

Inclusion tips : Down syndrome

Down syndrome is a common genetic condition that causes intellectual disability and other physical and learning challenges. Each child with a diagnosis of Down Syndrome is unique with their own talents, abilities, thoughts and interests.

Where to start

- ❖ Become informed about Down Syndrome and the individual child's abilities, needs and interests
- ❖ Use first person language, eg child with a disability, not disabled child
- ❖ If you're not sure what someone can do, ask. Work collaboratively to find the most appropriate ways you can help children be included
- ❖ Focus on what the child can do and the ways in which the child's ability can be developed
- ❖ Model acceptance, a positive attitude will influence others
- ❖ Have expectations – by having expectations that a child will be able to achieve something, though it may take longer, you are setting the child up for success
- ❖ As with all children (and where appropriate) it is important to expect children with Down Syndrome to follow the rules and routines of the activity.
- ❖ Acknowledge achievements – let children know their efforts are valued
- ❖ Be creative and flexible – are there simple ways you can adapt or modify your activity to suit different abilities and give all children a chance to belong?



We recommend reading the *Shaping Outcomes Inclusion guide, Inclusion checklist and the disability factsheets*

Top tips

Clarify with the family how the child communicates with others
Speak less, simplify your language and use key words
Express one idea at a time, in the order they will happen
Use simple and natural gestures
Allow time to respond
Use positive statements
Children with Down Syndrome are often visual learners, so use visuals to support communication

Social Stories

Children with Down Syndrome may have difficulty understanding social cues such as body language, facial expressions, gestures and eye contact. Social stories can be helpful for children to understand the who, what, where how and why of social situations and help children learn appropriate behaviour and responses.

<http://www.thegraycenter.org/>

Visual Supports

Visual information allows children extra time to process information and to understand what is going to happen and what is expected of them. Visual supports can range from body movements such as body language, natural gestures, key word sign and the use of objects, symbols and pictures to activity schedules or social stories.

If you would like more information about community inclusion, we have developed a series of factsheets and checklists for families and community activities.

These can be found at: www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au

For further information about Down syndrome:

<http://www.downsyndrome.org.au>

http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/special_needs/special_needs.html



Shaping Outcomes

early childhood intervention service

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