



Inclusion is a team approach

Teamwork is an essential feature of inclusive practice in children's services. Effective teams don't just happen. Getting a team to this point requires visionary leadership and ongoing care and attention by all team members. All members of the team have a role to play.

To perform their job optimally, educators need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities. This means having detailed job descriptions, a thorough orientation process, and appropriate and adequate resources and support to get the job done. Having clear and up-to-date policies and procedures helps to guide decision making, inform actions and ensure that issues are dealt with in a consistent manner.

While everyone has a specific role to play, adopting a team approach also requires educators to work together and share responsibilities. This is particularly important in supporting the inclusion of children with diverse needs and abilities, and children from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Rather than seeing this as 'someone else's job', it is important that everyone in the team, including casual staff members and additional workers, work together to support the inclusion of all children. This also means it is not appropriate

for anyone, including additional workers engaged with support provided through the IPSP program, to only work with one or two children in a one-to-one capacity and to the exclusion of other children or staff.

Some key ingredients for working as a team:

- **Effective communication:** Clear and effective communication means checking your intentions and being clear about the message before it is given. It also requires an ability to listen actively to check that you have heard and understood the other person's message
- **Collaboration:** Working collaboratively acknowledges that everyone has a contribution to make. Recognise and work with the expertise, strengths and wisdom of everyone in the team
- **Team vision and team goals:** This means knowing where you are, where you want

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to be, and how you will get there as a team. Developing goals as a team ensures everyone has ownership and increases motivation and commitment to achieve

- **Interpersonal relationships:** Relationships are central to everything you do. Your capacity to do your job well is enhanced when you invest time in getting to know each other on a social level as well as a professional one
- **Working with solutions:** A solutions-focused approach means building on the progress made so far and what you are doing well, rather than focusing on what is not working
- **Commitment to ongoing learning and continuous improvement:** This requires you to take time to reflect on your practice and remain open to different perspectives and ideas, and trying out new ideas in order to build on and enhance your practice
- **Practising gratitude:** Research shows that expressing gratitude elevates wellbeing and positive emotions. Make it a regular part of your practice.

Reflection

- How do you build and maintain positive relationships with colleagues?
- How do you ensure your daily interactions are fair, respectful and equitable?
- How do you notice and acknowledge everyone's contribution?
- How do you create opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate your achievements and successes?

Key Points

- Effective and open communication are essential components of team work
- Invest time in developing relationships at both personal and professional levels
- Acknowledge and utilise the strengths and expertise of everyone in the team
- Focus on solutions and build on successes

If teams are unsure or have any further questions they can contact the *ACT Inclusion Support Agency (ISA)* for further assistance on **6287 3330** or via email **inclusion@commsatwork.org**

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