

## **ExceleRate Illinois Award of Excellence**

### **for the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs**

#### **Introduction to the Standards for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs**

Inclusion is a basic principle in early care and education. This principle guides policies and practices that are embedded throughout early childhood programs and classrooms, ensuring that young children with special needs are cared for and educated alongside their peers who do not have special needs. Federal law not only protects the rights of children and adults with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]; Rehabilitation Act [Section 504]), but specifically requires that infants and toddlers be served and educated in natural environments (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], Part C), with preschoolers to be served and educated in the least restrictive environment (IDEA, Part B) (Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge, 2012). In early care and education, the principle of inclusion, and the policies and practices that flow from it, increasingly also have come to be applied to all children whose special needs are recognized and accommodated within early childhood programs and classrooms, including those with individual plans in the areas of health, mental health or behavior. In this document, the term "special needs" encompasses all of these children, whereas the term "disabilities" refers specifically to those children with special needs who have in place an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individual Education Plan (IEP), or 504 Plan (rehabilitation plan guaranteeing access to services for individuals with disabilities). (See Appendix A for additional definitions.)

A *Joint Position Statement* (2009) of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) highlights three key practice principles for early childhood inclusion, to be utilized collectively in high quality early childhood programs and services. Each is defined within the *Joint Position Statement*:

**Access**...Every child has access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings and natural environments, through the removal of structural, social, and learning barriers and multiple, varied formats for instruction and learning.

**Participation**...Some children receive additional, individualized accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning opportunities with peers and adults, and to benefit from those opportunities.

**Supports**...An infrastructure of systems-level supports for coordinated services and personnel development is in place to undergird the efforts of individuals and organizations providing inclusive services to children and families.

Collaboration is fundamental to achieving the full benefits of inclusion. When children receive services from different professionals or in more than one setting, their development and learning benefit when information on assessments and intervention practices are shared among parents and those professionals and across those settings. However, sharing information must be done with full respect for the family's wishes, and only with compliance to all applicable federal, state, and local privacy and confidentiality laws. The practices recommended in this document are based on the assumption that they are accomplished with full, signed consent of the family.

The Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, part of ExceleRate Illinois, reflects these principles.

#### **Framework for Standards and Evidence**

The principles outlined above apply to all early childhood programs and classrooms. Therefore, whereas the primary focus in this document is on the *Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs*, the framework also provides guidance for policies and practices to support inclusion for programs in the Silver and Gold Circles of Quality. Specifically, the framework includes:

- *Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs*: Standards, evidence, and a verification process for accomplishing the award (described below)
- *Guidance for Policies and Practices to Support Inclusion in Silver and Gold Circle Programs*: Policies and practices indicating that a program is moving toward high quality in including children with special needs and their families (Appendix B)
- *Preparation Activities for Gold Circle Programs Intending to Apply for an Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs*: Programs intending to apply for this Award of Excellence may initiate this process by participating in training and self-assessment related to this Award (see Appendix C)

### **Evidence and Approval Process**

Any program that has achieved the Gold Circle may apply for this Award of Excellence. To apply, programs with 15 or more children must be serving at least one child with a disability (IFSP, IEP, or 504 plan) in an inclusive classroom. Programs with fewer than 15 children may demonstrate a regular practice during the past three years of including at least one child with an IFSP, IEP or 504 Plan and an active practice of recruiting children with disabilities into the program.

The types of programs that include children with special needs vary widely in size, settings, requirements, and resources, as well as in ages of children served. There is no one instrument, observation, accreditation, or monitoring approach that is used across all settings and types of programs. In recognition of these factors, and to provide the opportunity for all Gold Circle programs to apply for this Award, approval for this Award will be based on a three-step process:

- (a) **Self-Study**, to include completion of a self-assessment that documents attainment of the standards, including completion of the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist*, which contains items that reflect excellence in inclusive practices, as supported by a *Program Portfolio* with program-selected supporting documentation;
- (b) **Peer Review**, by a state-approved committee of peers, of portfolios from those programs that believe they have met the stated standards, including achieving the top score on a minimum of 85% of items on the checklist, and therefore are ready for Review, and
- (c) Upon recommendation by the committee, **On-Site Verification** by a state-approved assessor that the program has met all standards, including achieving a minimum of 85% of items on the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist* (Table 1), through observation and interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents (if possible), based on a standard verification guide, with specific items from the *Checklist* to be selected as part of the Peer Review process.

The intent of this 3-step process is that programs will be able to provide evidence from a variety of sources that may differ depending on the setting and on information available from previous state-approved assessments and monitoring visits, as well as from current documentation that highlights practices directly related to inclusion. For each Standard and for each item on the Checklist, examples of possible documentation are provided. However, examples are not meant to be exhaustive; some types of evidence may not be available to all programs, and some programs may have types of evidence not listed in the document. Therefore, programs should develop their Self-Study Portfolios in the most convincing manner possible, using any forms of evidence they feel are relevant and sufficient to demonstrate each standard. (The Checklist is shown in Table 1; examples of evidence for each item are shown in Table 2).

The Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs will be maintained through (a) annual interim reports documenting activities and progress toward program and classroom goals addressed on individual program and classroom plans, including accomplishment and revisions in goals, (b) a 3-year updated plan based on self-assessment and *Program Portfolio*, (c) documentation that the program remains in the Gold Circle of quality, and (d) documentation that the program administrator and teachers completed a minimum of 9 or 6 clock hours of approved training (respectively) on inclusion of young children with special needs within those three years.

**References**

Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge (CONNECT) (2012). Policy advisory: The law on inclusive education (Rev. ed.). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute, Author.

Division for Early Childhood & National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009). Early Childhood Inclusion. Missoula, MT and Washington, DC: Authors.

## ***Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs***

This award addresses standards in each of the following areas, as outlined below:

1. *Teaching and Learning*
  - 1F. *Inclusion of Children with Special Needs*
3. *Leadership and Management*
  - 3A. *Program Administration*
4. *Qualifications and Continuing Education*
  - 4A. *Administrator Qualifications*
  - 4B. *Staff Qualifications*

### ***1F. Inclusion of Children with Special Needs***

**Standard 1:** The program demonstrates commitment to achieving the principles of full inclusion; natural proportions; and full participation of children with disabilities and their families in natural environments.

**Evidence:** The proportion of children with special needs in the program reflects the proportion of young children with disabilities in Illinois, birth through 2 and 3-5, as indicated by the proportional representation of children with IFSPs, IEPs, and 504 plans in the program; a majority of children in inclusive classrooms are children who do not have disabilities; written documentation that program is committed to providing Early Intervention, Special Education, and other special services in children's everyday environments (i.e., natural environments for Early Intervention, inclusive environments for Special Education)

**Standard 2:** The program demonstrates inclusive program and classroom practices that support access, participation, and support of children with special needs and their families.

**Evidence:** The program achieves a minimum score of 85% on the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist*, as verified by a state-approved committee of peers and on-site Assessor.

### ***3A. Program Administration***

**Standard 3:** Program administrators have completed Gateways to Opportunity-approved training on the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist* and portfolio development for the Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs.

**Evidence:** Documentation of Gateways to Opportunity-approved training on self-assessment and portfolio development using the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist*, and completion of DVD or on-line introduction to the *Inclusive Classroom Profile*

### ***4A. Administrator Qualifications***

**Standard 4:** Program administrators demonstrate current knowledge of state and community service systems, policies, and requirements related to children with special needs and their families, and of local, state, and national recommended practices and resources related to inclusive care and education.

**Evidence:** Documentation of:

- 3 clock hours of training, completed within the past 3 years, of required, Gateways-approved training on *Early Childhood Systems* (or documentation of equivalent knowledge), to include state and community service systems, policies, and requirements related to children with special needs and their families;
- 9 clock hours, completed within the past 3 years, of Gateways-approved training (or equivalent coursework) on inclusion of young children with special needs and their families, to include completion of required *Orientation to the Self-Study for the Award of Excellence for Inclusion with Special Needs*

### ***4B. Staff Qualifications***

**Standard 5:** All classroom and special services staff who provide direct services to children with special needs have current knowledge of requirements and recommended practices for children with

special needs and their families, and implement assessment, curriculum, instructional, and environmental practices that support education and care of children with special needs and their families in inclusive, natural environments.

**Evidence:** Documentation of:

- completion of 3 clock hours of on-line and/or face-to-face training on the *Inclusive Classroom Profile and*
- a minimum of 6 clock hours, completed within the past 3 years, of Gateways to Opportunity-approved training (or equivalent coursework) on inclusion of children with special needs and their families, to include training in two or more of the following areas: assessment of young children with special needs; enhancing learning for young children with special needs; collaborating with families in providing education and care to young children with special needs

Appendix A  
**Definitions Used in Award of Excellence for  
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs**

- Administrator - an individual responsible for the overall quality of the program, or for providing support to direct service staff in relation to providing high-quality services to children with special needs and their families (e.g., program director, administrative support staff such as disability coordinator or curriculum supervisor)
- Agency - the overall administrative entity under which the local program operates, including the public school, Head Start, Early Intervention, and public or private preschools or child care programs
- Approved Professional Development - training approved by Illinois Gateways to Opportunity
- Childhood Outcomes Summary (COS) - a summary documenting the status and progress of children with IFSPs and IEPs, with emphasis on how children use their emerging skills in everyday environments, based on multiple sources of information across contexts and individuals familiar with the child (e.g., classroom staff, family members, Early Intervention personnel, special service staff); required for state and federal reporting and when entering/exiting Early Intervention (included in the IFSP) and/or early childhood special education (completed COS form)
- Classroom - setting in which teachers provide services to support the health, development, and/or education of two or more unrelated children in a group environment
- Direct Service Staff - any individual who provides direct services to children with special needs and their families, including teachers, therapists, and other related personnel, whether internal to the program site, obtained through collaboration with other agencies or entities, or contracted by the program or collaborating agency
- Direct Service Team - the team of direct service staff, including those from one or more early childhood programs, or who are independent service providers, who work directly with a child and his/her family, and who are responsible for implementing high quality care, education, therapy, or other services for that child; when the parent wishes, and with the parent's consent, individual assessment results and intervention plans and strategies will be shared among professionals who provide services to the child and/or family, to facilitate coordination and integration of services
- Disabilities - as used in this document, this term refers to children with special needs who have in place an IFSP, IEP, or 504 plan
- Evidence - the documentation used to support accomplishment of standards, which may vary depending on the type of program and scores available from previous observations and monitoring by state-approved assessors, but may include relevant, previous scores from items on rating scales such as the Environment Rating Scales or others; results from monitoring or accreditation visits such as those by state agencies; or documentation such as children's files, lesson plans, meeting agendas, photographs, or other. Evidence should be from the current or previous year and/or from the most recent monitoring or assessment visits used for achieving/maintaining the Gold Circle
- Illinois Gateways to Opportunity - a centralized location for collecting and sharing information on training that has been examined and determined to meet high quality training standards, across different training organizations and providers. Training on "inclusion and/or children with special needs" refers to training in which at least half of the content directly addresses principles and strategies for inclusion and/or strategies and/or needs of children with IFSPs, IEPs, 504 plans, or other individual plans implemented in education and care settings
- Inclusion - a principle and a desired result of experiences for children with and without special needs, that embody values, policies, and practices that support the right of every child and his or her family to participate as full members of families, communities, and society, including full access to and participation in community-based early childhood centers and programs (Based on DEC/NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Early Childhood Inclusion)
- Individualized Family Service Plan Team (IFSP Team) or Individual Education Program Team (IEP Team) - depending on the age of the child, the team of family members, evaluators, service

coordinator, and teacher(s) responsible for developing or implementing all or portions of an individualized service plan; at the family's request and with the family's consent, the IFSP or IEP development and/or implementation team will also include other individuals of the family's choice, including teachers or other staff from multiple development, education and care settings in which the child participates

**Individual Service Plan** - an individual plan that outlines services, responsibilities, and timelines for Early Intervention or special education (i.e., IFSP, IEP, 504 plan), or other individual plan outlining services and supports designed, with family participation and consent, to address a child's development, health, mental, mental health, and learning goals and outcomes within the context of home, early childhood program, and community, based on evaluation of the child and on the concerns, priorities and resources of the family

**Least Restrictive Environment** - education and care settings designed for children without special needs, where young children with special needs are educated and cared for alongside their same-age peers who do not have special needs, with individualized accommodations and interactions to support their learning and development; with parent request or consent, information will be shared across multiple development, education and care settings in which the child participates

**Natural Environment** - a setting that is typical for infants and toddlers without disabilities or delays, including families' homes, early education and care programs, and other community settings where families spend the most time with their children, where families, teachers, and other direct service staff can use the child's daily routines and interests as natural learning opportunities to teach and support new skills and behaviors; with parent request or consent, information will be shared across different natural environments in which the child participates

**Partnership Agreement** - any agreement, formal or informal, legally binding or non-legally binding, that outlines agreed-upon roles and responsibilities between and among legal entities responsible for supporting the development, education, health, or well-being of young children and their families, including interagency agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding and Memoranda of Agreement

