# Local Program
## Indicators and Elements of High-Quality Inclusion
## *(Field Review)*

*March 10, 2021*

The Local Program Indicators detail the key elements that are necessary for promoting high-quality inclusive policies, procedures and practices at a local program level. They are designed to assist local cross-sector early childhood leadership efforts relative to supporting high-quality inclusion across programs to increase access and meaningful participation of young children with disabilities. 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 for early care and education environments.

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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 L1: Inclusion Leadership Teams

The program participates in, or establishes, a Program Inclusion Leadership Team composed of administrators, program staff, 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.

**The Program Inclusion Leadership Team:**

1. Is aware of or is involved with a Community Inclusion Team.
2. Determines which community partners are needed to support high-quality inclusion.
3. Develops and maintains agreements with early childhood education (ECE) programs, health partners, and behavior support personnel to provide supports and services to children with disabilities in inclusive settings.
4. Has a written inclusion action plan with goals and objectives aligned with its vision/mission, such as increasing the number and quality of inclusion environments.
5. Has action steps identified in the inclusion action plan to ensure successful implementation and sustainability.
6. Meets regularly to address evidence of progress toward goals on the inclusion action plan.
7. Reports annually to the program's families and the community on progress and accomplishments associated with the team's action plan.

# INDICATOR L2: Vision

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

**Program:**

1. Develops and implements a vision statement that promotes a culture and climate to support high-quality inclusion.
2. Uses its vision statement to guide the development and use of policies and procedures that support inclusion.
3. Ensures personnel can articulate and explain the vision regarding inclusion of children with disabilities and their families.
4. Shares the vision's message about inclusion for children with disabilities in public awareness information and program materials.

# INDICATOR L3: Family Engagement and Partnerships

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

**Program:**

1. Develops a plan for how they will engage and partner with families in activities such as advocacy efforts, public awareness, inclusion forums, and conferences.
2. Obtains families' input and feedback throughout the implementation of the inclusion action plan.
3. Provides information in accessible formats to all families about the research on the benefits, as well as the legal foundations, of high-quality inclusion.
4. Connects families to the Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and other family support programs.
5. Builds personnel capacity to honor and affirm the preferences and priorities of family partners.
6. Creates opportunities for families of children with and without disabilities to share their experiences with inclusion.
7. Includes families as a regular part of the program improvement and problem-solving processes.
8. Evaluates the effectiveness of the plan for engaging and partnering with families.

# INDICATOR L4: Awareness and Commitment

The program intentionally promotes, among personnel, families, and the community, an awareness of and commitment to inclusion.

**Program:**

1. Gathers and examines information on the attitudes and beliefs of personnel and families about high-quality inclusion and provides opportunities for the identification of barriers and solutions.
2. Ensures that all personnel can articulate and demonstrate their commitment to high-quality inclusion.
3. Ensures that all personnel can articulate and demonstrate their knowledge of the benefits and legal foundations of high-quality inclusion.
4. Provides regular and consistent opportunities for personnel to share information about their inclusion experiences.

## INDICATOR L5: Policies and Procedures

The program develops and implements written inclusion policies and procedures that are reflective of the program's vision statement and support the use of evidence-based inclusion practices.

**Program:**

1. Provides opportunities for parents and personnel to offer ideas for improvements to policies and procedures.
2. Implements policies and procedures that comply with federal and state legal requirements regarding services to children with disabilities and their families.
3. Implements policies and procedures for recruiting and enrolling children with disabilities.
4. Implements policies and procedures that support the high-fidelity use of evidence-based practices with children with disabilities and their families.
5. Implements policies and procedures for supporting individualized services that address the strengths and needs of children with disabilities and their families.
6. Implements policies and procedures for data collection to guide program evaluation and improvement.
7. Reviews and updates program policies and procedures.

## INDICATOR L6: Fiscal Resources

The program's policies and structures 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.

**Program:**

1. Develops collaborative agreements to efficiently and effectively cost share, braid, and/or layer funding with other ECE programs to provide services in high-quality inclusive settings.
2. Develops a budget for needed staffing, training, and coaching to support high-quality inclusion.
3. Plans for, monitors, and evaluates the effective use of fiscal, personnel, and other resources to support high-quality inclusion practices

## INDICATOR L7: Personnel Policies and Structure

The program's policies and structures 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.

