

STARTING POINT FOR CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION



# Working with Children with Special Needs

An Early Childhood Initiative Resource Guide for  
child care center administrators, staff and  
family home providers.

STARTING POINT



Early  
Childhood  
Initiative



**Commissioners:**  
Jimmy Dimora  
Peter Lawson Jones  
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# a **new** solution for special needs child care

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 ensured that children and adults with disabilities are entitled to the same rights and privileges others enjoy... including equal access to community-based child care.

**10 percent** of our young children have medical, physical, developmental or emotional disabilities. Or a combination. With the advent of welfare reform, the number of these children in need of child care has escalated.

Because of this, parents are finding it difficult to locate centers or homes willing to take in special needs children. Child care providers, in turn, often feel they don't have adequate time, facilities or training to deal with children with unfamiliar disabilities or problems.

## Now there is help for parents and providers alike...

a comprehensive new Special Needs Child Care Program, developed as part of the Cuyahoga County Early Childhood Initiative and coordinated by Starting Point, the area's child care resource and referral agency. This program has a three-fold purpose:

**1** to support families in their efforts to locate services for kids with disabilities, medical and behavior problems;

**2** to help child care providers and programs creatively adapt routines and activities so special needs children can participate; and

**3** to enhance the quality of services for all children in Cuyahoga County.

On the following pages, we'll tell you how the program works and how you can access services and programs in order to serve the special needs kids who need you — while maintaining high quality programs for all the children in your care.

*Tanisha was born prematurely. She was very fragile and had to be fed through a tube. Her Mom, who needed to work, was at her wit's end looking for child care. Family home provider, Diane, wanted to take her in, but she was scared she might do something that would hurt the tiny child...*

## How We Help You Care for Special Needs Children

**The Special Needs Child Care Program is centered on the belief that each and every child is a distinct individual with special strengths and needs; that kids with and without disabilities, health or emotional problems can participate in the same routines and experiences; and that they all can be enriched in the process.**

Caring for a child with special needs can be exceptionally rewarding — and it can be challenging, too. The Special Needs Child Care Program pulls together a wealth of community resources to help you, as child care professionals, deal with the challenges and reap the rewards of helping these youngsters achieve their potential. You'll have access to a comprehensive social service system for special needs kids that offers:

- telephone, electronic and on-site consultation and assistance from top area agencies in the health, disability and behavioral fields;
- special training, information and materials to help you (1) integrate special needs kids into your classroom, (2) alter your facilities and make creative modifications to routines and activities, and (3) access resources for special needs requirements;

- loans of special equipment and adaptive toys; and
- lending libraries of helpful videotapes and books.

Our agencies will be with you every step of the way. You'll be surprised The program's ultimate goal is to give you the tools to make this a more rewarding and less daunting experience for you and the children you serve, whether they have special needs or not. The special needs child care experience can be a very enriching one for all.

**1-800-880-0971**

# the team for special needs child care

These agencies can steer you to services, give you specialized training, show you how to adapt activities and facilities and access the resources you need to serve special needs kids. All are available free of charge.

## For information, referrals, training

Starting Point for Child Care and Early Education • 216.575.0061

As the child care resource and referral agency for Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga and Lake counties, Starting Point is an invaluable resource for child care professionals, parents and the community-at-large.

This agency addresses the vast spectrum of child care issues, develops and coordinates programs and offers a wide array of services to:

- link families with child care centers, homes and services;
- increase the number of quality child care centers and family child care homes to meet emerging needs;
- improve the quality of care;
- stimulate early education alternatives;
- advocate for children, families and professionals in the child care arena; and
- educate consumers, professionals, employers and the community-at-large on child care issues.

For child care professionals needing help for a youngster with special needs, Starting Point is a logical first step. As coordinator of this extensive special needs project, Starting Point has pulled together an impressive array of services to support and assist child care centers and homes. In addition, child care professionals can call Starting Point to:

- locate families with special needs children who need care;
- obtain information about special needs services, training, equipment loans, lending libraries and funding available for special needs child care; and
- access services for children with health, medical, emotional needs; developmental delays or physical disabilities.