**Policy** - a set of stated principles or plan intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, or directions

**Program** - the entity that provides early education and care(e.g., center, site, district) that operates with an Administrator or Director responsible for the quality of early education and care for young children in that program, including those with special needs

**Special Needs** - individual characteristics and needs that qualify a child for special services of a type or amount beyond those required by children generally, as outlined on an individualized service plan such as an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), IEP (Individual Education Plan), 504 plan, behavior support plan, mental health plan, or health plan developed in response to identified needs, including children with special health care needs as defined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau; See [http://childhealthdata.org/docs/nsch-docs/whoarecshcn\\_revised\\_07b-pdf.pdf](http://childhealthdata.org/docs/nsch-docs/whoarecshcn_revised_07b-pdf.pdf)

**Teacher** - educator or child-care provider responsible for ensuring and promoting health, safety, development, and learning of children in a group context

Appendix B

**Guidance for Policies and Practices to Support Inclusion of Children with Special Needs  
In Silver Circle and Gold Circle Programs**

Circle	Inclusion Policies and Practices
SILVER CIRCLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families of children with special needs are welcomed to the program and program materials use respectful language and visual displays to portray positive views of children and adults with multiple forms of diversity, including diversity of ability.</li> <li>• Children's development, health and sensory systems and abilities, including those with already identified special needs, are screened annually using valid, broad-based, developmentally appropriate screening tools and processes, and families are referred, with their consent, for special services when indicated.</li> <li>• Program provides families with information about community screenings and special services, including Early Intervention, Head Start, and public school early childhood special education; disseminates to families a current resource of agencies and providers who offer services to children with special needs and their families; and facilitates connections for additional assessment and services when desired by the family.</li> <li>• Program administrator and classroom staff provide opportunities for families of children with special needs to share their children's individual service plans (such as an IEP or individual health plan) and/or special needs assessments, to inform classroom practice.</li> <li>• Program administrator and at least one additional staff member have been trained to administer and interpret a broad-based, valid developmental screening tool, and assist other personnel in learning and using it.</li> <li>• Program administrator and at least one teacher in each classroom have completed, within the past two years, a minimum of 3 clock- hours of Gateways-approved professional development on inclusion of children with special needs within natural, inclusive contexts in classroom, home, and community.</li> </ul>
GOLD CIRCLE	<p><b>Guidance for Programs in Silver Circle, PLUS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program policies, practices and materials related to diversity emphasize understanding of and respect for beliefs, values, and practices of individual families, including those related to family perspectives about children with special needs.</li> <li>• Program administrator and other supervisory staff responsible for program policies and/or practices participate in local early childhood network of agencies and providers that provide services to young children and their families, including those with special needs (e.g., local Interagency Council for Early Intervention).</li> <li>• Programs actively disseminate to families, providers, and other agencies, information about the program's vision, policies and practices related to inclusion of children with special needs and their families.</li> <li>• Children with special needs are included in all initial and ongoing classroom assessment related to the general curriculum, and results are used along with those of other children to inform curriculum goal setting and planning.</li> <li>• Individual goals for children with special needs, based on the classroom curriculum, are shown on lesson plans along with those for other children, reflecting results of classroom assessments.</li> <li>• Teachers contribute to development and review of individual service plans for children with special needs.</li> <li>• Classroom and other direct service staff collaborate with families to make modifications in classroom routines, curriculum, and environments that will support children's ability to participate in play, activities and classroom routines.</li> <li>• Program administrator and all direct service staff have completed, within the past two years, a minimum of 3 clock-hours of Gateways-approved professional development related to providing services to children with special needs within natural, inclusive contexts in classroom, home, and community.</li> </ul>

## Appendix C

### **Activities for Gold Circle Programs with Intent to Apply for an Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs**

- Program staff complete self-assessment and related program development on items shown in *Guidance for Policies and Practices to Support Inclusion in Programs at the Silver and Gold Circles* (Appendix B)
- Program and classrooms participate in Gateways to Opportunity-approved training on Standards and on self-assessments related to the *Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs*, including the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist* and the *Inclusive Classroom Profile*.
- Program and classrooms initiate self-assessment using the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist* and the *Inclusive Classroom Profile*

**Table 1**  
**The Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist**

*This self-assessment tool provides a framework for collaborative discussion as programs examine program principles and practices that reflect high-quality inclusion and move toward achieving or maintain an Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs. Reflect on past experiences as well as on what you hope to accomplish. Consider the types of evidence that you can use to support your ratings (see Table 2 for examples of evidence that may be appropriate to your setting). Evidence should be recent (within the past year or from the most recent monitoring and assessment visit related to being a Gold Circle program). All voices are important as you consider each item. Based on the results, decide which items you want to include as goals that will improve the quality of inclusion in your program, and include these in an Individual Program Development Plan (see Table 3 for an example of a plan form). Track your progress on these goals by documenting activities and accomplishments; these will become part of your Evidence for achieving and maintaining the Award.*

