New Mexico Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program
Inclusive Practices Guide

Providing services to children and families with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) in their natural environments includes serving children who spend part or most of their day in Early Care and Learning settings, such as Early Head Start or child care.

This document provides guidance to Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Program personnel who serve children in these classroom settings in the community. This document includes effective inclusion practices that early intervention personnel can use to support the child's development in the classroom setting and to build effective collaboration with the educators in those settings.

“What does inclusive early care and education look like?

Inclusion is:
• Children with different abilities, interests or backgrounds playing and learning together
• Every child is involved in all daily activities
• Materials or activities are adapted to meet different needs of children
• Activities are based on children’s interests, building on and repeating their successes to increase good feelings about themselves
• Needs of the children are the basis for the daily plans and schedules”

(State of Delaware Guide to Promoting Inclusion in Early Childhood)

The following provides guidance on inclusive practices in a step-by-step, sequential format.

Step 1: Intake and Evaluation
When a child is referred to a Family Infant Toddler (FIT) provider Early Intervention (EI) agency it is recommended that the Family Service Coordinator (FSC) find out from the referral source and/or from the family during the intake process, about the settings in which the child regularly spends time. This includes asking whether the child spends time during the week at an Early Head Start (EHS) or a child care provider. Valuable evaluation information can be gained by observing the child in the classroom setting and by talking to the classroom staff about the child’s development.

• The FSC should ask about the daily activities and routines of the family, including whether the child is enrolled and spends time in an early care and learning setting such as a child care or EHS setting.
• The FSC should ask for permission from the family to be able to contact the early care and learning setting. They should also obtain consent from the family to release and obtain information and documentation about the child.
• The FSC and evaluation team should invite the early care and learning staff to provide information on routines, behaviors, peer relationships, and the child’s development within the classroom. This information can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Evaluation (CME).
• If possible, the evaluation team should schedule to observe the child in play and other activities in the classroom setting. These observations can help the team with the completion of the CME, by seeing the child’s development in the classroom in addition to the home.

“Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts.”

-FIT Program Key Principles
Step 2: IFSP Development
If the child is eligible for early intervention services through the FIT Program an initial Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be developed at a meeting with the family. For children who spend time in a child care or EHS setting, the classroom teacher and (if applicable) the EHS Disabilities Manager should be invited to participate in the IFSP meeting.

- The FSC should have a discussion with the family in developing their hopes and dreams for their child that will be addressed in both the home and community and in the classroom.
- With the permission of the family the FSC should contact the classroom teacher, center director and/or disabilities managers (if in EHS) and invite them to participate in the development of the IFSP. Try to schedule the IFSP meeting at a time and location that will work for both the family and center staff.
- For center staff who were not able to participate in the IFSP meeting, the FSC should provide them with an overview the IFSP meeting, including the outcomes and strategies and the early intervention services that will be provided to help meet those outcomes.
- Ask the classroom staff about the daily routines of the classroom and if possible obtain a copy of the daily schedule. Learn as much as possible about how the program is organized and how the child participates in the daily routines. Ask the classroom staff about the child’s likes and dislikes and any concerns and challenges they experience in supporting the child’s learning.
- Go over the IFSP in detail, addressing the child’s outcomes, routines, and concerns and discussing ways in which to embed areas from the child’s IFSP into the classroom learning opportunities and routines.

Step 3: IFSP Implementation
If the classroom staff was unable to attend the IFSP meeting a separate time should be set up to meet with them to coordinate outcomes, classroom agreements, routines, and strategies to support the child’s learning in the classroom.

- As a guide to establish an initial relationship with the Early Intervention provider and the Early Care and Learning Educators you may want to use the ‘Part 1: Classroom Partnership Agreements’ found in the New Mexico Early Childhood Guide for Inclusion Birth-5 to identify clear roles and responsibilities among service providers and classroom staff to better serve the child’s needs and outcomes.
- FIT Program early intervention provider are encouraged to work in partnership with the classroom staff to plan the implementation of the IFSP in the classroom and may use The ‘Webbing Framework’ found in the New Mexico Early Childhood Guide for Inclusion Birth-5 for infants/toddlers to learn as much as possible about the child’s routines within the classroom.
- FIT Program early intervention provider should include the families in the discussions with the early care and learning staff. Families can benefit from understanding the routines and
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activities in their child’s classroom. This can give the family valuable ideas regarding learning activities that they incorporate into the home routines.

Step 4: Classroom Schedule
Coordinate with classroom staff regarding the dates and times that will be most convenient and most effective to provide intervention services in the classroom. Communicate with classroom staff regarding upcoming activities. The EI staff can be a part of and plan appropriate intervention strategies for the child within the classroom.

- Discuss the child’s daily schedule in the early care and learning setting. When does the class eat? read? play? and nap?, etc.
- Discuss routines and activities that are the easiest and the most challenging for the child to participate in the classroom environment.
- Discuss classroom activities that the teacher currently does that support the child’s development and plan how the early intervention providers will join or lead an activity in the classroom that will promote the child’s development.

Step 5: Providing Intervention within Classroom Activities
Plan and implement activities in the classroom that support the development of the child and that enable the participation of the child’s classroom peers in the activity. These activities are not only teachable moments for the child receiving early intervention services, but for all the children in the classroom.

- Keeping the child in the classroom creates opportunities of learning within the familiar and predictable routines and activities of the classroom that can then be repeated throughout the week.
- It gives the child a sense of belonging and encouragement to be with their peers doing familiar activities, which increases social skills. This encourages independent and creative thinking from the child in activities with peers.
- Provide ideas to the classroom staff regarding accommodations (changes / adaptions) that can be made to classroom activities that can support the child’s developmental needs throughout the week.
- Involve the family in these discussions of adaptions or supports their child may need in the classroom setting as they will often have ideas and suggestions. Also, share with the family how these activities may be adapted in the home.

Step 6: Ongoing Communication and Partnership

At the end of each visit the FIT early intervention provider should go over with the classroom staff what was experienced, and worked with the child in the classroom. The early
intervention staff and classroom staff should reflect on how the child participated and any future adaption’s that could be made. If possible, leave summaries of the intervention conducted and the child’s progress for the family and the classroom staff. In addition to including the classroom staff in the IFSP meetings, try to meet with the classroom teacher and the family regularly to discuss ongoing successes and challenges, and to align strategies between the home and the early care and learning setting.

- Set up regular meetings with the classroom teacher/disabilities manager/family to discuss the child’s progress in the classroom.
- Invite classroom staff to participate in IFSP meetings, and try to schedule them at time and locations that works for them and the family.
- Leave progress notes for the family and the classroom staff to allow others working with the child to know what intervention is being provided and how they can continue to promote the child’s development.
- As part of the transition process talk to the family about their options for inclusive setting when their child moves to preschool when their child turns 3 and the importance of the learning that occurs inclusive setting with their same age, typically developing peers.
Bibliography:


