

Niagara Region is excited to share a new approach to better support children, families, and educators in our early years programs. Beginning January 1, 2026, the current special needs resourcing model will be replaced with the **Inclusion Resource Services Model (IRSM)**. This model shifts from focusing solely on children with special needs to strengthening how we work together so that *all* children are included, supported, and thriving in their learning environments.

What is the Inclusion Resource Services Model (IRSM)?

The IRSM is an approach that provides the right level of support to children based on their individual needs while also increasing in-class coaching and collaboration with educators ensuring all children benefit from high-quality, inclusive environments.

The IRSM uses a team-based approach that includes:

Early Childhood Educator (ECE): Your child's educator supports them daily. In this model they help identify when a child may benefit from additional supports and work closely with both families and the IRSM team.

Inclusion Quality Coordinator (IQC): IQCs work directly with children, families, and educators by modeling strategies, providing classroom resources, creating goal plans, and bringing in other practitioners when needed. Niagara's IQC services are provided through Bethesda and Niagara Children's Centre.

Community Pedagogical Advisor (CPA): CPAs support educators, supervisors, and IQCs by offering resources, helping identify professional learning needs, and ensuring learning environments align with Ontario's early learning pedagogy.

The IRSM model is broken down into three tiers of support:

Tier 1: Focuses on providing universal support for all children. Classrooms will receive ongoing support from the IQC and CPA to create inclusive, welcoming spaces for children of all abilities. This includes adapting environments, offering resources, and embedding inclusive practices into everyday routines.

Tier 2: Focuses on providing individualized support for some children. If an educator identifies your child as needing additional support, they will discuss this with

the IQC and with you, the family. Together you will collaborate to create goals that support your child. The IQC may also engage the CPA to provide additional professional learning or resources to support the teaching team in meeting the needs of your child and other children with similar needs. In some cases, additional wrap-around support may be provided through Pathstone Mental Health Behaviour Consultants.

Tier 3: Focuses on providing intensive support for individual children. For children who require more intensive support or specialized assistance, the educator and IQC will work with families to connect with appropriate community services (e.g., speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and/or behaviour consultant support).

How Your Child Benefits from This Model

- Your child is part of a learning environment that is inclusive to individual and diverse needs
- Your child's educator is equipped with the resources and strategies to properly support the individual needs of all children
- A strong collaborative approach connecting families, educators, and community partners
- Preparation for school through early support and goal-focused planning where needed

What to Expect

Beginning January 1, 2026, Niagara Region will introduce the new IRSM model. If your child is identified as needing additional support through Tier 2 or Tier 3 services, a member of the IRSM team will reach out to you. Before any services begin, you will be provided with clear information and invited to share your consent. This consent helps ensure you understand the purpose of the services, how information will be used, and how you can be involved in supporting your child.

If you have any questions about the Inclusion Resource Services Model, please reach out to Niagara Region Children's Services at 905-980-6000 ext. 3897.