<i>ITEMS</i>	<i>Not Yet Developed</i>	<i>Being Developed</i>	<i>Partially Implemented</i>	<i>Fully Established</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
<i>Area 1A. Learning Environment</i> <b>1</b> - Program and classroom spaces are accessible to all children, and adaptive furniture and equipment for routine care and for indoor and outdoor play and learning, support inclusion of children with special needs in all activities with other children.					
<b>2</b> - Accommodations are made to classroom play and teaching materials to support each child's participation in peer interactions, the general curriculum, and learning opportunities related to their own individual goals and outcomes.					
<i>Area 1B. Curriculum</i> <b>3</b> - Teachers, other direct service staff, and administrative support staff collaborate with families to identify goals and outcomes from the general education curriculum and from individual education and service plans such as IFSPs and IEPs to incorporate into play, activities, and classroom routines.					
<i>Area 1C. Instructional Quality</i> <b>4</b> - Strategies, supports, and services identified in individual service plans are provided in the classroom and are embedded into classroom play, activities, and routines.					

<p><b>5</b> - Classroom and program staff help each child engage in positive, sustained social interactions and play with peers, and provide opportunities for each child to be a fully participating member of the classroom community.</p>					
<p><b>6</b> - Classroom staff support development and learning by matching individual support strategies such as modeling, asking questions, and prompting to abilities, goals, and intended outcomes of individual children.</p>					
<p><i>Area 1D. Child Screening</i>  <b>7</b> - Specific markers (e.g., low energy, withdrawal, acting out), targeted screening (e.g., social emotional screening) and ongoing observation and documentation are used in addition to broad-based screening to identify and refer children and families who may benefit from further evaluation or specialized services.</p>					
<p><i>Area 1E. Child Assessment</i>  <b>8</b> - The program has written procedures and guidelines for gathering information from families on their priorities, goals and desired outcomes for their child's participation in the program, as well as on family routines and strategies that support their child's development and learning.</p>					
<p><b>9</b> - Classroom and special service staff collaborate in implementing and using initial and ongoing assessment for classroom and special service planning, and in summarizing and reviewing individual and group outcomes for evaluation and modification of classroom effectiveness.</p>					
<p><i>Area 1F. Inclusion of Children with Special Needs</i>  <b>10</b> - Written policies and procedures encourage and support collaboration and partnership among internal and external personnel and agencies serving the same child and family, including specific guidelines for joint planning, decision-making and problem solving related to educational, behavioral, medical, adaptive, social service, or other individual needs and resources, with family consent.</p>					
<p><b>11</b> - Program's advisory committee and/or parent board is regularly updated about policy and practices related to inclusion and special needs, and actively recruits parents of children with special needs for service on the committee or board.</p>					

<p><i>Area 2A - Family and Community Engagement</i></p> <p><b>12</b> - Families of children with special needs are included in all family activities provided or facilitated by the program, and information about the program's vision and strategies for inclusion of all children is shared with all families.</p>					
<p><b>13</b> - Written policies and procedures encourage and support families of children with special needs as partners in screening, assessment, choosing desired outcomes and setting goals, and instruction related to their child; support frequent communication between families, classroom and other direct service staff; and involve families in evaluating the program in relation to their goals and desired outcomes for their children.</p>					
<p><b>14</b> - Teachers collaborate with families, other service staff, and administrative support staff to incorporate individual and classroom goals, strategies, and supports into family routines at home and in the community.</p>					
<p><b>15</b> - Written policies and procedures identify and promote access to internal and external resources that assist families in accessing needed systems, services, and public benefits, including receiving individual support for finding, understanding, negotiating, participating in, and coordinating services among Early Intervention, special education, and other systems (e.g., social services, health, supplemental security income) working with their child both within the program and in the community.</p>					
<p><b>16</b> - The program administrator and other management staff (e.g., administrative support staff) participate regularly in community and state systems and activities that support public knowledge of and coordination and integration among services for children and families, including those with special needs, and provides leadership for high quality inclusion within the program.</p>					
<p><b>17</b> - Written agreements support collaboration among members of the local early childhood community (child care, the Early Intervention system, Head Start, public school early childhood program), including written procedures, roles, and responsibilities for shared tasks and activities (e.g., identifying children and families in need of services, sharing information, coordinating services, providing special services to children with special needs and their families, evaluating child and family outcomes).</p>					

