What is this research about?
This study investigated the attitudes of staff working in the field of Intellectual Disabilities. Specifically, this research explored whether staff working with people with Intellectual disabilities in a variety of community agencies supported a philosophy of inclusion. Furthermore, this research investigated whether or not differences in attitude about inclusion can be explained by demographic characteristics including: age, gender, and level of education.

What did the researchers do?
241 staff from 27 community agencies in Southeastern Ontario completed an adapted version of Henry et al.’s (1996b) Community Living Attitudes Scale-Mental Retardation, Short Form (CLAS-MR). The questionnaire has 17 items arranged into 4 subscales. The research participants responded to the 17 items using a 6 point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The four subscales measure the respondents’ attitudes towards the following: 1) empowerment (should a person with an Intellectual Disability be allowed to marry?); 2) similarity (perceived similarity between the participant and persons with Intellectual Disabilities), 3) sheltering (persons with Intellectual Disabilities need to be protected), and 4) exclusion (persons with Intellectual Disabilities should be excluded from community life).

What you need to know:
This study examined the attitudes of staff working in the field of Intellectual Disabilities and found that demographics appear to impact whether individuals working with people with Intellectual Disabilities hold a philosophy of inclusion. Staff members’ gender, age, and level of education were found to influence staff attitudes. The need to target specific groups for professional development and recruitment is discussed in the research article.
What did the researchers find?
The researchers found that demographic characteristics appeared to influence the attitudes of community agency staff members’ with respect to the inclusion of people with Intellectual Disabilities:

Research findings from this study included:

- male staff members’ were less supportive of inclusion than their female colleagues;
- staff with lower levels of education were less likely than their colleagues with college or university education to see people with Intellectual Disabilities as similar to themselves;
- older staff members were more likely than younger staff members to think that people with Intellectual Disabilities needed to be sheltered and protected from danger.

How can you use this research?
The researchers point to the need for additional training and education on inclusive values for specific groups, including male staff working with people with Intellectual Disabilities. The researchers indicate that this training should commence upon hiring and continue throughout employment with the agencies.

The positive relationship between higher levels of education and attitudes about inclusion may have implications for agencies in the recruitment of staff employed to work with individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

Teachers and administrators working with students with Intellectual Disabilities may wish to:

- explore additional research on this topic;
- examine their own philosophy re: inclusion to see if this is reflected in the opportunities provided by the school to students with Intellectual Disabilities including integration with the wider student population.
To learn more about this study, we invite you to read the original research article:


Other references:

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About this summary

The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE's clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the ResearchSnapshot series developed by York University and ResearchImpact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

This summary reflects findings from this study only and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.