

# An Overview of Developmental Preschools

Robyn Haenisch, LCSW

Findings indicate that (a) early intervention with children who have disabilities produces a positive treatment effect and (b) longer, more intense programs are associated with effectiveness. (Casto & Mastropier, 1986)

Most research regarding early intervention outcomes has come from studies involving at-risk or disadvantaged children. A meta-analysis published by *National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities* (NICHD) reports that in general, early intervention programs were found to have immediate benefits for populations with disabilities. These results were evident over a variety of outcome variables, including IQ and motor, language, and academic achievement. The variable that proved most important regarding intervention effectiveness for children with disabilities was longer, more intense programs. (Casto & Mastropier, 1986)

Prior to the passage of American with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1992, "many young children with disabilities were found in self contained or special purpose early education classrooms and child care centers." (Kansas Department of Health and Environment, 2001)

Some misconceptions regarding child care programs may be cleared up by the education and spread of knowledge regarding ADA.

- Any program receiving federal funds may not deny admission to a child solely on the basis of the nature or extent of a disabling condition.
- Children with special needs can not be excluded from child care opportunities of "typically developing".
- Child care facilities should not require a child to be toilet trained.
- Staff should be adequately educated to meet the needs of the children in their care with an emphasis on inclusion.

## Public Preschools

- Function to serve children ages 2.5-5 with a developmental disability. Disabilities include physical disabilities (i.e. Cerebral Palsy, auditory or visual disabilities, health impairment, developmental disabilities, emotional/behavioral and/or speech/language disabilities).
- Provide services in a center-based facility.
- Include typically developing peers.

## Head Start

- Since 1972 Head Start is mandated to make available, at least 10% of its enrolment opportunities to children with disabilities. Therapies are generally provided by your Local Education Agency/school district (LEA) within Head Start program.
- Funded by US Congress through Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Free to eligible families who are eligible
- Eligibility determined by low-income or recipient of public benefits-Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security Income (SSI)
- It is a national program to promote school readiness by providing specific services on education, socio-emotional development, physical and mental health and nutrition
- Serves children ages 3-5
- 9 month programs- Some provide wrap-around child care.
- Find out qualifying and more information regarding your local Head Start at [www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org)

## Early Childhood Special Education

- Part B of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act)
- Ages 3-5
- Free to any child that qualifies through a Child Find Screening and/or Evaluation from a local school district
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) driven from screening-assessment-eligibility
- Least restrictive environment regulation
- Certified and/or licensed personnel provide services
- Related services include: SLP,OT and PT, SW, Psych, ECSE (preschool teacher)
- Boundaries by school district
- Eligibility based on team decisions and/or standardized scores i.e. TPBA– AEPS- Dial R
- Educationally relevant-a medical diagnosis does not automatically qualify a child

There may or may not be private preschools that provide specific or general preschool opportunities in or near your community. Many developmental preschools are attached in some way to a hospital or clinic. Infant Toddler Services, School Special Education Offices, and local developmental pediatricians may be able to provide information regarding private preschools that exist to serve children with disabilities.

## References

Casto,G., & Mastropieri,M.O (1986). The efficacy of early intervention programs: A meta-analysis. *Exceptional Children*, 52(5), 417-424).

Kansas Department of Health & Environment. (January 2001) *Child Care Licensing and Registration- The basis for and Purpose of Child Care Regulation*. Retrieved May 17, 2007, from [http://www.kdheks.gov/bccclr/gen\\_info.html](http://www.kdheks.gov/bccclr/gen_info.html)