<p><i>Area 2B - Transitions</i>  <b>18</b> - Program policies, procedures, and practices to support transition of children with special needs entering into and exiting from the program are included in partnership agreements and include timelines, roles, and responsibilities of both sending and receiving programs, including responsibilities for sharing and transferring records.</p>					
<p><i>Area 3B - Group Size and Ratios</i>  <b>19</b> - Early childhood programs and classrooms within which children with special needs are served meet agency, state, and federal requirements for programs and classrooms that include children with special needs and their families.</p>					
<p><i>Area 3C - Continuous Quality Improvement</i>  <b>20</b> - Program administrators engage staff in systematic, collaborative, ongoing program and classroom self-assessment using the <i>Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist</i>, and demonstrate progress toward achieving program goals based on results of the assessment, as stated on an individual program development plan.</p>					
<p><b>21</b> - Teachers and special service staff engage in systematic, ongoing self-assessment using the <i>Inclusive Classroom Profile</i>, and demonstrate progress toward achieving classroom and individual professional development goals based on results of the assessment.</p>					

**Signatures of Participants in Discussion** *(Please provide signatures for all administrators and staff whose work is a part of this award)*

I verify that I participated in discussion of these standards in preparation for applying for this award:

Early Childhood Administrator(s) :

Classroom Teacher(s):

Special Service Staff:

Coach/Consultant:

I, the primary Administrator responsible for this process, verify that the individuals signing above participated in discussion of these standards in preparation for applying for this award:

**Table 2**  
**Examples of Evidence for Items on the *Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist***

Many types of evidence will be appropriate for the Portfolio, depending on the type of program, as well as on other contexts such as size and population. All evidence should be recent, i.e., within the past year or based on the most recent monitoring or assessment visit.

<b>Items*</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence*</b>
<p><i>Area 1A. Learning Environment</i></p> <p><b>1</b> - Program and classroom spaces are accessible to all children, and adaptive furniture and equipment for routine care and for indoor and outdoor play and learning, support inclusion of children with special needs in all activities with other children.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Scores on relevant items from previous observations completed by state-approved assessors [e.g., ERS scales, other]; scores from self-assessment on ICP; documentation from accreditation reviews [such as Head Start, NAEYC, NECPA]; other relevant documentation such as photographs and written descriptions</p>
<p><b>2</b> - Accommodations are made to classroom play and teaching materials to support each child's participation in peer interactions, the general curriculum, and learning opportunities related to their own individual goals and outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Scores on relevant items from previous observations completed by state-approved assessors [e.g., ERS scales, other]; scores from self-assessment on ICP; documentation from recent accreditation reviews; accommodations noted on IFSP/IEP plans (when desired by families) and/or strategies noted on classroom plans; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written descriptions</p>
<p><i>Area 1B. Curriculum</i></p> <p><b>3</b> - Teachers, other direct service staff, and administrative support staff collaborate with families to identify goals and outcomes from the general education curriculum and from individual education and service plans such as IFSPs and IEPs to incorporate into play, activities, and classroom routines.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Documentation from previous observations by approved monitor that lesson plans contain individual, curriculum-related goals and outcomes for children with special needs; lesson plans and/or other individualized planning forms (e.g., matrix plans) show individual goals and outcomes for children with special needs; samples of lesson plans or other daily planning documents showing individualized goals and outcomes from individual service plans; scores on relevant items from previous observations by state approved assessors (e.g., ERS scales) or monitors; scores from self-assessment on relevant items from ICP; summaries of meetings showing team members; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written descriptions</p>

\* All items and evidence that relate to sharing information across environments or programs are based on this being desired by families and done with the families' consent.

