



INCLUSION IS
EVERYONE'S
BUSINESS

TIP SHEET

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How to create a welcoming environment

What's important for all children?

- To feel safe and secure
- To feel valued and accepted
- To make friends/share interests with other children
- To allow their voice to be heard
- To make their own choices
- To have opportunities to learn new things
- To build trusting relationships
- To have their unique interests and strengths acknowledged
- To have opportunities to contribute to their communities
- To participate meaningfully in areas that interest them

How can you ensure that your environment is welcoming?

- Create a consistent and predictable environment. Ensure children have a familiar routine upon entry to your program. A [visual schedule](#) may be used to support this.
- Ensure that children have consistent instructors/team members that are familiar. Build positive relationships with all children.
- Wherever possible give families and children plenty of notice of any changes to the group, such as new staff or children attending their session.
- Use [social stories](#) to help prepare children for new events or changes in the program.
- Get to know all the children. You may like to use the '[All About Me](#)' worksheet or '[Child Snapshot](#)'.
- Use [inclusive language](#) and address children and family members by their names.
- Tune in to what children are saying and use effective [communication](#) strategies.
- Ensure that there is a quiet and inviting space for children to retreat to when needing a break. A [sensory space](#) or sensory toys can be useful.
- Keep group sizes small to reduce waiting times and noise levels. This also gives children more opportunities to get to know each other.
- Promote and provide opportunities for social participation and engagement with other children.
- Get down to children's eye-level (faced-to-face) when speaking.
- Talk to children in a calm manner and ensure you have their attention before speaking.