

Template No. 2

Early Childhood Counts

Center-Based Programs

QUESTIONS	DISCUSSION
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CHILDREN SERVED

What children will be served?	It is desirable for all children, particularly those in rural and peri-urban areas who are at risk of delayed or debilitated development, to participate in a center-based program.
What age group will be served?	Generally these centers are for children aged three and older who are not in other forms of care or in school. Sometimes child care is required for those under three.
How many children will be included in one room?	<p>The ratio established for the birth-three age group is one child care worker for every 12 children, along with two parent or family volunteers. At no time should infants between the ages of birth-three years be left in a group setting where there is a ratio smaller than 1:4.</p> <p>In order for children three-five years of age to be provided the opportunity for active exploration, the minimum for this age group should be a 1:20 ratio, incorporating a parent or community volunteer for groups between 21 and 30 children.</p>

LOGISTICS

Where will the program take place?	Centers can be purpose-built or they can use space in existing buildings. Centers are often found in churches and community halls, and they can even be located at the market and under the trees. But they should be safe and free from hazards; they should be clean, with access to safe water and latrines. There should be space for a variety of activities.
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FACILITATOR/TEACHER

Who will teach in the center?	Many preschool centers are staffed by paraprofessionals, frequently from the same community as the children. The teacher/facilitator should be someone who loves children, who enjoys working with them, someone who is willing to be trained, and someone who has the respect of the community.
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FACILITATOR/TEACHER (continued)

What kind of training will the ECCD worker be given?
Initially?

ECCD workers will need training in health, nutrition and psycho-social stimulation. There should be a focus on prevention in terms of nutrition and health care, but teachers should also be trained in terms of curative practices they can administer and know when to refer children to services. (Minimum of 40 hours of preservice training; 80 hours is preferable. The content and process of training are more important than the number of hours offered.)

In-service?

Refresher courses should focus on expanding the teacher's repertoire in terms of activities to stimulate children's development. One-day refresher courses should be offered every three months maximum, every six months minimum.

Who will supervise the teacher/facilitator?

During the initial months supervision should happen monthly, over time this can shift to every three months. The Supervisor should focus on enhancing the teacher's skills and knowledge, not making judgments.

CURRICULUM

What do we want children to learn?
What kind of experience do we want them to have?

Children need to be in a safe, clean environment where they have opportunities to explore a variety of materials, where there are things to play with, and a caring adult they can interact with.

Activities should include things that promote large muscle development, small muscle development, social skills, problem-solving, art, drama, pre-reading and pre-writing skills.

Nutrition should be a part of the program, with the minimum being the provision of a nutritious snack, depending on the hours of operation of the program.

What materials will we supply?

Basic equipment should be made available. This will include: eating utensils, sleeping mats/cots, a place for children to keep personal things, outdoor play-things and indoor play-things, and materials.

Many of the materials that children need can be made from 'throw-aways' and things found in the environment. Equipment (tables, chairs, toys, games) can frequently be made by parents.

Survey the local community before ordering expensive equipment from outside the community.

DAILY SCHEDULE

What hours will the center be open?	Many ECCD centers offer half-day programs. If there is a need for full-day care this should be accommodated. This should be determined by the needs of the parents and the needs of the children.
What days of the week will it function?	Programs do not need to operate daily. Again, this should be determined by the parents and those operating the program. In the same community there may be more than one ECCD center, each with a different daily schedule.
What months of the year will the center be open?	While ECCD centers generally follow the primary school schedule, this needs to be determined based on climate and seasonal work schedules.
What allowances will be made for seasonal variations?	If there are periods of drought or monsoon or harvest times, these may all affect the operation of the homes. Be flexible!
What will the child's day look like?	A daily schedule should be developed. Children should follow the same basic routine everyday. This provides them with security.

EVALUATION

How will we know if the program is enhancing children's well-being?	Periodic health checks. Monitoring of children's growth. Assessment of all areas of psycho-social development is possible, with assistance from appropriate professionals.
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