*Kenny had already been expelled from three child care centers for violent behavior when Jewel reluctantly took him into her center. Right away he began hitting the other children. Now, he was throwing chairs. Nothing she did seemed to work. Was there anything to do besides expel him again?*

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## For developmental screening, early intervention, and coordination of services

Starting Point • 216.575.0061 • Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County

Starting Point, Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County and the Early Childhood Initiative work together to identify youngsters in child care settings who need specialized services and to link child care professionals and families to needed services.

Starting Point:

- provides technical assistance and training to child care professionals and families regarding children in child care who have special needs, such as developmental disabilities, health conditions, physical and behavioral concerns;
- consults with families and caregivers on developmental issues, parenting, health care and other community resources.

Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County:

- conducts developmental screenings of young children, using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire—a helpful tool that assesses a child's skills at specific age levels, monitors their development and is useful in discovering areas of concern in communication, motor skills, problem-solving, personal and social skills for children up to 4 years of age;
- determines eligibility for ongoing specialized services to help children from birth to three years of age with problems caused by premature birth, health issues or concerns about their progress in seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, playing or moving;
- links families to ongoing service coordination and family support;
- facilitates the development of individualized family service plans (IFSP) for the care of children with special needs;
- provides training to child care staff on using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, the Help Me Grow system and child development information.

## Other special needs team members

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Cuyahoga County  
Department of Mental  
Retardation and  
Developmental Disabilities  
(MRDD) • 216.736.2681

The Cuyahoga County Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities offers a variety of services and opportunities to children and adults with varying levels of mental retardation Down Syndrome, learning delays and other developmental disabilities.

They offer a wealth of educational materials, activities, support, resources, outreach and skill development in order to help these individuals achieve their highest levels of performance. Child care providers wanting to work with these children may want to take advantage of MRDD training workshops, consultation and materials.

*continued on next page*

## For health and medical needs

Cuyahoga County Board of Health,  
Division of Nursing • 216.443.5660

If your child care center or home cares for a medically fragile child—such as a premature baby needing a feeding tube or a child with diabetes, asthma, seizures, congenital heart condition, kidney disease or other health condition—a nurse from the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Division of Nursing, are available at no cost.

They offer whatever on-site help is needed for providers to feel secure in caring for special needs children. They will:

- identify children with special health needs, conduct health screenings and help you access other appropriate health services;
- consult, train and supervise staff with respect to specific diseases, medical conditions, nutrition and feeding issues; medication and side effects, medical emergencies, injuries, post surgery problems, medical documentation and liability, etc.;
- develop individualized health care services plans, provide ongoing follow-up, monitoring, health assessments and modifications and nutrition assessments;
- coordinate services by a Public Health Nurse who makes certain that families, doctors and child care professionals work together for the child's benefit;
- furnish equipment rentals, including items like apnea monitors, inhalers, etc.
- offer a lending library of educational materials—books, video-tapes, articles, leaflets on health and nutrition; and
- conduct in-service workshops on general health topics like Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), asthma, seizure disorders, etc.

If there is a child in your center or family child care home with special health care needs, it is important to take advantage of this program to ensure the child's health as well as to understand your responsibilities from a legal perspective.

*Tracy was born with cerebral palsy and was expected to spend her young life in a wheelchair. Gloria wanted to care for her in her child care center, but she wasn't sure how she could manage. Building alterations, special equipment and activities would be needed. Was there anyone who could help?*

## For children with disabilities

Achievement Centers of Cleveland • 216.795.7100  
Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

The TAP Program of The Achievement Centers for Children was a pioneer in mainstreaming children with disabilities — children who are hearing impaired, have vision problems, developmental delays, orthopedic disabilities, autism, asthma, down syndrome, etc. — into community child care settings. Serving children from birth to age twelve since 1980, TAP's philosophy is that "children are more alike than different."

