This position statement was developed in 2005 and updated in 2012 by the Inclusive Child Care Action Team (ICCAT). ICCAT is a workgroup of the Santa Barbara County Child Care Planning Council (SBCCCPC). Members include consumers, early intervention and special education service providers, child care providers, training and technical assistance providers, and other individuals interested in increasing the availability and improving the quality of inclusive child care in Santa Barbara County. ICCAT members need not be members of the SBCCCPC.

The ICCAT Mission: Building inclusive, high quality child care opportunities for all children and their families in Santa Barbara County

The goals of this Position Statement are to:

- Reduce and eventually eliminate the barriers to inclusive child care
- Enhance awareness of child care providers, early intervention and special education service providers, and the general public about the value of inclusive child care for all children, families, and our communities in Santa Barbara County
- Strengthen the capacity of the child care community to deliver appropriate, inclusive, high quality service to families of children with disabilities and other special needs
- Increase the participation of child care providers in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team process
- Create additional inclusive child care options to meet the needs of families with children who have disabilities or other special needs or are at risk for disabilities

Definition of inclusive child care:

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports. This definition comes from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); for more go to:


Definition of Children with Disabilities or Other Special Needs:

- Children with identified disability, health, or mental health conditions requiring early intervention, special education services, or other specialized services and supports; or
- Children without identified conditions, but requiring specialized services, supports, or monitoring.

This definition has been provided by First 5 California and may be viewed at:

http://www.ccfc.ca.gov/evaluation/PDF/Special%20Needs%20Def%2001_08.pdf

Family Need:

In Santa Barbara County, programs are available for special populations, such as children with identified disabilities, children who are abused, neglected or at risk, children of homeless families, children of migrant agricultural workers, and children of teen parents. Such high need children are sometimes integrated into traditional early care and education settings. However, all available early care and education programs do not come close to meeting the overall need in the County. For specific data on
child care need, please see the Child Care Needs Assessment, “Early Care and Education Now,” at http://www.sbceo.org/~ccpc/needs.shtml

**Barriers to Inclusive Child Care:**
The following barriers to inclusive child care have been identified by child care providers and service providers in Santa Barbara County:

- Lack of involvement of child care providers in the IFSP/IEP process
  - Child care providers are not invited to IFSP/IEP meetings
  - IFSP and IEP meeting times are during the day when providers cannot attend
  - IFSP and IEP meetings are held at places that providers cannot get to easily
  - Child care providers are not able to afford a substitute or substitutes are not available so that child care providers can attend IFSP/IEP meetings.

- Fear of doing harm to the child
- Fear of litigation
- Lack of available courses, training and/or experience
- Lack of ongoing support and resources
- Lack of knowledge of child care providers’ responsibilities and rights
- Lack of resources for additional staffing in child care centers or child care homes to care for children with significant Disabilities, as required adult to child ratios are based on the needs of typically developing children
- Individual, societal, and cultural bias

**ICCAT Recommendations:**
It is the position of the SBCCPC and ICCAT that it is the responsibility of service providers to assist families and child care providers in achieving successful inclusion placements. To achieve that goal, the SBCCPC and ICCAT recommend the following:

- Promote a celebratory attitude towards diversity in our communities
- Value child care as a desirable inclusion setting and natural environment
- Value the knowledge and perspective of child care providers, many of whom spend more than 10 hours a day with a child
- Consider the family’s and child care provider’s needs when designing service delivery and scheduling IFSPs/IEPs
- Inform families of their right to have child care providers participate in the IFSP/IEP process and provide information to families about why their child care provider’s participation would be valuable
- Invite child care providers to participate in the IFSP/IEP process
- Insure frequent and regular communication between families, child care providers, and service providers
- Provide therapy and related services in the child care setting when appropriate for the family, or use a consultative model
- Increase the availability of training on disabilities, inclusion, and related topics. Offer training onsite at child care programs at times when child care providers are available
- Invite child care providers to existing training opportunities
- Insure that child care providers and families are aware of and know how to access local lending libraries
- Offer course work at local community colleges in supporting children with challenging behaviors
- Mentor caregivers
- Increase public awareness of the need for high-quality inclusive child care settings
- Advocate actively for inclusive child care opportunities in the community