**Program:**

1. Implements policies and procedures to support collaboration among program and specialized services personnel during the daily routines of children with disabilities.
2. Identifies personnel to coordinate services for families and children with disabilities.
3. Identifies personnel to connect families to services and assist with navigation.
4. Implements policies and procedures to ensure personnel have access to specialized supports and resources needed to address individualized child and family strengths and needs.
5. Implements policies and procedures to ensure program and specialized services personnel work together to embed services in natural environments and daily routines and maximize learning from one another.

# INDICATOR L8: Collaborative Teaming

The program provides adequate planning time and other supports for collaborative teams to work together on an ongoing basis to maximize the learning and development of children with disabilities.

**Program:**

1. Establishes an appropriate staffing structure to ensure early intervention, special education, and related service providers can support program personnel in using evidence-based inclusion practices and embedded services to meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families.
2. Establishes staffing structures and flexible scheduling to allow personnel time to meet, plan, and problem solve.
3. Regularly reviews and assesses the effectiveness of teaming practices

# INDICATOR L9: Specialized Technical Assistance and Consultative Services

The program 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.

**Program:**

1. Makes personnel aware of available state and local technical assistance and support.
2. Gathers information from personnel regarding additional technical assistance and consultative services needed.
3. Develops a plan to access available technical assistance and consultative services.
4. Communicates the need for additional supports to the Community Inclusion Team and/or state as appropriate.
5. Establishes a plan for all program personnel to collaborate, plan, and problem-solve with specialized services personnel.
6. Uses data to assess the effectiveness of the technical assistance and consultative services.

# INDICATOR L10: Program Supports for Professional Development

The program builds personnel confidence and competence in implementing evidence-based inclusion practices by providing opportunities and supports to engage in meaningful, on-going, evidence-based professional development and coaching.

**Program:**

1. Systematically assesses personnel strengths and needs related to high-fidelity use of high-quality inclusion practices.
2. Implements the necessary supports for use of high-quality inclusion practices, such as practice-based coaching and mentoring for personnel and administrators.
3. Identifies and supports personnel responsible for facilitating practice-based coaching and mentoring.
4. Provides professional development opportunities for personnel on evidence-based inclusion practices, including role release and embedding specialized services.
5. Provides release time and resources necessary for personnel, including administrators, to engage in meaningful, on-going, and evidence-based professional development and coaching.
6. Evaluates the effectiveness of professional development and its impact on the adoption and use of evidence-based inclusion practices.
7. Has a process for providing professional development to support newly hired personnel, including administrators.

# INDICATOR L11: Curriculum

The program effectively implements a developmentally appropriate curriculum which is modified when needed to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities within the program.

**Program:**

1. Implements a curriculum that is adaptable to the strengths and needs of children with disabilities.
2. Trains personnel on how to make adaptations, accommodations, and modifications to the curriculum in order to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
3. Ensures personnel have a strong understanding of the principles of universal design for learning as a framework for flexible and accessible instructional practices, materials, and environments.
4. Evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum and its implementation related to supporting high-quality inclusion practices.

# INDICATOR L12: Data Collection and Use

The program collects and uses data, including ongoing observation and authentic assessment, for decision-making and quality improvement related to environment, inclusion practices, and child experiences, to ensure full participation and improved outcomes for children with disabilities.

**Program:**

1. Identifies the data needed for making informed decisions about the implementation of evidence-based inclusion practices.
2. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to the number of seats/slots available for children with disabilities within its program.
3. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to the number of children with disabilities on the program's waiting list.
4. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to the developmental outcomes of children with disabilities.
5. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to personnel satisfaction with and perceptions of inclusion.
6. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to personnel feelings of competence and confidence for including children with disabilities.
7. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to family satisfaction with and perceptions of inclusion.
8. Systematically collects, analyzes, and uses data related to the number of children receiving their early intervention, special education, and related services in high-quality inclusive environments within its program.
9. Provides data from the program indicators to the Community Inclusion Team (CIT) and state agencies as needed.
10. Uses data to update and revise action plans.
11. Uses the Early Care and Education Environment Indicators and Elements of High-Quality Inclusion, as appropriate.
12. Regularly provides data summaries to personnel, families, stakeholders, and other ECE programs in user-friendly formats.
13. Evaluates the effectiveness of data collection processes on a routine basis.