Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

TIPSHEET #4: What is Inclusion?

An Inclusion Resource Sponsored by: **CVS CAREMARK | Charitable Trust**

Inclusion is an approach, not a program.

Inclusion is...
An attitude and approach that seeks to ensure that every person, regardless of ability or background, meaningfully participates in all aspects of life.

An inclusive environment is a welcoming environment:

o Disability is a natural part of the human experience, and an important part – but not the only part - of an individual's identity. Get to know children with disabilities as people with their own interests and ideas.

o Inclusion is also about gender, class, ethnicity, language, and other characteristics.

o Research documents the benefits of inclusion for typically developing peers, as well as for children with disabilities.

<< Quick Tip >>

Many people are unsure about how to act when someone looks or acts very different from them. When you meet a person who looks like they have a disability, greet them the same way you would anyone else. If you would shake hands, put out your hand. If you would offer a fist bump or high five, offer that. They will respond however they are able.

SNIP is a program of:

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

www.supportforfamilies.org

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An inclusive program:

o Has physically accessible and easy to use facilities and materials.

o Goes beyond accessibility to support involvement
  - Students are not just *there* next to their peers, but are actively involved.

o Has a consistent policy and strategy for determining accommodations that allow all children to participate.
  - An individualized assessment is used to understand the child's needs.
  - This policy is communicated clearly to family members/guardians.

Staff and leaders in inclusive programs:

o Focus on strengths rather than limitations.
  - "What <u>can</u> the child do?" not just "what can't the child do?"

o Focus on similarities first, then differences.
  - "What does Julia have in common with the other children?"

o Actively treat <u>everyone</u> – including each other - with dignity and respect.
  - Person-first language, "a child with a disability" rather than "disabled child" keeps our focus on the person.
  - Speaking directly to, rather than about or for, a child.

o Develop written plans for including children with disabilities.
  - Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of those plans over time.

o Are responsive to requests for accommodations, but don't assume children with disabilities need special treatment.

o Teach all students to value diversity and to respect and connect with others.

<< Quick Tip >>

Most children with disabilities can be successfully included with minimal accommodations and/or program-wide improvements that benefit all participants. <u>SNIP</u> is your first stop for detailed strategies, like visual supports or setting clear expectations.

Find additional Tip Sheets and more information about the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) at:
www.SNIPSF.org
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