

Organizational Governance Policy

Inclusion, Accessibility, and Equity Policy

POLICY POSITION

Connections is committed to serving all families. We celebrate the diversity of the world and are committed to including every race, colour, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or ability in our activities. In our ever-changing and increasingly diverse world, Connections fosters environments and programs that celebrate different ways of knowing and that are accessible, equitable, diverse, and inclusive including supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities and complex needs.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our programs and services reflect the City of Windsor, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services current policies, standards and requirements and expectations with respect to inclusion, accessibility, equity, and services for those with complex needs.

PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Connections inclusion, access and equity principles of service delivery are:

- **Accessibility:** We provide an accessible, welcoming, and user-friendly space that continuously works towards meeting the needs of families, staff, volunteers, and visitors (physically, developmentally, emotionally, financially).
- **Equity:** We strive to ensure meaningful engagement opportunities that are fair, open, and respectful while addressing any imbalances.
- **Diversity:** We recognize that individuals uniquely represent different social and historical backgrounds; we invite families, staff, and volunteers interested in participating to guide us in the continual development of programming offered at Connections. We are keen to continually learn, incorporate, and celebrate cultural perspectives in the programming offered.
- **Inclusion:** We incorporate a family-focused approach that aims to reduce barriers and create a safe and welcoming environment for our families, staff, and volunteers. All children are able to actively and meaningfully participate in our early years programs and are supported to form authentic, caring relationships with their peers and educators
- **Different ways of knowing:** We strive to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment by listening to our families, staff, and volunteers. We proactively find ways to support and encourage people with no voice, who face incredible challenges to raising their families, and find ways to work with them to identify and recognize what support they need.



SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers who provide and support the services at Connections Early Years Family Centre and it outlines the steps we take to make our services as considerate and as accessible as possible.

This policy reflects the foundational conditions of Ontario's pedagogy for the early years (How Does Learning Happen?) and articulates a strength-based view of children, families, and professionals supported by four foundations that are essential for all children to grow and flourish: Belonging, Wellbeing, Engagement, and Expression. Ontario's Vision for the Early Years stipulates:

"All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and childcare programs and services that are child- and family-centred and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being."

GUIDELINES

INTEGRATED SUPPORT

We require educators, therapists and consultants to intentionally collaborate and make relevant, timely referrals and connections to other programs and services to support children and families' needs so they may benefit from this collaboration.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

We ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by families with disabilities while accessing our services.

COMMUNICATION

We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider their disability.

SERVICE ANIMALS

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

SUPPORT PERSONS

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises. We will notify families of this through a notice posted on our premises and website.

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTION

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for families with disabilities (EarlyON Centre, Pre-School Speech and Language, Infant Hearing, Blind Low Vision and Caregiver-Mediated Early Years Programs), Connections Early Years Family Centre will notify families promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services if available. The notice will be placed at 795 Giles Blvd. East and all applicable satellite offices in Windsor and Essex County.

TRAINING FOR STAFF

Research demonstrates that supporting educator, therapist and consultant capacity to increase their skills and knowledge helps address the needs of all children in their programs and fosters effective inclusion practices. Connections Early Years Family Centre will provide training to employees,



volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf. Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our plan.

Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

- Administration Personnel
- Managers
- Direct Service Delivery Personnel
- Support Personnel
- Volunteers

This training will be provided for staff and volunteers within six months of continuous employment from their start date. This training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (with latest amendments on April 22, 2014) and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- Connections Early Years Family Centre's plan related to the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- How to use automatic doors where applicable.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Connections Early Years Family Centre's services.

RECORDS OF TRAINING

Connections Early Years Family Centre will keep records of staff and volunteers trained, the category of staff trained, the date of training and the individuals trained (individuals names are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act).

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service will be available online.

FEEDBACK PROCESS

Families who wish to provide feedback on the way Connections Early Years Family Centre provides programs and services can send an email to info@connectwithus.ca or speak to us in-person, fill out an evaluation questionnaire, or contact us by telephone at 519-252-9696.

All feedback will be directed to the Executive Director. You can expect to hear back in five (5) working days. Complaints will be addressed according to our organization's regular complaint management procedures.

