



COMMUNITY INDICATORS AND ELEMENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY INCLUSION (*FIELD REVIEW*)

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Community Inclusion Teams (CIT), with the support of a Program Coach, bring service providers and families together to build community-wide awareness and vision of the importance of early childhood inclusion. The CIT is a group of early childhood program personnel, family members and others in a community that is devoted to high-quality inclusive early care and education (ECE) settings where children with disabilities participate as full members. The CIT helps guide programs in adopting the evidence-based practices that ensure that all children succeed. In this model, no one program is expected to "do it alone." Rather, they have the sustained and planful support of state agencies, Program Coaches and the CIT to help them obtain the skills, knowledge, personnel and other resources needed for high-quality inclusion.

The Community Inclusion Team helps all the early care and education programs within the community "swim in the same direction." The CIT helps with the sharing of information and resources among programs and agencies, facilitates agreements between the Local Education Agency (LEA)/school district, early intervention and other community programs for the provision of early intervention, special education and related services in natural environments, and provides guidance and information to programs on policies and procedures that support and promote high-quality inclusion. The CIT collects information on successes and challenges and shares that information with the State Leadership Team so that the state team can better support their efforts. It is assumed that all federal and state legal requirements are in place at the local program level. These indicators are not meant to examine federal and state requirements. They are intended to enhance program policies, procedures, and guidance on high-quality inclusive practices to early care and education environments.

For more information, visit <http://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion>

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"Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities."

—U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education, [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#) (2015)

INDICATOR 1: Community Inclusion Team

The community has a Community Inclusion Team (CIT) composed of administrators, program personnel, family members, and community partners who implement action plans that guide, support and ensure the availability of high-quality inclusive settings and the implementation of evidence-based inclusion practices at the community level.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Has a coordinator who serves as the lead contact and coordinates team meetings.
2. Has members who represent key stakeholder groups, such as child care, school district, early intervention, Head Start, and families. This representation ensures key voices are at the table while limiting the number to about 15 members.
3. Has requirements for member participation, such as signed written agreements and memoranda of understanding.
4. Shares administrative supports and resources across programs. Participating programs commit to cover costs of staff time, supporting materials, and other expenses.
5. Has a written action plan with goals and objectives aligned with its vision statement and these indicators.
6. Is aware of early childhood programs and service delivery systems in the community, including program activities and purposes, population served, program eligibility, operating calendar/hours, etc.
7. Communicates clearly the benefits and legal requirements of inclusion to early childhood programs, service delivery systems, and families in the community.
8. Shares the [Local Program Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#) and the [Early Childhood Education Environments Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#) with all programs and assists their use of the indicators.
9. Facilitates formal agreements among the community partners which promote community inclusion opportunities such as arrangements for early intervention and/or school district personnel to provide early intervention, special education, and related services within community early care and education settings; arrangements for shared professional development opportunities and resources; and arrangements for shared transportation resources, etc.

10. Meets regularly to address evidence of progress toward the goals on the inclusion action plan.
11. Reports annually to State Leadership Team, media, policy makers, families and the community at large on accomplishments, including increase in the number and quality of inclusion environments, and progress on other related activities associated with the team's action plans.
12. Provides opportunities for community celebrations of progress.
13. Partners with school district personnel to increase inclusive opportunities for early elementary age students.
14. Communicates to state agencies and/or the State Leadership Team the need for state-level solutions to address barriers to high-quality inclusion related to policies, procedures and funding identified by programs within their community.

INDICATOR 2: Vision

The CIT develops, implements, and widely shares a written vision statement for inclusion of children with disabilities that embraces and affirms the unique contributions and identities of all children and families.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Develops and disseminates a written, community-wide vision of high-quality inclusion for children with disabilities and their families. Team members are able to clearly communicate the purpose and vision of the CIT.
2. Provides guidance and information to help programs develop a written vision statement for inclusion.
3. Develops a written action plan, based on its vision, that guides the work of the CIT. The CIT reviews the plan and reports progress at each meeting to ensure achievement of the goals.
4. Reviews and revises the inclusion action plan at least annually.

INDICATOR 3: Family Engagement and Partnerships

The CIT ensures that families of children with and without disabilities participate on the CIT and in the development and implementation of policies and initiatives related to inclusion.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Supports the membership and participation of families on the CIT and in its activities.
2. Provides guidance and information to programs on effective family engagement and partnerships.
3. Provides training opportunities for families.
4. Develops multiple mechanisms for communicating with families about high-quality inclusion.

