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What to Know About the American's with Disabilities Act and Child Care

The American's with Disabilities Act is a federal law enacted in 1990. The law guarantees that children with special care needs or disabilities cannot be excluded from "public accommodations" simply because of a disability. "Public accommodations" includes private businesses and includes preschools, child care centers, school age child care programs, out-of-school time programs and family child care homes.

It is also unlawful to charge more to a family who has a child with disabilities. This can be challenging to child care programs as these children may require more attention, thus requiring either fewer children in care or more staff to be available. These extra costs should be treated as overhead expenses and divided equally among all paying customers. There are also two programs that may be able to provide financial assistance to assist these families in paying for child care and to enhance income of the providers caring for these children. The first is the Integrated Child Care Program through Oregon Department of Human Services for low-income families. Call 776-6172 in Jackson County or 474-3101 in Josephine County to learn more. The second program is The Inclusive Child Care Program through the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities. Families must meet income requirements for this program as well, although qualifying income is higher.

For more information about this program call Lisa at CCRN, 842-2591.

THE JOB COUNCIL
PROVIDING WORKFORCE RESOURCES

Provider

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P R E S S

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Creating Opportunities for Independence and Cooperation

Children learn to think and behave independently when they are in an environment that is both appealing and challenging. When most early childhood activities are led by an adult, children don't have the opportunity to work hard to figure something out or to see if a theory they have will work. When conflicts that arise are immediately settled by an adult, then children don't have the opportunity to negotiate with other children to find a solution. These are problem-solving skills that we all need to learn and the best time to begin practicing them is during the preschool years. Here are some suggestions for offering a program that promotes success through experiences that build independence and cooperation:

Notice the individual interests and skills of the children and challenge them to extend their learning.

If one child is fascinated with butterflies but isn't interested in books and isn't yet using scissors very well, find books and magazines about butterflies to engage her with books and reading, and provide her with pictures of butterflies that she can cut out with scissors to make a collage.

Provide materials that offer a challenge and also lead to success.

If a puzzle is too simple, children get bored. If a puzzle is too difficult, children get frustrated and are likely to fail and not want to attempt it again, feeling incompetent. Remember that every child develops at their own unique rate; all three year olds do not have the same skill levels. Constantly observe the skills and abilities of the children and continue to provide materials and activities that are challenging and lead to success for all children.

Create a program that reflects children's home lives and cultural backgrounds.

When the songs, books, pictures, dolls, music and games are familiar to the children, they feel a sense of belonging and security and are more likely to join in the activities.

Offer open-ended materials and activities.

Using recycled items or scraps to make a collage encourages children to think and be more creative than coloring in a coloring sheet. A dramatic play area with props and costumes provides an opportunity for children to create new scenarios each time they play.

Design activities that help children understand and handle fears.

Children process fears and new experiences by acting out these situations through dramatic play, using various art outlets to express their feelings, and hearing stories about typical fears children have.

Encourage children to do as much as possible for themselves.

A child develops self confidence when they help a friend put her cot away, zip up a jacket, or pour juice. It may be easier and faster when the adult does these things, but the benefits of letting children take the time to master these life skills is worth the wait.



Communicating with Children: What do we want them to hear?

Children learn about themselves by what others say about them and to them.

Parents and caregivers are like mirrors, reflecting back to children images of their personal characteristics, abilities, and value. Nonverbal communication also sends a powerful message to children – smiles, hugs, and nods convey a message that we are noticing what children are doing; that we care.

Being able to listen and respond are necessary skills when talking with children.

Listening goes beyond just hearing what a child is saying. It also means paying attention to body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. To let a child know you are listening and interested in understanding them, kneel down to their level and make eye contact. It seems simple, and it is. It's also very powerful.

When responding to children's words and feelings, use the same courteous voice you would use when responding to a friend's words and feelings. Children feel heard when adults repeat back what the child has just said. This is showing empathy for the child's concerns. If a child is crying because her mom just dropped her off, and I say, "It's time to stop crying and find something to do," what message have I given her? If I say, "You are sad because you mom is going to work and you don't want her to leave," what message have I given her? Showing empathy is not only the caring thing to do, it also reduces the duration of challenging behaviors and can eliminate many challenging behaviors altogether.

Verbal and non-verbal communication are powerful relationship-builders and provide the foundation for trust and security. When children's emotional needs are being met, they are less likely to act out or withdraw and more likely to enjoy learning, playing with friends, and cooperating with others.



Why Create Prop Boxes?

