

GUIDELINES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO THE BEST POSSIBLE START IN LIFE.



BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY. TOGETHER



social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



FOREWORD



In the human life cycle the early childhood phase from birth to nine years is considered the most important phase for every human being. Giving children the best start in life means ensuring them good health, proper nutrition and early learning. The well being of children depends on the ability of families to function effectively. Children need to grow up in a nurturing and secure family that can ensure their development, protection, survival and participation in family and social life. From an environmental perspective, it means safe water, basic sanitation, and protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination. These imperatives work best together and lay the foundation for life.

The aim of family and child welfare services is to preserve and strengthen families so that they can provide a suitable environment for physical, emotional and social development of all their members. It is important that the capacity of parents be strengthened and supported to give their children the best possible start in life. Money invested in ensuring children the best start in life yields a meaningful return for children, their families and taxpayers. It is therefore critical to develop human capital as it catalyses economic growth and saves public funds in health, education and welfare/social security.

Early childhood development services need to be holistic and should attend to the child's health, nutrition, development, psychosocial and other needs. Parents, communities, non-governmental organisations and government departments have a role to play to ensure an integrated service to children. Collaboration between sectors is therefore of the utmost importance. Access to basic social services is the right of all children, parents and other primary caregivers. They should have access to as many resources as possible to provide in the needs of young children.

This document, *The Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services*, is a review of *The Draft Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services* that was the product of a long and intensive consultation process. A need was identified, however, to review the latter to ensure that it rises to the challenges facing the ECD sector, i.e. poverty, HIV and AIDS, disability, gender equity to mention but a few.

The document is divided into different sections to deal with the continuum of early child development services. These sections deal with early childhood development services aimed at interventions and programmes aimed at parents and/or primary caregivers; community based services and early childhood development centres. The Guidelines were written in such a manner that different sections can be "pulled out" to use for a specific target group. The Guidelines aim to explain the most important facets of service delivery in simple, clear terms for easy understanding and referencing by all service providers. More elaborative explanations and resource materials are attached as Appendices for reference and for use in training situations. Guidelines for family care pertaining to the young child have also been included, as the family provides the context in which the majority of children function.

These Guidelines were developed to facilitate the Department of Social Development's mandate towards early childhood development in South Africa. They also refer to important core aspects in the early childhood phase of life such as nutrition, health care, environmental safety and early education and learning. It remains, however, the role and mandate of the sister departments to provide guidance and information on their contributions and mandates towards young children through policies, guidelines and other methods of communication. For this purpose, an address list of relevant government departments is attached to this document.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ZST Skweyiya', written over a light grey background.

DR ZST SKWEYIYA
MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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The Department of Social Development wishes to acknowledge and thank the following persons and parties who have contributed to these Guidelines:

- All the practitioners in the early childhood development and related fields who contributed towards the consultation and development process over the past years. Every input was carefully considered, reviewed and where appropriate and suitable, included. It was not possible to accommodate all the inputs, though every input and comment facilitated critical thinking and in some way contributed to the completion of this document.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES EFFECTIVELY

It is not the aim of these Guidelines to be comprehensive but to provide basic information as set out in the different chapters. In essence, these Guidelines are divided to focus on three aspects namely, the policy and legislative provisions (Part One) and the actual service delivery (Parts Two and Three).

It is important to keep up to date with the latest policies and legislative developments that affect children, in particular young children (from birth to five years). These Guidelines only accommodate those policies and legislation that were in effect on the date of completion of this document.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 were written in such a manner that they could be used as separate entities in service provision. It is hoped that this will facilitate easy reference for practitioners. For example, if you run an after school care centre, you only need to refer to Chapter 7 in Part 2 to find all the information you need.

These Guidelines also have a number of Appendices that contain more in-depth information on the needs and rights of young children and their caregivers. These should be used for reference and in-service training in accordance to the needs of the practitioners.

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DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

The following terms are used in these Guidelines:

AIDS:

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

ART:

Anti-Retroviral Treatment is a combination of medicines given to someone who is sick with AIDS. ART helps strengthen the immune system. It is not a cure for AIDS.

Baby/infant:

A child from 0 to 18 months old.

CBO:

Community-based organisations concerned with helping the community local to the organisation. CBOs are not for profit organisations. Also see NGO.

Child:

A person under the age of 18 years.

Child minder/day mother:

A person who, whether for gain or free of charge, takes care of a maximum of six children away from their homes. Registration and assessment will be addressed in the new comprehensive Child Care Act. Presently some municipalities require child minders to register with them. Since a child minder is responsible for the care and development of children in her care, she must be familiar with basic safety measures and good child-care practices.

Children with disabilities:

Children who have an impairment, i.e. physical e.g. loss of a limb; sensory e.g. loss of hearing and sight; intellectual e.g. learning difficulty.

