



Building better futures
for children with disabilities

What do the Child Safe Standards Mean for Children with a Disability?

Lou Ambrosy and Alison Webster

Noah's Ark Inc.

1283 Malvern Rd, Malvern VIC Australia 3144

T 1800 819 140

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Post it note activity:
Take 1 or 2 post it notes, and write down what you think should be considered when you are including children with a disability into your program?

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What is disability or additional needs?

“A mismatch between the abilities and interests of the child and the demands of the environment” Dr Robin McWilliam 2016



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What do the Standards Say?

“Children with a disability have an increased risk of being abused compared with children without a disability. A number of factors may contribute to the risk of abuse including physical impairments or difficulties with speech and communication, memory, literacy, vision and hearing impairments, and reliance on caregivers.”

(Child Safe Standards overview, Pg 10)

What do the Standards Say?

That organisations should: *“Create an environment supportive of children with a disability, for example, by being aware of the different support needs of children with a disability accessing the organisation.”*

(Child Safe Standards overview, Pg 12)



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What creates a safe place for children with a disability?

- Inclusive environments are considered to be Best Practice for children with a disability
- Lets look at what inclusion really means, and some things to consider in this space

Inclusion is.....

- Children of all abilities and backgrounds living, learning, and playing together
- Valuing each child's individual strengths and needs
- All children *participating* - because the programs are planned to meet children's individual needs

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Inclusion is about access, but its also...

- Believing that all children have the potential to learn
- Knowing and understanding child development
- Knowing that children with disabilities are more like all children than different
- Encouraging children to be independent
- Providing a physical environment that meets the needs of all children
- Planning activities that all children can do
- Partnering with the family and other professionals

(Reference: Guide to Promoting Inclusion in EC Programs, Delaware Health and Social Services, 2013)

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A parents view

- We are about to watch a short video with parents talking about what it was like when they received a diagnosis for their child





One experience

- Remember, those parents talked about the world from their experience; we all view the world from our own experience that includes our parenting, our work, our life experiences
- No ones experience is ever the same



Legislation behind Inclusion



- The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** underpins the inclusion of all children in community settings
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- ECA and ECIA: Position Statement on the Inclusion of Children with a Disability in ECEC (2012)

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Benefits of Inclusion for Children with Additional Needs

Children with additional needs can increase language and social skills through interaction with typically developing children *(Hardin, Wesley and Lohr 1998).*



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Children with Additional Needs

While challenges do exist, children with disabilities do form meaningful friendships, and in many cases, these friendships are with typically developing children.



Goldman & Buysse, 2008

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Benefits for Typically Developing Children

- Typically developing children can learn about similarities and differences and to be more accepting of differing abilities (Hardin, Wesley and Lohr 1998).
- They are provided with opportunities to develop positive attitudes towards others who are different from themselves (Wolery, 1994).
- They are provided with models of individuals who successfully achieve despite challenges (Wolery, 1994).

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Benefits for Families

- They may feel less isolated from the rest of the community
- Develop relationships with families of typically developing children who can provide meaningful support
- They are able to learn more about typical development
- Families of children without disabilities will have opportunities to teach their children about individual differences and about accepting individuals who are different

Wolery & Wilbers (1994)

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Benefits for Educators

- Educators can learn new skills
- They can develop positive attitudes towards inclusion
- They can learn to focus on the abilities and strengths of all children
- They can learn about other services in the area and form partnerships with support services in their community, e.g. Early Childhood Intervention

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What are some of the challenges in including children with disabilities in your program?



What is our role in supporting children with disabilities?

- Our support should focus on giving children the skills they need to meaningfully participate in the program, alongside their peers – not focus on skill deficits.

Why?

- Meaningful participation is the context in which children learn, develop and belong.



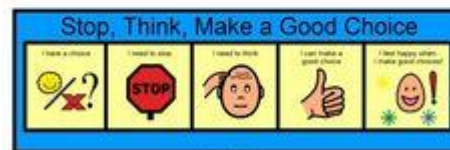
Can you think of a skill that a child with a disability might need to meaningfully participate in a learning opportunity that you regularly provide?

What can you do? Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Provide a visual schedule of the sessions/ activities so that each child may see and understand what will be happening.
- Use a variety of ways to communicate instructions, e.g. words, pictures, gestures.
- Provide different types of seating, e.g. chairs, cushions, mats.



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What can you do?

- Ensure that all activities are accessible for *all* children.
- Offer choices.
- Plan for children's interests but also plan activities that are *of interest to children*.

What can you do?

- Use books, songs, and communication that involve and represent all children, including children with disabilities and from different cultural backgrounds.
- Provide opportunities for children to interact with children with disabilities.

High expectations and equity

Every child has the ability to learn and develop.

Having high expectations is especially important in achieving better outcomes for the most vulnerable children.

Recognises that some children need additional supports and different learning opportunities and experiences to learn and develop.

When children are expected to succeed they are more likely to succeed.

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All children have the capacity to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities. Children progress well when they, their families, early childhood educators and support professionals have high expectations for their achievement in learning and development.

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Who had high expectations of you?



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Contact

Noah's Ark Training Team

03 8823 8600

training@noahsarkinc.org.au

www.noahsarkinc.org.au