



Early Childhood Development Draft Policy

Preface

The Government of Namibia has realized the critical importance of Early Childhood Development and its impact on subsequent performance of children in the basic education programmes. In the long-and medium term goals, Vision 2030 and the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (2005-2011) Early Childhood Development has been identified as a fundamental area to be addressed and developed.

Previously, Early Childhood Development was placed under the auspices of the Directorate of Community & Early Childhood Development within the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. In the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) the Ministry of Education will be responsible for the care and education of children 5-6 years old within the pre-school phase.

Early Childhood Development Programmes involve a wide variety of strategies and services directed at assisting families and communities to meet the needs of children 0-6 years old. Many young children are at risk because their health, nurture and educational needs cannot be provided for adequately from resources available within the community. In the absence of effective State intervention, the provision of Early Childhood Development services to communities has been non-governmental agencies, efforts of parents and church based organisations. To assist Central Government in its efforts to address the needs in Early Childhood Development, the Decentralization Policy has been approved by Parliament in 2000. In accordance to the Decentralization Policy (2000), the City of Windhoek has become actively involved in Early Childhood Development in communities in Windhoek.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Development is of vital importance for intellectual, physical, emotional and social growth of children. It is during this phase, 0-6 years old, that the foundation for further learning is laid. Rapid growth and development take place and deprivation thereof may have lasting effects on children. The City of Windhoek has realized that support of children's programmes could yield rich benefits not only for the individual child and his/her parents, but to eradicate poverty and social inequality in the long run. Interventions in Early Childhood Development thus offer the opportunity to avoid or moderate social problems and could bring lasting benefits to the individual and society.

"The care and development of young children must be the foundation of social relations and the starting point of human resource development strategies from community to national levels."

The vision of the City of Windhoek is to:

"Strengthening the capacity of families and communities in providing Early Childhood Development services and programmes to improve the livelihoods of its youngest residents"

Development Focus

- ✓ Facilitate the provision of land and infrastructure
- ✓ Capacity building of Day Care Staff in Windhoek
- ✓ Partnership with Stakeholders
- ✓ Advocacy

Strategic Objectives

The Policy aims at addressing the following strategic objectives:

- ✓ Promote and facilitate the provision of innovative Early Childhood Development education and care services, programmes and facilities in a conducive and stimulating environment where children's need for love, care and individuality are met.
- ✓ Ensure that basic services are available and affordable to centres that comply with set standards and regulation.
- ✓ Promote the implementation of programmes aimed at childcare and school-readiness.
- ✓ Facilitate and coordinate training of caregivers.
- ✓ Promote family involvement, mother & fatherhood to support in child development.
- ✓ Promote basic health, nutrition, security and safety programmes.
- ✓ Ensure affordable and cost-effectiveness of Early Childhood Development programmes.
- ✓ Initiate and encourage partnership to support early childhood development.
- ✓ Establishing facility standards for child care centres, infant care, children with special needs and after school care and extended programmes
- ✓ Monitor, evaluate and maintain quality Early Childhood Development & Care services and programmes within the City of Windhoek.

- ✓ Improve Early Childhood Development programmes and services in the informal settlement areas, thus strengthening the ability of families to alleviate the impact of poverty to ensure viable livelihoods.

Role of the City of Windhoek

The City of Windhoek will be actively involved in:

- ✓ Assisting communities, non-profitable organizations, churches and private individuals to initiate and establish Early Childhood Development facilities and programmes by making land available for this purpose more easily and at a discounted value.
- ✓ Contributing towards the development of the community in providing facilities, services and programmes.
- ✓ Monitoring facilities, services and programmes to ensure that health, nutrition, safety, protection and educational standards are maintained.
- ✓ Secure funding for Early Childhood Development facilities, services and programmes if centre comply with set standards and regulation.
- ✓ Engage in curriculum development and its implementation in partnership with stakeholders.
- ✓ Coordinate training of caregivers in Windhoek.
- ✓ Advocate the importance of early childhood development and positive stimulation of children.
- ✓ Register centres in partnership with stakeholders.

Conclusion

Children's development should be safeguarded by a healthy environment that supports development and learning. Urbanization has led to changing circumstances and challenges for children's day care. Efforts to reconcile family life and work should be enhanced, with the focus on the needs of children whilst providing positive opportunities to working parents. Continuous training opportunities for day care staff to upgrade competence and service delivery will remain a challenge to be addressed. Advocacy on the importance of ECD should be done in an effort to bring about positive change in the operating environment and service delivery.

The draft policy on ECD aimed at providing a guideline for a start-up programme which could be revised after successful implementation. A detailed outline will be provided for the operation of Day Centres initiated by City of Windhoek and registered with the CoW.

