



10 June 2013

An Integrated Early Childhood Development Programme of Action for– Moving Ahead 2013 -2018.

Introduction

The Department of Social Development (DSD) has always been involved and taken the lead in issues of early childhood development (ECD) in South Africa.¹ In fact, the provision of early childhood education (ECD) to children between 0 and 4 years is currently and largely the competence and responsibility of the Department of Social Department as per the Integrated Plan for ECD and the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005, as amended²). The involvement of the DSD in ECD is guided and informed by its primary goal to invest in the development of children as one of the primary means of improving South Africa's human capital and reducing intergenerational poverty.³ The White Paper for Social Welfare (1996) prioritises the provision of social development to children under the age of five. Some of the key roles of the Department of Social Department, as mandated in the White Paper on Social Welfare⁴, include:

- Ensuring the registration and subsidization of ECD centres.
- Providing a caring and integrated service delivery system for young children and their caregivers.
- Facilitating human development from birth to 9 years through development/social protection services.
- Improving the quality of life for young children and their caregivers in a sustainable manner.
- Maintaining a special focus on young children and their caregivers that are most vulnerable and in need of special interventions.
- The development of national policies on early childhood development services, for example the *White Paper for Social Welfare*.

Specifically, the National Department of Social Department is responsible for the following key areas :⁵

- To develop and support national legislation on ECD services.
- To develop national minimum standards for the implementation of early childhood development services.
- To set national priorities for ECD services.

¹ Department of Social Development (2010)

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*



- To work together with core national departments such as the Departments of Health and Education to develop national strategies and frameworks for integrated early childhood development services, for example the *Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)* and the *National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa*.
- To provide support, guidance and capacity development opportunities to provincial departments on early childhood development services.
- To monitor the way in which provincial departments of social development implement national policies, norms and standards.
- To appropriate a national budget for ECD services through the annual budget vote in Parliament.
- Registration of ECD service providers as *Not for Profit Organizations (NPOs)* as required by the *Non-profits Organisations Act (No.71 of 1997)*.
- To provide information on the requirement to notify the Department of any instance where a child shows repeated bruising or injuries, abuse or neglect or suspected malnutrition.
- To provide feedback to the Minister for Social Development, the Portfolio Committee on Social Development and other structures of Parliament on ECD services rendered in the country.

The provincial departments of Social Department are responsible for the following key areas⁶:

- To promote the importance of ECD services in the province.
- To seek concrete ways of inter-sectoral collaboration and integration in ECD service delivery with the provincial departments of Education and Health and any other department or non-governmental organization (NGO) that contributes to services to young children and their families. Where appropriate, to develop a provincial integrated plan for ECD services in partnership with the provincial departments of education and health.
- To establish mechanisms and programmes to facilitate capacity development in ECD service delivery in the province.
- To provide support and guidance to ECD service providers in the province.
- To facilitate integration of services to young children within the Provincial Department of Social Development, e.g. family preservation and development services; parent/caregiver support services; poverty alleviation programmes; child support grants; services to children affected and infected with HIV and AIDS and their caregivers; life skills programmes for youth, etc.
- Ensure that national policies, legislation, strategies and priorities are implemented within the means of the provincial department.
- To provide feedback to the National Department of Social Development on the implementation status of national policies, legislation, strategies and priorities for early childhood development services.
- To develop, at the discretion of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), provincial legislation, policies, guidelines, strategies and priorities on early childhood development,

⁶ Department of Social Development, (2010)



provided that they are in support of national legislation, policies, guidelines, strategies and priorities and do not contradict or oppose nationally accepted legislation, policies, guidelines, strategies and priorities.

- To register ECD centres.
- To put mechanisms in place to facilitate the registration of ECD centres in an empowering and developmental way.
- To keep a provincial register of all registered ECD services.
- To determine the place of care grant (subsidy) payable to early childhood development facilities in the province,
- To appropriate a provincial budget for ECD services through the annual budget vote in the provincial legislature.
- To allocate a provincial budget for support to ECD services, which will include services to families and services to community based programmes.
- To provide transfer payments for ECD services in line with the existing financing policies and guidelines.
- To monitor the provision of registered and non-registered early childhood development services
- Cancellation of Registration Certificates of Day Care Centre (place of care).
- To provide information on the requirement to notify the Department of any instance where a child shows repeated bruising or injuries, abuse or neglect or suspected malnutrition.

Integrated ECD Programme of Action-Moving Ahead 2013-2018

The time frames for the Integrated ECD programme of Action- Moving Ahead 2013-2018 are as follows:

Short Term	: April 2013 – March 2014;
Medium Term	: April 2014 – March 2016; and
Long Term	: April 2016 – March 2018.

Legislation and Policy Framework

The DSD reported that an amendment of Children's Act on ECD will be included in the Parliamentary legislative programme. Furthermore, an integrated strategy for the implementation of universal access for children from birth to school- going age will be developed. The DSD indicated that it will do this by doing desktop research on the concept on the universal access to ECD.

Institutional Arrangements, Coordination and Integration



DSD highlighted that it will establish an inter- sectoral management and coordination mechanism for ECD by April 2014.

Human Resources, Training and Capacity Building

In terms of human resource training and capacity building the DSD reported that ECD qualifications will be revised and Department of Basic Education will lead this initiative. The Department further reported that an integrated professional registration system for ECD practitioners working with children birth to pre-grade R will be in place by June 2015.

ECD Infrastructure

DSD will lead in producing an audit of existing ECD infrastructure provisioning report by March 2014 with an Improvement Action Plan. Model by-laws on infrastructure will also be developed and circulated to all municipalities by November 2013.

Communication and Awareness

The Department indicated that it will provide public education and raise public awareness on the importance of Early Childhood Development to ensure that all young children have access to quality ECD programmes/services. DSD will do this through informing communities, parents and caregivers about the comprehensive Package of services for ECD and how to access the comprehensive Package of services for ECD.

Issues for Consideration

- The Department indicated that this integrated programme of action requires the commitment of all governments departments, stakeholders and the broader ECD sector in realising the objectives of building a better future for the young children in SA. Who will be responsible for making sure that there is good co-ordination?
- In terms of communication to the communities, has the Department thought of using traditional leaders especially in rural areas and churches to raise awareness?
- Does the Department include farm communities when it is referring to rural areas?
- The Department reported that an amendment of Children's Act on ECD will be included in the Parliamentary legislative programme. When will this happen?
- How effective has this programme been so far? Have there been any studies to prove the effectiveness of the programme?



References

Department of Social Development (2013). Presentation on "An Integrated Early Childhood Development Programme of Action For– Moving Ahead 2013 -2018".

Department of Social Development (2010). Annual Report 2009/10.