

PART II
NATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

For the purposes of [section 94 \(2\)](#) of the Act, the following are national norms and standards for early childhood development programmes-

1. The provision of appropriate developmental opportunities

Programmes must-

- (a) be delivered by members of staff who have the knowledge and training to deliver developmental programmes;
- (b) be appropriate to the developmental stages of children;
- (c) respect and nurture the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child;
- (d) provide opportunities for children to explore their world; and
- (e) be organised in a way that each day offers variety and creative activities.

2. Programmes aimed at helping children to realise their full potential

- (a) Children must receive care, support and security.
- (b) Programmes must promote children's rights to rest, leisure and play through the provision of a stimulating environment.
- (c) Programmes must promote self discovery.
- (d) Programmes must be evaluated and monitored.
- (e) Programmes must promote and support the development of motor communication and sensory abilities in children.
- (f) Programmes must promote self control, independence and developmentally appropriate responsibility.
- (g) Activities must promote free communication and interaction amongst children.
- (h) Programmes must respect and nurture the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child.

3. Caring for children in a constructive manner and providing support and security

- (a) Creative play and exploratory learning opportunities must be provided to children.
- (b) Programmes must adhere to the following conditions-
 - (i) toilet facilities must be safe and clean for children;
 - (ii) where there are no sewerage facilities, sufficiently covered potties must be available;
 - (iii) every child under the age of three years must have his or her own potty;
 - (iv) for ages three to six years, one toilet and one hand washing basin must be provided for every twenty children;
 - (v) there must be a place for the bathing of children;
 - (vi) discipline must be effected in a humane way and promote integrity with due regard to the child's developmental stage and evolving capacities. Children may not be punished physically by hitting, smacking, slapping, kicking or pinching;
 - (vii) programmes must adhere to policies, procedures and guidelines related to health, safety and nutrition practices. These must relate to-
 - (aa) practices aimed at preventing the spread of contagious diseases;
 - (bb) at least one meal per day must be provided;
 - (cc) all meals and snacks should meet the nutritional requirements of children; and
 - (dd) where children are bottle-fed, a suitable facility must exist for cleaning the bottles; and
 - (ee) children must be supervised by an adult at all times.
- (c) Programmes must meet the following requirements in relation to staff-
 - (i) Staff must be trained in implementing early childhood development programmes;
 - (ii) staff must be equipped with basic information, knowledge and skills to recognise children's serious illnesses and how to deal with those;
 - (iii) staff must be trained in first aid;

- (iv) the staff-to-child ratio must-
 - (aa) for children between the ages one month and 18 months be 1:6;
 - (bb) for children between the ages 18 months and three years be 1:12;
 - (cc) for children between the ages three and four years be 1:20; and
 - (dd) for children between the ages five and six years be 1:30; and
- (v) for every staff member stipulated above, there must be an assistant.

4. Ensuring development of positive social behaviour

- (a) Programmes must promote understanding of and respect for diversity in gender, language, religion and culture.
- (b) Activities must include parents and caregivers in the development of positive social behaviour in children.
- (c) Programmes must promote the development of positive social values.
- (d) Programmes must be conducted in a non-discriminatory manner.
- (e) Staff must demonstrate behaviour that promotes positive behaviour by modelling attitudes and interactions with children.

5. Respect for and nurturing of the culture, spirit, dignity, individuality, language and development of each child

- (a) Programmes must promote appreciation and understanding for children's culture and language.
- (b) Educators must utilise one medium of instruction in class.
- (c) Children must be allowed to communicate in the language of their choice and preference outside class.
- (d) Cultural diversity must be encouraged and respected by educators and children alike.
- (e) Programmes may, where appropriate, facilitate late birth registration.
- (f) Programmes must contribute to the development of a sense of identity in children.

6. Meeting the emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development needs of children

- (a) Programmes must be appropriate to the developmental stages and evolving capacity of children.
- (b) Programmes must ensure that parents and caregivers are involved in the development of children.
- (c) Programmes must provide education and support to parents, caregivers and families to fulfil their responsibilities towards child-rearing and the holistic development of their children.
- (d) Programmes must be accessible to especially vulnerable children in their homes.
- (e) For children up to three years of age, programmes should, as much as possible, include household visits for increased accessibility to children.
- (f) Programmes must promote cognitive development in children.
- (g) Programmes must promote the development of fine sensory and motor skills in children.
- (h) Activities must promote a positive relationship between the centre, families and the community.
- (i) Programmes must teach age appropriate self control and independent behaviour.
- (j) Existing community resources and strengths must be utilised in promoting the development of children.
- (k) The emotional needs of children must be addressed and children must be encouraged to express their emotions in a safe, supportive and protective environment.
- (l) Parents, caregivers and families of vulnerable children, children with disabilities and child-headed households must be provided with information, knowledge and skills to promote the development of their children.
- (m) Children must be enabled to develop a positive sense of identity and self worth.
- (n) Programmes must be based on an integrated approach.
- (o) Children should feel valued and respected when participating in activities.