

Illinois Inclusion Guidelines

The **Illinois Inclusion Guidelines** assist programs in identifying practices that support children with disabilities in inclusive settings. The IIGs were developed as a component of the Award of Excellence in 2014 and are aligned with the ExceleRate Standards. The guidelines were revised in 2026 under the guidance of the Statewide [EC LRE Stakeholders Consortium](#).

Please Note: The identified “levels” (i.e. Systems, Building, Classroom) are offered as a flexible framework that may shift based on the size and structure of a district or program.

Systems Level Items

1 – Continuous Improvement Using Illinois Inclusion Guidelines

ExceleRate Standard 3C. Continuous Quality Improvement

Program administrators engage staff in systematic, collaborative program and classroom self-assessment using the Illinois Inclusion Guidelines Checklist and demonstrate progress toward achieving program goals based on results of the assessment.

2 – Continuous Improvement using Inclusive Classroom Profile

ExceleRate Standard 3C. Continuous Quality Improvement

Teachers, related service providers, and administrative support staff engage in systematic self-assessment using the [Inclusive Classroom Profile](#) and demonstrate progress toward achieving classroom and individual professional development goals based on results of the assessment.

3 – Proportions of Children with Disabilities

ExceleRate Standard 3B. Group Size and Ratios

Early childhood programs and classrooms serving children with disabilities meet program, state, and federal requirements that promote inclusive practices and meaningful family participation.

[General Early Childhood Requirements](#) | [Special Education Requirements](#) | [OPI Requirements](#)

4 – Collaborative Agreements

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

Written agreements support collaboration among members of the local early childhood community (childcare, the Early Intervention system, Head Start, public school early childhood program).

This includes 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 services to children with disabilities and their families).

5 – Transition Policy

ExceleRate Standard 2B. Transitions

Program policies, procedures, and practices to support transition of children with disabilities entering and exiting the program are included in partnership agreements. This includes:

- Timelines
- Roles and responsibilities for transition
- Responsibilities for sharing and transferring records

6 – Policies and Procedures for Collaborative Planning

ExceleRate Standard 1F. Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Written policies and procedures encourage and support collaboration and teaming with consent, among internal and external personnel and agencies serving the same child and family, including specific guidelines for joint decision-making and problem solving related to the following needs:

- Educational
- Behavioral
- Medical
- Adaptive
- Social service
- Or other needs

7 – Policies to Access Supports

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

Written policies support families in identifying and accessing needed services and benefits within the program and in the community from

- Early intervention
- Education
- Health care providers
- Social service systems

8 – Policies to Support Families as Partners

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

Written policies and procedures encourage and support families of children with disabilities as partners in

- Screening
- Assessment
- Choosing desired outcomes
- Instruction related to their child
- Frequent bidirectional communication
- Evaluating the overall program

Building Level Items

9 – Program Advisory Committee

ExceleRate Standard 1F. Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Members are regularly updated and have input about policy and practices related to inclusion. The program actively recruits parents of children with disabilities for service on the committee or board.

10 – Inclusion and Families

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

Families of children with disabilities are included in all family activities provided or facilitated by the program. Information about the program's vision and strategies for inclusion of all children is shared with all families.

11 – Inclusion Leadership

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

The program administrator and leadership team participate regularly in community and state systems activities that support public knowledge of and coordination of inclusive practices as well as provide leadership for high quality inclusion within the program.

12 – Child Screening Procedures

ExceleRate Standard 1D. Child Screening

Multiple sources and data points are used to inform the need for further evaluation such as

- Targeted screening
- Authentic assessments
- Play observations
- Information from families

13 – Procedures for Gathering Information from Families

ExceleRate Standard 1E. Child Assessment

The program has written procedures and guidelines for gathering information from families regarding

- Home routines
- Strategies used
- Desired outcomes for their child's participation in the program

Classroom Level Items

14 – Use of Assessment Information

ExceleRate Standard 1E. Child Assessment

Teachers, related service providers, and administrative support staff collaborate in implementing and using initial and ongoing assessment for classroom planning, and for data-based decision making regarding individual and group outcomes.

15 –Inclusive Environment

ExceleRate Standard 1A. Learning Environment

All program and classroom spaces that children use, indoors and outdoors, are accessible and support the inclusion of children with disabilities in all activities with other children such as:

- Adaptive furniture
- Communication supports
- Equipment for routine care and learning

16 – Adaptations

ExceleRate Standard 1A. Learning Environment

Accommodations and modifications are made to support each child's participation related to their own individual goals and outcomes. Adaptations might be seen in:

- Classroom play, activities and routines
- Educational environments
- Teaching materials
- The general curriculum
- Interactions with peers and adults

17 – Belonging

ExceleRate Standard 1B. Curriculum

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.

18 – Strategies

ExceleRate Standard 1B. Curriculum

Strategies are documented on individualized plans and/or on lesson plans. Classroom staff support development and learning by using individual support strategies such as

- Modeling
- Asking questions
- Prompting

19 – Embedding Goals

ExceleRate Standard 1B. Curriculum

Teachers, related service providers, 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.

20 – Embedding Strategies

ExceleRate Standard 1B. Curriculum

Strategies, supports, and services identified in individual service plans are provided in the classroom and are embedded into classroom play, activities, and routines.

21 – Embedding Strategies into Family Routines

ExceleRate Standard 2A. Family and Community Engagement

Teachers collaborate with families, related service staff, and administrative support staff to incorporate individual and classroom goals, strategies, and supports into family routines at home and in the community.