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Operational quality and standards

1 Service Structure

- Half Day Care or Full Day Care.
- Day Care Facilities may be operated profitable or non profitable.
- Clear guidelines of cooperation, partnership, association or trust shall be outlined.
- Day Care principals/centre heads for municipal ECD services will be appointed by the Tender Board of CoW and will be responsible for the overall operation of Child Care facilities constructed by CoW.
- The board of directors/parent committees at different institutions eg. Private institutions, churches, trusts or organizations will be responsible for appointing staff members.
- The City of Windhoek will facilitate the development of the following policies in partnership with day care heads/principals:
 - ü Admission and record keeping
 - ü Daily Programme
 - ü Staff management
 - ü Child behaviour guidance
 - ü Health Care
 - ü Business hours
 - ü Financial policy for parents/families/OVC's
 - ü Staff qualification and training
 - ü Emergency procedure
 - ü Inclusionary practices for children with disabilities
 - ü Confidentiality

Day care heads/principals will oversee the implementation of policies and the City of Windhoek; Early Childhood Development section will monitor the implementation of policies

2 Applicant requirements

Applicants will be invited in communities via relevant media and should comply with the following:

- Demonstrate willingness and ability to operate and manage the Day Care Facility with mature judgement, compassionate regard for the best interests of children and consistency in complying with regulations and relevant laws.
- Posses management and supervisory experience, including the capacity to manage the financial operations and staff of the Day Care facility.
- Knowledge and experience in the field of child care, child development and areas related to the provision of child care services.
- Conduct and demonstrates an understanding of, and compliance with rights for children in Day Care Facility.

2.1 Educational requirements for Pre-Primary Phase and Centre Head/principals in compliance with set regulation (to be announced) by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

2.2 Employment conditions

- An employment history check should be done for each employee of a child day care or home providing care to a child.
- Upon employment, a written report by a medical practitioner of a negative tuberculosis test within twelve (12) months prior to the date of employment or evidence of no active tuberculosis on a chest x-ray should be supplied.
- Probation period of three months should apply to all employees; if necessary this probation period can be extended for an additional three (3) based on the inputs and outcomes of a performance evaluation done and agreed upon by both parties in advance.
- Temporary/interns and volunteers can be accommodated and should comply to employment conditions.
- School leavers/volunteers should be under direct supervision of experienced staff members.
- Administrative and day care staff must be able to perform their assigned tasks and meet all staff requirements as set out in the staff policy.

3 Administration

3.1 Child's Records:

- Should be completed at the time of admission, maintained and kept by Day Care Staff on each child in care.
- Incident register should be kept of each child enrolled.

3.2 Personnel Records

- Full details of each employee shall be kept.
- Performance evaluation must be recorded and filed.

3.3 Child requirements

A Children

- No child under six (6) weeks of age, as verified by a birth certificate, should be cared for in a Day Care Facility.
- Staff should display the ability to work and interact with children, to relate and communicate with parents.
- Children of staff members should be counted and enrolled in the appropriate age groups when in care at the facility.

B Supervision

- Each child, during indoor and outdoor play, must be supervised by child care staff who is responsible for ongoing activity and safety of each child.
- Supervision while napping: The facility should provide supervision to children during napping and/or sleeping hours and at all other times by awake staff.
- Crying/emotionally disturbed children: Any child/children crying out/showing signs of emotional disturbance should be attended to.
- Emergency plan: At all times there should be a plan for obtaining help in case of any emergency.

3.4 Other staff requirements and responsibilities in Day Care Facilities

- The Day Care Head/Principal should be responsible for the overall administration and operation of Day Care Facility.
- In case of absence, a staff member who meets the requirements should be designated to be in charge and will be given the authority to administer the facility in compliance with set policies/rules.
- The designated Day Care Head/principal should be on site for sixty percent (80%) of the time that the day care centre or home is in operation on a daily basis.

3.5 Responsibility of the facility to parental involvement

- Encourage parents to visit: Parents should be permitted to visit the child, to observe the daily programme at any time that the child is present and provide opportunities to participate in activities.
- Information regarding the child should be exchanged regularly with parents/legal guardians.
- Parents/legal guardians should be informed prior to taking children on field trips and should be required to give written permission.
- Direct telephonic access should be provided by the facility to parents/legal guardians at all time while children are in care.
- Centre rules should be made available to parents/legal guardians prior to admission of child to the facility.