<p><i>Area 1C. Instructional Quality</i></p> <p><b>4</b> - Strategies, supports, and services identified in individual service plans are provided in the classroom and are embedded into classroom play, activities, and routines.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Lesson plans and/or other individualized planning forms (e.g., matrix plans) show individual strategies, supports and interventions for children with special needs; scores on relevant items from previous observations by state approved assessors (e.g., ERS scales) or monitors; scores from self-assessment on relevant items from ICP; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written description</p>
<p><b>5</b> - Classroom and program staff help each child engage in positive, sustained social interactions and play with peers, and provide opportunities for each child to be a fully participating member of the classroom community.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Scores from self-assessment on relevant items from ICP; documentation of progress toward goals and outcomes on an individual service plan; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written description</p>
<p><b>6</b> - Classroom staff support development and learning by matching individual support strategies such as modeling, asking questions, and prompting to abilities, goals, and desired outcomes of individual children.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Strategies are documented on individual service plans and/or on classroom planning documents; scores from self-assessment on relevant items from ICP show implementation of support strategies; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written description</p>
<p><i>Area 1D. Child Screening</i></p> <p><b>7</b> - Specific markers (e.g., low energy, withdrawal, acting out), targeted screening (e.g., social emotional screening) and ongoing observation and documentation are used in addition to broad-based screening to identify and refer children and families who may benefit from further evaluation or specialized services.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Description of varied approaches to identifying children and families who may benefit from further evaluation or services; evidence that children and families have been identified and referred for further evaluation or services, specific markers and criteria for referral included in written descriptions of screening and referral process; documentation of completed screenings; documentation of referrals, if appropriate.</p>
<p><i>Area 1E. Child Assessment</i></p> <p><b>8</b> - The program has written procedures and guidelines for gathering information from families on their priorities, goals and desired outcomes for their child's participation in the program, as well as on family routines and strategies that support their child's development and learning.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Documentation (such as IFSP or IEP) that family is involved in assessment process and contributes information about priorities, goals, and family approaches to supporting the child's development and learning at home; documentation that child care and school teachers collaborate with families to gather family information on children's development (e.g., as members of assessment team).</p>

<p><b>9</b> - Classroom and special service staff collaborate in implementing and using initial and ongoing assessment for classroom and special service planning, and in summarizing and reviewing individual and group outcomes for evaluation and modification of classroom effectiveness.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Individual and group assessment portfolios and planning documents over time show evidence that initial and ongoing assessment are used for planning; documentation of collaboration in using assessment information for initial and ongoing planning; documentation of use of outcomes for modification of individual and group curriculum and instruction; documentation that teachers serve as members of planning teams (e.g., child care teachers included on IFSP/IEP teams).</p>
<p><i>Area 1F. Inclusion of Children with Special Needs</i></p> <p><b>10</b> - Written policies and procedures encourage and support collaboration and partnership among internal and external personnel and agencies serving the same child and family, including specific guidelines for joint planning, decision-making and problem solving related to educational, behavioral, medical, adaptive, social service, or other individual needs and resources, with family consent.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Written documentation demonstrating that the program is committed to allowing Early Intervention providers to deliver services in the natural environment; written descriptions of staff roles; staff schedules; documents resulting from team meetings; written procedures demonstrating that program supports child's teacher being a member of IFSP/IEP teams, with parent request/consent; evidence that individual service plans are implemented across multiple programs in which child is participating; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written description</p>
<p><b>11</b> - Program's advisory committee and/or parent board is regularly updated about policy and practices related to inclusion and special needs, and actively recruits parents of children with special needs for service on the committee or board.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Meeting agendas; roster of membership; description of efforts to recruit parents</p>
<p><i>Area 2A - Family and Community Engagement</i></p> <p><b>12</b> - Families of children with special needs are included in all family activities provided or facilitated by the program, and information about the program's vision and strategies for inclusion of all children is shared with all families.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Description of family events; agendas of family meetings; pictures of posted mission; copies of information provided to all parents; copies of information shared with individual families</p>
<p><b>13</b> - Written policies and procedures encourage and support families of children with special needs as partners in screening, assessment, setting desired outcomes and goals, and in instruction related to their child; support frequent communication between families, classroom and other direct service staff; and involve families in evaluating the program in relation to their goals and desired outcomes for their children.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Written procedural guidelines for collaboration with families of children with special needs (e.g., support for child care teacher to be member of IFSP/IEP team); relevant items from previous observations (e.g., ERSs); self-assessment on relevant items from ICP; documentation of frequent communication with parents; documentation of parent involvement in evaluation of their child's program</p>

