

# INCLUDE NORTH DAKOTA

A comprehensive study of inclusive childcare across ND, Fall 2021

- 567 parents of children with disabilities ages birth - 17 across North Dakota
- 750 childcare providers across North Dakota

Participants took part in surveys and round table discussions



## FINDINGS:

***There is a lack of childcare in ND; especially for children with disabilities who require extra care and those who need care outside the typical work day. Most parents of children with disabilities struggle to find childcare!***

Children with disabilities are being denied childcare for a variety of reasons from lack of bowel/bladder control, diabetes, allergies, the presence of certain disabilities or syndromes, to a history of known behavioral outbursts and special health care needs.

Disability itself is a barrier; if children don't fit the "mold" for what is typical they are often excluded from the outset.

***Though there is strong belief that children with disabilities should be included with their peers; most childcare situations in ND are not inclusive. Why?***

Fear  
Staffing needs  
Inadequate funding  
No experience

Training needs  
Shortage of time  
"full plates"

***Sadly, just like in schools, some children with disabilities are being suspended and expelled from childcare centers! Why?***

Children with disabilities are sent home most often for behavioral issues (often related to their disability) and for the complexity of care they require.

Afterschool programs lead in suspensions and expulsions in North Dakota followed by private childcare centers.

Yes, we want safe childcare for all our children; to provide this, childcare workers need training, practice, and mentorship on how to efficiently model, positively manage, and effectively change behavior.

***Parents of children with disabilities need access to childcare! Why?***

To work and provide for their families as well as to “take a break” from the challenges inherent in caring for a child with disabilities.

***Why is inclusive childcare important?***

It is important to all children; not just children with disabilities!

Inclusive childcare experiences provide the

foundation for valuing the strengths and abilities of others.

Children in these settings have greater social, problem-solving, and

communication skills and research shows they are better prepared for school.

Inclusive childcare provides the chance for all children to develop friendships, be challenged, enhance self-esteem, value diversity, and increase expectations about possibilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Support the resiliency of childcare workers in North Dakota.
- Expand the North Dakota Inclusion Support Program for childcare by including both generalized and targeted training and greater access to “just in time” services. Include access to nurses and well-trained positive behavioral specialists.
- Increase access to inclusive childcare across North Dakota by providing increased funding to childcare centers willing to become more inclusive. Provide parents of children with disabilities with increased financial assistance for childcare.
- Establish a more robust education system for childcare providers; leveraging existing resources, requiring experiences with children with disabilities, and providing mentors.
- Establish a coordinated system of care. In ND many agencies provide care to children with disabilities. Require increased collaboration between these entities to allow for more efficiency and better opportunities for inclusive childcare services.
- Develop public/private partnerships to increase availability of inclusive childcare for children with disabilities; especially during “atypical” hours. Leverage these partnerships to enhance funding options.