3.6 Day care for children with special needs

- Day Care Facilities should make adequate provision for children with disabilities.
- A Child Care Facility must ensure that all staff are adequately trained or have sufficient experience to meet the needs of all children for whom they are responsible.
- Parents should be required to furnish facility with information regarding child's physical, emotional and/or mental disabilities prior to admission to ensure appropriate and successful programming.

4 Programme description, schedule, materials and equipment

Facilities should describe programmes in writing and should include the following:

- Age appropriateness
- Hours of operation
- Number of children served
- Type of programme, eg. Basic Childcare, care for children with special needs, half – day care, infant/toddler care, school readiness, etc.
- Specific focus if applicable (educational, religious, Montessori, Steiner etc.)
- Opportunities for parental involvement
- Child guidance methods used by staff

4.1 Staff Child ratios

Age	Number of children	Caregiver/s
All 6 weeks to 2 years	6	1 Supervisor; 1 assistant
2 – 3 years	10	2
4 year	20	1 trained, 1 assistant
5-6 years	25	1 trained, 1 assistant

- Any location that is operated as a day care by a single person in a residential/family house should not accommodate more than 8 children and shall be regarded small childcare facility.
- Any facility that provides regular day care services for less than 24 hours per day, for more than 3 children in a facility other than a family/residential home, including an institutional building, shall be regarded a day care centre and shall comply with the ratios as stated above.
- Any institution may establish occasional/temporary care programmes, eg. during school holidays or after school care.
- Measures shall be put in place to identify children in such care and additional staff shall be provided in such cases.

4.2 Outdoor activities

- Facilities must have access to an outdoor flat and clean play area with sufficient space for safe play for all children.
- Outdoor supervision: All parts of the playground must be under constant view of supervising staff.
- All children shall have a minimum of 60 minutes outdoor play each morning and afternoon session if weather permits.
- The outdoor area shall be shaded, fenced and protected for safety.
- Outdoor play should aim at fine and gross motor development.

4.3 Indoor Activities

- Television, video viewing and/or use of computer shall be educational and age appropriate. Television viewing should be limited to 30 (thirty) minutes or less per classroom daily.
- All activities shall be stimulating and developmentally appropriate.
- Toileting should take place based upon individual needs.
- Indoor and outdoor physical activities should provide opportunity for fine and gross motor development.
- Adequate equipment for rest should be provided.

4.4 Toys and play equipment

- The facility should provide toys and equipment for indoor and outdoor activities appropriate to the ages and numbers of the children in facility.
- For infants, a variety of soft toys, music and books designed to stimulate curiosity, small and large muscle development, eye-hand coordination, and the sensory perception.
- For toddlers and pre-school children, sufficient variety to offer activities in the following areas:
 1. Blocks and construction materials
 2. housekeeping and dress-up
 3. books and language
 4. arts and crafts
 5. puzzles, games and manipulatives
 6. sensory activities (sand and water)
 7. science and nature
 8. music and,
 9. toys, equipment and space that encourage gross motor development
- Problem-solving experiences that facilitate concept formation, language development and sensory discrimination should be stimulated.
- Creative experiences, like art and media, dramatic play, music and language.
- Language experiences should promote conversation, as well as experience with poems, stories and songs.
- Materials and equipment should be appropriate for children enrolled, including those with special needs.

5 Health

- Immunization: Each child's record should clearly illustrate his/her immunization status as set by forth by the Ministry of Health and Social Services.
- Where possible immunization sessions could be arranged at facilities.

5.1 Accidents and sudden illness

- Notification of parent/legal guardian: Facility staff shall immediately notify the child's parents/legal guardians in case of any illness, serious injury or accident involving the child.
- All incidents, injuries or emergencies regarding children should be recorded on child's file/register.
- Administration of medication should be done only upon written order from medical doctor according to labelled instructions on medicine container and request by parents/legal guardian.
- Non-prescription medication should not be administered to any child. Verbal permission from parents/legal guardian or provider is allowed in case of emergency.
- Extra clothing for pre-school children in the event that clothes become soiled or damaged during the activities of the day.

6 Environment and Safety

- The facility head should take immediate steps to rectify any condition in the physical facility or on the premises, which poses any danger to children's life, health or safety.
- Gates shall be locked at all times.
- Toxic plants and materials are prohibited in areas accessible to children.
- Any pet or animal present at the facility, indoors and outdoors, should be in good health, show no evidence of carrying disease, and be a friendly companion to children.
- Playground shall be free of glass, holes and other hazards.