<p><b>14</b> - Teachers collaborate with families, other service staff, and administrative support staff to incorporate individual and classroom goals, desired outcomes, strategies, and supports into family routines at home and in the community.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Documentation of collaborative meetings and/or other ways of communicating with families about carry-over of classroom and program goals and strategies related to individual service plan and to classroom curriculum; documentation that teacher participates as a member of planning teams (e.g., IFSP/IEP), with request/consent of family; documentation of carryover of goals, outcomes, strategies across environments; other relevant documentation such as photographs, artifacts, and written description</p>
<p><b>15</b> - Written policies and procedures identify and promote access to internal and external resources that assist families in accessing needed systems, services, and public benefits, including receiving individual support for finding, understanding, negotiating, participating in, and coordinating services among Early Intervention, special education, and other systems (e.g., social services, health, supplemental security income) working with their child both within the program and in the community.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Documentation of up-to-date, comprehensive array of program and community services, with procedural policies and procedures for promoting family access, to include MOUs, written descriptions, artifacts, and other relevant documentation; documentation that brochures regarding special services (e.g., Early Intervention public awareness brochures) are accessible to families</p>
<p><b>16</b> - The program administrator and other management staff (e.g., administrative support staff) participate regularly in community and state systems and activities that support public knowledge of and coordination and integration among services for children and families, including those with special needs, and provides leadership for high quality inclusion within the program.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Attendance sheets and agendas from meetings (e.g., Early Intervention Local Interagency Council); descriptions of meetings attended; evidence of actions taken based on knowledge of community and state systems activities</p>
<p><b>17</b> - Written agreements support collaboration among members of the local early childhood community (child care, the Early Intervention system, Head Start, and public school early childhood program), including written procedures, roles and responsibilities for shared tasks and activities (identifying children and families in need of services, for sharing information, coordinating services, providing special services to children with special needs and their families, evaluating child and family outcomes).</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Copies of written agreements with/among a minimum of each of Head Start, one Early Intervention CFC (Child and Family Connections), and public school program providing services to young children with disabilities; written agreements delineate procedures, roles and responsibilities for multiple areas of joint or overlapping responsibility (e.g., screening, assessment, program planning, program implementation, and evaluation of child and family outcomes), including contribution of teachers to the Childhood Outcomes Summary (COS); copies of IFSPs/IEPs or COS forms demonstrating participants in process; minutes from cross-agency meetings at level of service provision; documentation from recent monitoring and accreditation visits</p>

<p><i>Area 2B - Transitions</i>  <b>18</b> - Program policies, procedures, and practices to support transition of children with special needs entering into and exiting from the program are included in partnership agreements and include timelines, roles, and responsibilities of both sending and receiving programs, including responsibilities for sharing and transferring records.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Copies of partnership agreements (Memorandum of Understanding, Memorandum of Agreement, or other interagency agreement) for transition from Early Intervention into preschool and preschool into the K-12 system, with language outlining activities, timelines, roles and responsibilities for the transition process; participation by direct service providers in required transition activities of other systems such as preparation of Early Childhood Outcomes process for children with disabilities; transition plans outlining steps and services (e.g., Early Intervention Transition Plan; kindergarten transition plan); documentation regarding how information is shared across programs when families leave the system (e.g., move to a different district or state)</p>
<p><i>Area 3B - Group Size and Ratios</i>  <b>19</b> - Early childhood programs and classrooms within which children with special needs are served meet agency, state, and federal requirements for programs and classrooms that include children with special needs and their families.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Licensing or accreditation documentation for group size and ratios required for serving children with special needs; class lists</p>
<p><i>Area 3C - Continuous Quality Improvement</i>  <b>20</b> - Program administrators engage staff in systematic, collaborative, ongoing program and classroom self-assessment using the <i>Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist</i>, and demonstrate progress toward achieving program goals based on results of the assessment, as stated on an individual program development plan.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Self-assessment on <i>Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist</i> and other relevant checklists; relevant item scores from previous program and classroom rating scales (e.g., ERS scales, other); individual program plans with assessment-related goals; evidence of ongoing assessment and updated over time; documentation of activities (e.g., training, coaching) undertaken to address goals</p>
<p><b>21</b> - Teachers and special service staff engage in systematic, ongoing self-assessment using the <i>Inclusive Classroom Profile</i>, and demonstrate progress toward achieving classroom and individual professional development goals based on results of the assessment.</p>	<p><b>Examples of Evidence:</b> Self-assessment on relevant items from <i>Inclusive Classroom Profile</i> and other relevant checklists; relevant item scores from previous classroom rating scales (e.g., ERS scales); individual program plans and individual classroom plans with assessment-related goals; evidence of ongoing assessment over time; documentation of activities (e.g., training, coaching) undertaken to address goals</p>

**Table 3**  
**Sample Individual Program Plan Form**

Program Development Plan Form

Item # (from checklist)	Goal (what should change?)	Action Steps (what will we do?)	Resources (what, who can help?)	Responsibilities (who?)	Timelines (by when)