

Advocacy from the Start: Understanding Inclusion

This session is designed for faculty, staff and students who are interested in increasing their understanding of early childhood inclusion, and gaining resources to support students and families. Participants will learn about bite-size modules with embedded resources and activities to help families and professionals understand, promote, and advocate for inclusion for children birth to age 5. Participants will gain access to resources and materials that explore six topics on inclusion for use by families, practitioners, service coordinators, educators, faculty and administrators within formal and informal learning opportunities. We will review companion tools and explore ways they may be used to facilitate discussions and extend learning opportunities with families and professionals, and discuss ways to implement or adapt materials for use with families and professionals. Materials are available in both English and Spanish and can be used to help inform and advocate for inclusive practices across settings and situations.

Recognizing the diversity of learners, and key features of evidence-informed professional development, the materials include illustrative examples, narrated slides, embedded reflections, video clips, and extended learning activities. This package also aligns and references evidence-based content as it covers an orientation to the inclusion journey, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), commitment to inclusive practices (laws/policies), benefits to inclusive practices, inclusive settings, and implementation and advocacy for inclusion. This presentation will be organized around the learning objectives and anticipated participant outcomes. Adult learning principles and key features of evidence-informed professional development will be embedded such as: 1) explicit explanation and illustration of the packaged materials available for families and professionals working to understand inclusion, 2) opportunities to consider ways the materials may be implemented or adapted for programs, states or territories participants represent, 3) opportunities to discuss, reflect and ask questions, and 4) access to tools and resources to assist in future application.