

ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDCARE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN ALASKA



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INTRODUCTION



Is finding affordable, quality early childcare for your child with special needs difficult for you?

What are your special needs child's legal rights when it comes to childcare?

What does quality inclusive childcare look like?

This resource for families of young children with special needs in Alaska will guide you through these questions.

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WHAT IS INCLUSION?



“Values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities as full members of families, communities, and society.”

National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009

<http://naeyc.org>

WHAT DOES INCLUSION LOOK LIKE?



Access:

All children have equal access to participate in classroom activities.

Classroom teachers use different ways to teach a skill in order to include different types of learners.

Participation:

Children are given accommodations and supports that meet their individual needs so they can play and learn with peers.

Supports:

Childcare provides professional development to staff and is able to incorporate specialized services and therapies.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSION:

- The focus is on a child's strengths and abilities, providing support when necessary.
- Childcare providers match their teaching method to meet the needs of each child.
- Children learn to understand and accept each other and their individual differences.
- All children, regardless of abilities, are able to learn in the same environment with the services and supports they need to be successful.



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National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009

QUESTIONS TO ASK EARLY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS:

1. What is teacher/child ratio in the classroom?
2. How long has the staff worked at the center?
3. What trainings/education have staff received?
4. Is staff given opportunities or incentives for receiving professional development?
5. Is the room set up in a way that allows all children to safely access facilities and materials regardless of their abilities?
6. Do teachers focus on children's' strengths in the classroom?

More information at: <http://threadalaska.org>



FINDING QUALITY CHILDCARE IN MY AREA:

- Alaska's **Thread childcare Referral Service** helps connect families to childcare programs in their area based on what the family is looking for.
- To access this program go to <http://threadalaska.org>



ADDITIONAL TOOLS: ALASKA LEARN AND GROW

Alaska Learn and Grow is a state wide program that can provide resources and supports to participating licensed childcare centers. These supports include coaching and technical assistance, funding for professional development, and quality improvement grants for participating programs.

Participating childcare centers can receive recognition for 5 different levels of care, the first level being the most basic and the fifth level representing the highest level of measurable care.

Parents can visit the Thread website to see what childcare facilities are participating and what their level of care is.

To learn more go to <http://threadalaska.org/index.cfm/Early-Educators/Learn-&Grow-%28Alaska%27s-QRIS%29>



ADDITIONAL TOOLS: SYSTEM FOR EARLY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (SEED)

Alaska SEED is an early childhood professional development system for educators. Early childhood teachers, directors and administrators can advance in areas of knowledge, starting at basic skills and continuing to an advanced level of knowledge. **This tiered educational system can help parents decide where to place their children based on the level of training staff has received.**

For more information go to <http://www.seedalaska.org/>.



PUBLIC LAWS THAT AFFECT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

To understand the rights of your child and family, it is important to have an understanding of the most influential laws that affect children with disabilities and their families.

The relevant laws can be categorized into two areas: those that influence the child's *educational program* and those which affect the *civil rights* of children with special needs.



CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS



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Rehabilitation Act: Section 504

1. Children who have a physical or mental impairment that limits them from “major life activities” are protected; disabilities such as orthopedic impairments or conditions such as asthma that may not qualify for special education services are included. School districts are required to develop a written plan to ensure that children with disabilities have access to the full range of programs, activities, and services.

2. A 504 plan describes all reasonable accommodations that may include a change in routine, method, or approach, Examples such as changes in time requirements and testing accommodations are included as well as assistive technology devices and services.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), children with special needs have physical or mental disabilities that may limit them from “major life activities” such as breathing, learning, hearing, seeing, speaking or walking.

WHAT DOES THE ADA REQUIRE CHILDCARE PROGRAMS TO DO?

CONSIDER MAKING CHANGES IN 4 ASPECTS OF THEIR PROGRAM:

1. Examine their admissions policies and procedures.

Examples: Policies that forbid administering medication to a child with a disability or policies that require children be toilet trained when a child's disability may prevent this.

2. Make reasonable modifications in their practices and procedures.

Examples: Provide food accommodations for a child with allergies, give visual cues for activities, provide additional training for staff on how to work with challenging behaviors.

3. Are required to provide services and devices designed to ensure effective communication.

Examples: Provide large-print books, staff fluent in sign language, or an interpreter.

4. Remove architectural barriers that prevent access to services if removal is readily achievable.

Examples: Installing a temporary or permanent ramp or moving furniture or equipment to provide wheelchair access.



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT RIGHTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN CHILDCARE

Questions?

Answers!!



Question	Answer	Reason
Do child care providers have to comply with ADA?	Yes	A child care provider is considered to be an individual who provides care for young children.
Is there a number of children with special needs a child care center or provider may care for?	No	There is no particular number of children, as each child with special needs is different, and there are no required staffing ratios other than those mandated by state licensing requirements.
Can a program charge more for a child with special needs?	No	Programs may not charge the parents of children with disabilities more for providing reasonable accommodations.
Is there something a parent can do if they feel they have been discriminated against?	Yes	Individuals who feel they have been discriminated against may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a federal law that protects and gives rights to a child with special needs.

