



# All Abilities Playgroup Tip Sheet

## Talk about it.

*How to discuss the many differing abilities we as people have and encourage thoughtful conversation between participants of Milwaukee Center for Independence (MCFI) and your children.*

Background: Everybody has abilities! The group of people who will participate with us at our playgroup are very social, love to meet new people and to have fun. When our children are engaged in the activities, participants from MCFI will also be engaged, trying something new and learning with our group. In our society, there are many negative stereotypes about people with differing abilities, believing these individuals to lack competence. Through our playgroup we can demonstrate to our children that our new friends from MCFI are just like us and have the ability to make change and do good in our community. For our children, at this age they look forward to the activities during the playgroup. Playing with the parachute, reading a book or signing the hello song are all important to them. What they don't know at this young age is that through these activities, their worlds are becoming larger, as they learn patience and respect for others.

### Things to Consider:

*Consider the following, to facilitate a comfortable and respectful conversation.*

Social Norms: Some people may make loud noises or talk out of turn. It might be a little more difficult for the rest of the group to focus, but we want to be sure to include everyone in our fun!

*Example:* If during story time or name sharing time in the circle, we are interrupted by a participant at MCFI, just like when our littles interrupt, it's okay to let them talk for a few minutes or to even finish. It is also okay to remind them to wait their turn.

Personal Space: Some people may want to touch your hand, arm or shoulder or even give you a hug. It is okay to want your personal space.

*Example:* "I only hug my family, let's give a high five instead!"  
It is also okay to take a few steps back from someone who is in your bubble.

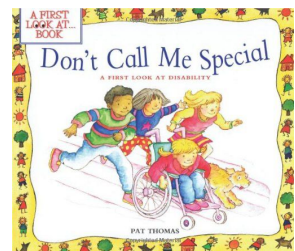
Conversation Starters: Consider starting conversations about things you, your kids and your new MCFI friends can easily chat about.

- Interest or knowledge about the theme of the month (ex. Valentine's Day, Father's Day)
- Interests or hobbies
- Current weather
- Sports! Packers!
- Food (ex. what did you have for breakfast today?)

## Read about it.

Thoughtful, well-written books on the topic of All Abilities may help your children. You may be able to find these at your local library.

- *A Rainbow of Friends* by PK Hallinan
- *Don't Call me Special* by Pat Thomas
- *It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr



## Do something about it.

- Be a model for your child by approaching a participant to engage in thoughtful conversation.
- Offer a helping hand during craft time to engage the participant with your child.
- Support your child's learning experience by encouraging free play with a friend from MCFI.
- Sit beside a friend from MCFI during story time.
- Show your children you can be friends with people who have varying abilities outside of playgroup! (ex. grocery store, post office).

## Keep the conversation going – questions to ask.

- How did you feel when you were playing with our new friends?
- Where else in the community can we meet friends with varying abilities?
- Do our new friends at our playgroup remind you of anyone you know?