Part of the Cuyahoga County Early Childhood Initiative, TAP works with other community programs to advocate for children with special needs and offers a wealth of services to families and child care professionals so children with disabilities will succeed in the least restrictive environments.

The process starts when a parent calls TAP for assistance. A Resource Teacher meets with them, learns about the child, the family and its child care needs; then, observes the child in a classroom, therapy or community setting and contacts community child care centers, preschools and child care homes to discuss possible placement. Parents are offered several options and invited to visit the centers or homes before making their choice.

After a center or home is chosen, the Resource Teacher turns attention to helping its child care professionals adapt the center or home to the special needs of the child being placed, observing the child in the center or home and offering:

- information on the child's disability and specific needs;
- pre-placement training;
- consultation on adapting programs, space and equipment to meet the child's needs;
- answers to questions and concerns of child care professionals, other children and their parents;
- help explaining the child's disability to other children in the center or home;
- referrals to additional community services as needed;
- loans of adaptive equipment and toys for the special needs child;
- loans of children's books to help all the children learn about disabilities;
- handouts on activities all the children can enjoy together.

or call 1-800-880-0971 for Starting Point

## OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS TEAM MEMBERS, CONT.

Cuyahoga Cty Community  
Mental Health Board  
216.241.3400

The Cuyahoga County Community Mental Health Board works to improve the mental health, quality of life and well-being of children and families throughout Cuyahoga County; initiating programs, collaborating with other agencies and providing mental health counseling, case management and other services to families and children through its 15 contract agencies. A Children's Crisis Program offers outreach to families and children in crisis situations. The agency also offers education and training in topics like domestic violence.

Cuyahoga Special Education  
Service Center (CSESC)  
Special Needs Public  
Preschool • 440.885.2685

The Cuyahoga Special Education Service Center (CSESC) provides information and support to families of and educators who work with disabled children attending Cuyahoga County public schools, including preschool children ages 3-5. For disabled preschoolers, the agency offers assessments, consultation, training workshops, activities, in-service training, and a directory of early childhood services available to Cuyahoga County school districts and agencies. CSESC also maintains a lending library.

# For mental health and behavioral problems

## Positive Education Program (PEP) Day Care Plus 216.361.7129

The PEP Day Care Plus program was established in 1997 as an early intervention program to maintain children with difficult emotional and behavioral problems in child care centers by offering a high level of integrated mental health, educational and support services to the centers. The goals of this program are to

- Improve the social, behavioral and emotional functioning of at-risk children in child care;
- Increase the competencies of parents, caregivers of at-risk children in child care;
- Increase the competencies of childcare staff;

At-risk behavior can include children who are hitting, biting, destroying property, withdrawn, endangering others, who have witnessed violence or experienced other emotional trauma. The program is a collaboration of PEP, the Cuyahoga County Community Mental Health Board and Starting Point.

Using an approach grounded in trust, competence, self-control and positive reinforcement, Day Care Plus staff look at the child's whole world—parents, siblings, child care staff—and work intensively with all to achieve constructive results. Day Care Plus offers the community:

- **INTENSIVE SERVICES.** Centers are chosen by an advisory/research committee. They receive Day Care Plus services on an on-going basis for an extended period of time.
- **RESPONSE SERVICES.** Consultants are available to help centers and certified family child care homes for limited periods of time. The specific degree of help given depends on the intensity of the problem.
  - Day Care Plus can provide these services: observe at-risk children, develop individual behavior plans, offer one-on-one help and services such as collaborative arts programming, speech and language screening;
  - train providers to manage children with difficult behaviors;
  - refer children and collaborate with other agencies, as needed; and
  - work with parents on a consistent approach to care.