INDICATOR 4: Awareness and Commitment

The CIT intentionally promotes, among programs, personnel, families and the community, an awareness of and commitment to high-quality inclusion.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Solicits information and feedback from programs, families, community, and stakeholders about their knowledge of high-quality inclusion.
2. Incorporates state public awareness strategies when appropriate.
3. Develops and implements a community-wide inclusion public awareness plan using research on the benefits of inclusion and the legal foundations and requirements for high-quality inclusion. The public awareness strategies include written information, social media, hosting visits to high-quality programs, and other methods.
4. Adapts the public awareness plan for audiences such as families, local early intervention providers, public school administrators at all levels, school board officials, child care directors, state administrators of ECE programs and other policy makers such as legislators and governors.
5. Provides guidance and information to programs on effective public awareness activities for high-quality inclusion.
6. Identifies, in partnership with Program Coaches, centers, schools or programs that can be highlighted as local demonstration sites for high-quality inclusion.
7. Develops an awareness presentation to recruit programs.
8. Establishes recruitment and acceptance criteria for programs participating in the initiative.
9. Recruits programs annually.
10. Evaluates the effectiveness of the public awareness plan.

INDICATOR 5: Policies and Procedures

The CIT promotes inclusion policies and procedures that are reflective of the CIT's vision statement and that support the use of evidence-based inclusion practices.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides opportunities for programs to jointly review policies and procedures in order to identify any that are conflicting or that could be a barrier to high-quality inclusion.
2. Provides guidance and information to programs on policies and procedures that support and promote high-quality inclusion.
3. Establishes procedures that effectively support resource sharing and coordinated service delivery among programs.

INDICATOR 6: Fiscal Resources

The CIT understands the available funding streams and resources, and helps programs to reallocate, coordinate, and braid funds to design and implement evidence-based inclusion practices.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Facilitates discussion among agencies and programs comparing funding requirements and resource sharing.
2. Provides guidance and information to programs on available fiscal resources and legal considerations for using funding streams including how to cost share, braid, layer and coordinate resources.
3. Helps programs identify funding sources to support inclusion activities for at least three years.

INDICATOR 7: Personnel Policies and Structure:

The CIT promotes personnel policies and structures that support the delivery of early intervention, special education, and other specialized services within daily routines and activities enabling program personnel to collaboratively learn and implement evidence-based practices.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Facilitates discussion among agencies and programs comparing personnel policies and structures.
2. Provides guidance and information to programs on personnel policies and structures that support embedding the delivery of early intervention, special education and related services within the daily routines of community program settings.

INDICATOR 8: Collaborative Teaming

The CIT promotes collaborative teaming to maximize the learning and development of children with disabilities within high-quality inclusive settings.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides guidance and information to programs on strategies for effective collaborative teaming.
2. Facilitates collaboration among personnel across all community settings and programs.

INDICATOR 9: Specialized Technical Assistance and Consultative Services

The CIT identifies and accesses specialized technical assistance and consultative services to support the implementation of evidence-based inclusion practices and communicates to the state any additional supports that are needed.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides guidance and information to programs on how to access available state and local specialized technical assistance and consultative services.
2. Collects information from programs about additional supports needed from the state.

INDICATOR 10: Program Supports for Professional Development

The CIT supports programs in their efforts to build personnel confidence and competence in implementing evidence-based inclusion practices.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides guidance and information to programs on shared professional development opportunities.
2. Identifies trainers and coaches to build and sustain program-wide adoption of evidence-based inclusion practices.
3. Provides guidance and information to programs on evidence-based professional development approaches such as training, coaching and mentoring.
4. Provides information and guidance to programs on evidence-based inclusion practices including role release and embedded specialized services.
5. Assists programs in the collection of data on the effectiveness of professional development.
6. Collects data on professional development needs within the community to develop shared opportunities for training, coaching, etc.
7. Evaluates the impact of shared professional development opportunities.

INDICATOR 11: Curriculum

The CIT Provides guidance and information to programs on research-based curricula that are adaptable to individual children's strengths and needs.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides information to local programs on the benefits of using a research-based curriculum.
2. Provides examples of research-based curricula to local programs.

INDICATOR 12: Data Collection and Use

The CIT collects, summarizes and uses data from programs and the community to track progress toward the goal of increasing high-quality inclusion opportunities for children with disabilities and families.

The Community Inclusion Team:

1. Provides guidance and information to programs on measures, procedures and use of data to ensure high-quality inclusion.
2. Collects data annually on programs' progress on their action plans.
3. Collects data annually on each programs' number of high-quality inclusion slots available.
4. Collects data annually on each programs' number of high-quality inclusion slots filled.
5. Collects data annually on each programs' number of high-quality inclusion slots needed.
6. Collects progress data annually from each program on the [Local Program Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#) and the [Early Childhood Education Environments Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#).
7. Collects information from families and programs on gaps and needs in the community.
8. Shares summary data and progress data with the State Leadership Team.