every child to participate and experience challenge in meaningful ways.
- Recognizing how critical gaining mastery in self-regulation and resiliency skills is for all children and the adults who support them. Resource Consultants guide and support program staff and children through the gaining of awareness and skills to effectively navigate through daily stressors and regain equilibrium by:
 - Building capacity in educators' recognition of the key role the environment plays in reducing children's stressors as well as the skill of adult co-regulation through identifying emotions, sharing a calm state, using gentle tones and offering physical comfort and designated quiet areas through times of dysregulation.
 - Being attuned and responsive to children's cues of distress, their arousal states and offering different strategies to calm and refocus such as visual displays, fidgets, music, heavy work and movement and breathing techniques. When needed, words are modeled and additional strategies used, such as the Institute of Child Psychology's "3 R's" of Regulate, Relate and Reason.

Engagement

Every child is an active and engaged learner who explores the world with body, mind, and senses. All children are valued as individuals with unique interests and strengths along with a right to a quality program with opportunities to develop their skills and explore their world.

Resource Consultants foster engaged, child-led learning through play by;

- Embracing the belief that all children have the right to participate to the fullest of their ability. Resource Consultant's facilitate professional learning opportunities for program staff based on interest and need to ensure that the environment and experiences provided help children discover, explore and master skills and new learning through participation.

- Supporting the capacity building of educators and early years staff in the design and creation of inclusive environments that are meaningful and engaging for all by sharing knowledge of child development, schema play theory and by problem solving flexible program adaptations and barriers to program participation and seeking out special equipment and/or adaptive devices as recommended by a regulated health professional.
- Communicating with families and program staff on a regular basis to ensure each is current and informed of the child's gains and challenges that may exist. Input and goals are sought from families and program staff at Intake and every six months thereafter to include in the child's Individual Support Plan and children's achievements and successes are shared with the full team on an ongoing basis.

Expression

Every child and family are capable communicators who may express themselves in a variety of ways while benefiting from positive, responsive partnerships found within early years environments.

Resource Consultants support an approach that values listening, responding to, and building on child-initiated communication and ideas by;

- Understanding that communication happens in many forms such as verbal and vocal exchanges, through gestures, creative expression and body language. Within the universal support and caseload support Resource Consultants offer, children are afforded the space, time, materials and opportunities to explore authentic reciprocal language and increase their overall language capacity.
- Enhancing collaboration with parents and program staff to facilitate the best possible social, language and literacy skills in young children through referencing the Hanen Centre's interaction and language building training strategies found in TeacherTalk™ training and Learning Language and Loving It™ workshops.
- Expressing value for the feedback received from families and program staff so they know their input and goals have meaning and have been heard.
- Working closely with community agencies such as One Kid's Place and following and sharing the guidance received to ensure a child's successful participation in all aspects of the program they are attending.
- Providing adaptive resources that allow a child to manipulate materials, explore music and movement, engage in process art, drawing and imaginative play. Resource Consultants also rely on tools such as social stories and visual schedules to support a child's mastery of self expression and literacy development.
- Attending and participating in learning opportunities that enhance personal capacity building and that of program staff in gaining knowledge of diverse cultures, including First Nation, Metis and Inuit people, and those with different home languages and cultures. Combining culture and social background knowledge allows Resource Consultants to plan and deliver activities and resources that offer children a sense of belonging while building awareness for all.
- Participating in program-based team meetings and one-on-one opportunities with program staff to enhance collaboration and information sharing. Reciprocal communication exchanges are nurtured with families by encouraging them to define the method and timing of whichever form of communication works best for them.
- Continuous self reflection of their own communication strategies, collaboration with community partners and families and the ability to have sensitive conversations when needed. This is achieved through self-reflection exercises, team meeting exercises, and their ongoing Continuous Professional Learning and annual Performance Planning and Review goals.