## Beech Brook 216.831.2255 ext. 3518

Beech Brook is nationally recognized as an outstanding provider of children's mental health services. Its mission is to advance the emotional well-being of children and their families by providing effective, innovative mental health services and serving as a strong voice for children and families. Its more than 350 licensed clinicians, professional therapists, teachers and caregivers serve nearly 14,000 children and their families each year.

The agency offers mental health treatment, consultation and training to children, families and providers of services to children throughout Cuyahoga County, with special emphasis on the City of Cleveland.

Through the Cuyahoga County Early Childhood Initiative, Beech Brook staff work with child care professionals who serve preschoolers and school-age children with social, emotional and developmental disorders. Services include:

- Education and training on childhood development, working with children with mental health needs and autism; and supporting families of these children;
- Technical assistance on developmentally appropriate and specific activities for children with mental health and/or autism concerns;
- In-service training sessions for child care professionals three times a year;
- Collaboration with other agencies on maintaining quality assurance standards.

Beech Brook also offers numerous parent education programs and assists Starting Point with data collection and information-gathering.

Through this program Beech Brook hopes to help child care professionals better meet the needs of children with mental health and autism

problems as well as to increase their understanding of the issues facing these children and their families.

## Applewood Centers, Inc. 216.741.2241

Applewood helps preschool and school age child care providers deal with children with emotional problems and disorders such as ADHD; hitting, biting, pushing or other aggressive behaviors; tantrums; eating disorders; anxiety; and mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and depression.

Applewood Centers offers these services:

- on-site assistance to preschool and school-age programs at the YMCA's Southeast, Euclid, West Park and Lakewood branches, and Children's Aid Society's Child Development Center;
- a lending library of books and videotapes on managing children with behavior problems.

SERVICES TO CHILD CARE CENTERS. At the on-site locations, counselors interact with the kids, observe their behavior, get feedback and work with the child care staff on methods of improving behavior; ways to set up "quiet", "calm down" and "safe" areas; and activities to redirect the children's anger. They also provide behavior management training, educational resources and work as a team with other caseworkers to ensure consistent care. Where possible, they meet with the parents so the same approaches are used at the center and at home.

# quick reference chart

For special needs information and referrals, call Starting Point. For help in coordinating services for special needs kids, call Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County at Starting Point. **One phone number, 216.575.0061.** The following services are available for providers serving special needs children.

DISABILITY OR PROBLEM →	<b>Developmental Disabilities</b>	<b>Health Conditions</b> premature baby, asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, medication, injuries, post surgery, other medical problems	<b>Nutrition and Feeding Problems</b>	<b>Physical, Mental Disabilities</b> wheelchair-bound, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, blind, deaf, down syndrome, brain injury, autism, other disabilities	<b>Behavior and Mental Health Problems</b> ADHD, aggressive behavior, eating disorders, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, withdrawal, other behavior problems
↓ SERVICES AVAILABLE					
Assessment	●	●	●	●	●
Plan	●	●	●	●	●
Consultation	●	●	●	●	●
Training	●	●	●	●	●
Workshops	●	●	●	●	●
Speakers	●	●	●		●
Lending Library	●	●	●	●	●
Equipment		●	●	●	
Follow Up	●	●	●	●	●
Other*	●				●
Agency and Phone	<b>Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County 216.736.4300</b>	<b>CC Board of Health, Division of Nursing 216.443.5660</b>	<b>CC Board of Health, Division of Nursing 216.443.5660</b>	<b>Achievement Centers 216.795.7100</b>	<b>Applewood Centers<sup>1</sup> 216.741.2241 Beech Brook 216.831.2255 Positive Education Program<sup>3</sup> 216.361.7129</b>

\* See specific description of agency services for more information

<sup>1</sup> Limited to YMCA Preschools <sup>2</sup> Limited to specific centers <sup>3</sup> 17 contract agencies plus response team for others.

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2000 East 9th Street, 15th Floor • Cleveland, Ohio 44115

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[www.starting-point.org](http://www.starting-point.org)



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