Prop boxes are a great way for children to practice many emerging skills. Children practice creativity and problem-solving when they set up a medical clinic and decide where the exam rooms will be and what they will use as a stethoscope. They learn cooperation and negotiation skills as they compromise with their peers regarding who gets to be the receptionist, doctor, nurse, or patient. They expand their understanding of the health profession as they ask questions and add new ideas. They overcome common fears of doctors and needles as they work through those fears by practicing what it will be like to be the patient or the staff.

How to Create Prop Boxes

Introducing new ideas through class field trips, reading books, or having guest speakers is a great way to begin. Children may or may not have visited the beach, so taking time to introduce a "beach" prop box is important so all children have a common understanding. Have a good discussion with children about what they think they would see when they are walking on the beach, what they would hear at the beach, what they would bring to the beach, the activities they would do at the beach, and the things to be careful of at the beach. Next, introduce the prop box in the area where the children can play with the contents, and allow them to explore the items and set up the beach scene on their own. Create prop boxes for both indoor and outdoor use. Rotate boxes periodically, but allow enough time for children to have extended play time over a number of days. Here are a couple of ideas to get started.ⁱ

Beach

Consumable Supplies	Props	Dress-up Items
Paper plates, cups, plastic utensils, Food (pictures or empty can or boxes) Sunscreen (empty containers)	Beach Bags Picnic basket Sea shells Umbrellas Sand molds, buckets, shovels Playing cards Camera Inflatable toys Beach toys Blankets and beach towels Portable radio Fishing poles CD of beach sounds	Sunglasses Sun hats Swim goggles Plastic sandals Flippers

Gas Station and Automobile Repair

Consumable Supplies	Props	Dress-up Items
Auto supply catalogs Rags Paper Pads Pencils	Funnel Short lengths of hose Wiring Windshield wiper blades Flashlights Parts (used and washed spark plugs, filters, gears) Small tool set	Sunglasses Sun hats Swim goggles Plastic sandals Flippers

ⁱ Foster, C. (1982). Dramatic play kits or prop boxes. Competency-based training module no. 24: Dramatic play (Suppl. No. 5), 41-46. Coolidge, AZ: Central Arizona College.

"Show and Ask": an Alternative to "Show and Tell"

Traditionally, when children participate in "Show and Tell", they bring an object and talk about it to the group in an oral presentation and the group listens quietly while waiting for their turn to share. In "Show and Ask", a child brings an object and introduces it, but then other children come up with good questions to ask about the object or comments to make. This slight change in process increases development of receptive language (listening) skills, expressive language (speaking) skills, self-esteem, the concept of audience, and cognitive (thinking) skills.

This activity can be structured in different ways. In small groups like family child care homes, everyone one might gather together around a table or in circle on the floor. In a larger class it might be more productive to have sharing centers, similar to learning centers, with one child at each sharing table with their item to share while 4 or 5 other children are assigned to start at each table as actively engaged audience members.

This new process should be shared with parents. They should understand that sometimes their child will be answering questions from the audience, and sometimes they will be an audience member who will ask good questions. A handout to parents with suggestions of how to practice asking good questions with their children might be helpful. It should be clear to parents that this is not a "brag and tell" to show off expensive toys, but rather a time to share interesting objects, photo albums, a collection, or something similar.

Teachers should model how "Show and Ask" works by bringing in an interesting item and prompting children to ask questions about it, explaining that the children will need to take turns asking questions, and encouraging a deeper discussion of the topic. Over time, children will develop more skill and require less teacher facilitation. These frequently practiced skills will enhance a child's approach to listening, learning and thinking.



Great Websites To Check Out

www.kids.discovery.com Discovery Kids makes science fun and hands-on.

www.hello-world.com This website exposes children to new languages in fun ways.

www.papertoys.com Have fun with various paper activities.

www.lpl.org/youth The Internet Public Library has a section just for kids and teens.

www.crayola.com Crayola has many craft activities and resources for educators, parents, and kids of all ages.

www.kids.nationalgeographic.com The kids side of National Geographic includes stories, videos, activities and games.

How Do You Envision Your Program Growing? A mentor can help you get there.

CCRN is able to offer mentoring services free of charge to providers in Jackson and Josephine Counties, through grants from the Jackson County Commission on Children and Families and the Oregon Community Foundation. A Statewide Mentoring program funded through the Oregon Child Care Resource and Referral Network is also available to providers of both counties.

Mentors can assist you in a wide variety of areas, from setting up your child care environment, ideas to encourage language and literacy skills for the children in your care, connecting you with training opportunities for professional growth and development and other community resources.

Participants completing the Partnering with Providers program are eligible for funds to purchase equipment/supplies for their programs. Please call Patty at 842-2590 to find out more about these exciting opportunities!



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