The four major rights are:

- 1. Free and Appropriate Public Education: (FAPE)** If the child is eligible, he/she must receive an education program specially designed to meet his/her unique learning needs. This must be provided to the child at no cost.
- 2. Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment: (LRE)** Children with disabilities have the right to placement in an environment as similar as possible to one attended by general education peers without disabilities.
- 3. Assessment Procedures:** Allowing parents or schools to request educational assessments to identify a child's learning needs, determine whether the child requires special education services, and identify the services needed.
- 4. Informed Consent:** The parent/guardian must receive written notice whenever the school district plans to conduct a formal assessment of their child, change in eligibility and/or educational placement or services.

SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS

The two basic protections:

1. Participation in Developing the Individualized Education

Plan/Individualized Family Support Plan: (IEP/IFSP) Before the child receives special education services, a written IEP must be developed at a meeting in which the parent/guardian has the right to participate and the responsibility to make suggestions about their child's IEP.

2. Due Process: Process/steps that can be taken to protect the rights if the parent disagrees with any decisions regarding their child's assessment or IEP/IFSP.

PART C SERVICES: ALASKA EARLY INTERVENTION/ INFANT LEARNING PROGRAMS

The Alaska Statewide Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) provides infant learning services for families with children 0-3 with developmental delays. ILP staff conduct home visits for the family or other childcare providers, supporting caregivers as they help children learn new skills. ILP can also provide physical, occupational, and speech therapy when needed to help support children in daily activities at home or in early childcare settings.

For more information on Alaska's Infant Learning Programs go to <http://dhss.alaska.gov>



EARLY HEAD START PROGRAMS



Early Head Start Programs provide supportive, inclusive learning environments for children 0-3. Head Start programs are federally mandated to provide any needed changes to the class room environment, individual accommodations, or supports needed to include children with disabilities in classrooms with their peers. Head Start programs are also mandated to have at least 10% of enrolled children be children with a diagnosed disability receiving coordinated services.

For more information of Alaska Head Start Programs go to <http://akheadstart.org>.

NEED HELP PAYING FOR CHILDCARE?

You may qualify for childcare Assistance!

Alaska's childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) provides assistance with childcare expenses for eligible families who are working or participating in an education or training program.

For more information go to

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/ccare/parents.aspx>.



TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CHILDCARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CONTACT THE REGIONAL OFFICE NEAREST YOU:



Alaska Family Services: Municipality of Anchorage

Anchorage, Bird Creek, Chugiak, Eagle River, Girdwood, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
Phone: 644-5000

Alaska Family Services: Central

Cordova, Glennallen, Mat-Su Valley, Palmer, Valdez, Wasilla
Phone: (907) 373-4450 Toll free: 1-866-746-4080

The LeeShore Center: Coastal

Aleutian Chain, Bristol Bay, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nome
Phone: (907) 283-4707 Toll free: 1-877-855-2227



thread: Northern

Barrow, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Salcha, Tok, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta
Phone: (907) 479-2212 Toll free: 1-855-479-2212

Catholic Community Service: Southeast

Haines, Juneau, Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Petersburg, Prince of Wales, Skagway, Sitka, Wrangell
Phone: (907) 463-6184 Toll free: 1-800-505-6124

Childcare Program Office:

Statewide: Eligibility for childcare Assistance PASS I and Approved Providers

Municipality of Anchorage: Eligibility for ALL Providers (Approved, Approved Relative, In-home, Licensed)

Phone: (907) 269-4500 Toll free: 1-888-268-4632

ALASKA INCLUSIVE CHILDCARE PROGRAM (ALASKA IN!)

Alaska IN! Childcare Program gives families help with inclusive childcare for children with special needs. The program provides referrals, trainings, and additional funding based on the child's needs.

To qualify, the family and the childcare provider must participate in CCAP. Also, the child with special needs must be 12 or younger. For more information, go to:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/ccare/parents.aspx>



ALASKA INCLUSIVE CHILDCARE PROGRAM (ALASKA IN!)

Alaska IN! Also Provides:



- Referrals, outreach, and education to parents of children with special needs about childcare options through Alaska's statewide childcare Resource and Referral Network, **thread**;
- An on-site observation of your child in their care setting by **thread**, and a childcare Provider Inclusion Plan;
- Specific training and support to providers who care for children with special needs; and
- Supplemental funding to providers, based upon each child's individual needs and/or needed accommodations.

ALASKA INCLUSIVE CHILDCARE PROGRAM (ALASKA IN!)

Eligibility Requirements:

- The family must be participating in the State of Alaska's childcare Assistance Program (CCAP), including Parents Achieving Self Sufficiency (PASS) I, PASS II, and PASS III;
- The child must be under 13 years of age;
- The child must have a diagnosed special need or developmental disability;
- Must use a CCAP participating provider; and
- The child's diagnosed special need or developmental disability must require additional services at a cost to the provider.

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