6.1 Sanitation, health and safety

- Minimum usable space/child: Indoors – 2 m²
Outdoors – 5 m²
- Lighting and ventilation: Every room, hallway, walkway etc. used by children should be well-lighted.
- Natural light and fresh air is required in any room in which any child's attendance exceeds 4 hours/day.
- All rooms shall be adequately ventilated.
- Smoking, use of alcohol and drugs shall be prohibited on the premises when children are present.
- Cots, mats and blankets shall be kept clean.

- Two toilets and wash basins are required for every twenty (21) children. Boys (urinal) and girls separately.
- Toilets shall be kept clean and sanitized at all times.
- § Washing and toilet facilities with running water and soap should be provided.
- § Surfaces under swings, slides or climbers shall be safe.
- § Outdoor playground equipment shall be safely constructed and of suitable size to the age and needs of all children.
- § Outdoor play areas shall be provided with shade to protect children from sun.
- § Swimming pools shall be secured and covered to prevent access and to ensure safety.
- § First Aid Kit shall be available, stocked and safely stored.
- § Drinking water shall be available and accessible to all children at all times.

7 Food and Kitchen Facilities

- Well balanced meals and snacks should be served.
- Snack should include items such as milk, fruit or juice and bread and not sweets.
- Lunch might include: vegetables, fruit, meat, poultry, fish, cheese, eggs, pasta, or bread.
- Food served should be suited to the child's age and appetite.
- Information regarding children's allergies and religion will be readily accessible to food preparation staff, which should pay attention to it when serving food.
- Children shall be under direct supervision during meal times.
- Where possible perishables should be kept refrigerated.

8 Kitchen facilities

- Kitchen areas shall be well-lighted, clean and orderly.
- Children will be permitted in meal preparation areas only while under direct supervision.
- Staff who is ill should not work in food preparation areas. Staff with open sores that cannot be covered shall not handle or prepare food in any day care facility.
- Food shall be covered and stored appropriately.

9 Transportation

Vehicle requirements

- Any person authorized by the facility to transport children shall be properly licensed to operate vehicle.
- Vehicles used should be well-maintained and shall comply with road safety regulation.
- Number of children in any vehicle should not exceed the seating capacity of vehicle.
- Children must be seated at all times and fastened or in child safety seats.
- A supervisor must accompany every group of children per vehicles transported.

Appendix (ii)

1 Fitness requirements for Informal Settlement Day Care homes/centres

1.1 Types of fitness

1.1.1 Full fitness

- Shall be issued to any applicant who complies with or demonstrates the ability to comply with all applicable standards and regulation.

1.1.2 Conditional fitness

- May be issued when applicant fails to comply with standards and regulation. The applicant shall be informed in writing when and what improvements must be made during the term of conditional fitness.

1.1.3 Temporary Fitness

- When a day care moves to a new location.
- All applicable standards must be met before granting of fitness.

2. Term of Fitness

2.1 Full fitness: one (1) year

2.2 Conditional fitness: six (6) months

2.3 Temporary fitness: six (6) months

3. Monitoring for compliance

The ECD Section in cooperation with Town Planning and the Health Division shall monitor the facility on a regular basis to evaluate progress on compliance.

4. Failure to comply with fitness

- Notification shall be given in writing
- Fitness shall not be granted
- Violation of regulation shall result into the termination of services in the best interest of children.

Appendix (iii)

Definition of terms

Early Childhood Development	Refers to the goal –directed interaction between children and caregivers /day care staff to develop the child to its full potential.
Day Care Centre	Any Child care facility which regularly provides day care for less than 24 hours per day for : <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ More than 8 children in a family home✓ More than 3 children in a facility other than a family home, including an institutional building.
Day Care Head / Principal	An individual responsible for implementing the Early Childhood Development policy and managing the day care facility in cooperation with the board of directors / parents committees. Day Care Head / Principal is having the overall responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum and children enrolled at the facility.
Decentralization	Refers to the transfer of authority to other autonomous management and decision making levels which are distinct legal entities (for instance, in federal regionalization, regionalization, municipalisation or privatization). These bodies will make the policy and administrative decisions and assume full responsibility for the implementation of programmes.
Facility	Refers to a building in which day care services for children in a centre or home is housed.
Fitness	In compliance with set standards by Town Planning, Health and Early Childhood Development.
Services	Specific activities or programmes that contribute to the health, nutrition, safety, education and development of children.
Occasional care	Day care facility , group or organization caring for children on an irregular basis such as e.g. holidays , twice a week etc.
Volunteer / intern	Any person who helps or provides services without compensation at a day care facility.
MoE	Ministry of Education
CoW	City of Windhoek
MoHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services

This framework will serve facilities established by City of Windhoek or in partnership with stakeholders in Early Childhood Development as well as centres registered in compliance with regulation under local authority.