Communicable disease:

A disease that can be passed on to others e.g. scabies, chickenpox, measles.

Department:

In these Guidelines, Department refers to the Department of Social Development. If reference is made to any other government department, that department will be mentioned specifically.

Developmentally appropriate:

This term is used to describe activities, equipment or programmes. It is a way of working with children that takes note of what is known about child development and also what is known or learnt about each child and her development.

Director-General:

In these guidelines, Director-General refers to the Director-General of the national Department of Social Development.

ECD:

Early Childhood Development is the process of emotional, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development of children from birth to nine years.

ECD Centre:

Any building or premises maintained or used, whether or not for gain, for the admission, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents. Depending on registration, an ECD centre can admit babies, toddlers and/or pre-school aged children. The term ECD centre can refer to crèche, day care centre for young children, a playgroup, a pre-school, after school care etc. ECD centres are sometimes referred to as ECD sites.

ECD Services:

A range of services provided to facilitate the emotional, intellectual, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development and growth of children from birth to nine years.

ECD Programmes:

These are planned activities designed to promote the emotional, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development of children from birth to nine years.

Family:

Individuals, who either by contract or agreement, choose to live together and provide care, nurturing and socialisation for one another.

Grade R:

The national Department of Education has identified three models of provision of Reception Year/ Grade R: those within the public primary school system, those within community-based sites and the independent provision of reception year programmes. Grade R refers to the year before Grade 1.

Head of Department:

In these Guidelines, this refers to the Head of Provincial Department of Social Development.

HIV:

Human Immunodeficiency Virus that attacks the immune system of the body.

Local authority:

The local municipality within the boundaries of which the ECD service is provided.

Medical health officer (MHO):

A health officer in the service of a provincial or local authority. Also referred to as the Communicable Disease Control Officer.

Minister:

Member of Parliament responsible for a Ministry.

NQF:

The National Qualifications Framework is a framework on which agreed standards and qualifications are registered for the main purpose of bringing together separate education and training systems into a single, national system.

NGO:

All non-governmental, non-profit organisations that are concerned with the betterment of society or the individual. NGOs are private, self governing, voluntary organisations operating not for commercial purposes but in the public interest, for the promotion of social welfare and development, religious, charity, education and research.

Notifiable disease:

Diseases that must be reported to the Department of Health, local or provincial, e.g. measles, hepatitis.

Orphan:

A child who has lost one or both parents.

Place of care:

Any building or premises which are maintained or used, whether or not for gain, for the admission, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents. This does not include a boarding school, hostel or institution that is maintained or used mainly for the teaching or training of children as is controlled or registered or approved by the State, including a provincial administration. Depending on its registration, a place of care can admit babies, toddlers, pre-school aged children and school-going children on a full-day or other basis. In cases where parents work night shift, children could be cared for at night. Caution should be exercised that parents do not utilise the place of care as a boarding facility.

Practitioner:

The term refers to all ECD education and training development practitioners, i.e. educators, trainers, facilitators, lecturers, caregivers and development officers, including those qualified by their experience, and who are involved in providing services in homes, centres and schools.

In respect of educators and trainers, the term includes both formally and non-formally trained individuals providing an educational service in ECD. This would include persons currently covered by the Educators Employment Act (Act no. 138 of 1994).

Pre-school child:

A child under six years of age not yet attending formal school.

Qualification:

Formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and type of credits and such other requirements at specific levels of the NQF as may be determined by the relevant bodies registered for such purpose by the South African Qualifications Authority.

Quality Assurance:

The process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved.

SAQA:

The purpose of the South African Qualifications Authority is to ensure the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large.

Subsidy:

Financial support to ECD services by the government, including a place of care grant as referred to in Regulations of the Child Care Act, 1983.

The Act:

For the purposes of these Guidelines it means the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act 74 of 1983).

Toddler:

A child between 18 and 36 months old.

Vulnerability:

Heightened or increased exposure to risk as a result of one's circumstances.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles were used as a basis for these Guidelines:

Child-centred

The needs and rights of children are central to all services and provisions.

Holism

Children develop in a holistic way and social, emotional, intellectual and physical development should be equally valued.

The Rights of Children

The rights of young children as established in the UN Convention, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and the South African Constitution must be protected.

Accountability

Everyone who intervenes in the lives of young children and their families should be held accountable for the delivery of an appropriate, effective and efficient service.

Empowerment

The resourcefulness of each young child and her family should be promoted.

Participation

Young children and their families should actively participate in the utilisation of the facilities.

Family-Centred

Programme delivery must strengthen the family.

Integration

Services to young children and their families should be holistic, inter-sectoral and delivered by an appropriate multi-disciplinary team wherever possible.

Accessible

The language and format of the guidelines must be easily understood by most people who need to use them.

Family Preservation

All services should prioritise the goal to have young children remain within the family and/or community context wherever possible.

