

**Dw** DEVELOPMENT  
WORKSHOP

Community Development  
Human Settlements and Development



# PARENTAL INFORMATION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP NAMIBIA 2021

The first five years of a child's life are fundamentally important. They are the foundation that shapes children's future health, happiness, growth, development and learning achievement at school, in the family and community, and in life in general. The love and care children get during their early years determine how they develop as they grow up and all parents and families want their children to receive quality education, become successful and responsible citizens.

This booklet is designed to provide parents/ guardians and caregivers with practical information to help them support and stimulate their children and ensure their children are ready to enter formal education and are equipped with the necessary skills to success in life.

The information in this booklet were taken from the following documents and sources:

1. *Facts of Life, 4th edition: UNICEF*
2. *Basic Police Training (module 3) Child Protection -study manual: Namibian Police Force*
3. *The Child Witness: A Training Manual: UNICEF and The Government of Namibia*
4. [www.rightstart.com.na](http://www.rightstart.com.na)



## 1. CHILD DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT IS CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

The learning processes children go through as they grow and become adults is called development. Skills are learnt and then combined to develop more complex tasks such as walking, talking and playing. Children learn more quickly during their early years than at any other time in life. They need love and nurturing to develop a sense of trust and security that turns into confidence as they grow. Babies and young children grow, learn and develop rapidly when they receive love and affection, attention, encouragement and mental stimulation, as well as nutritious meals and good health care.

### CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

The early years, especially the first three years of life, are very important for building the baby's brain.

Everything she or he sees, touches, tastes, smells or hears helps to shape the brain for thinking, feeling, moving and learning.

Babies learn rapidly from the moment of birth. They grow and learn best when responsive and caring parents and other caregivers give them affection, attention and stimulation in addition to good nutrition, proper health care and protection.

Encouraging children to play and explore helps them learn and develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. This helps children get ready for school. Children learn how to behave (socially and emotionally) by imitating the behaviour of those closest to them.

Entering ECD centres (kindergarten) and pre-primary school on time is critical to ensure the continuity of a child's development. Support from parents, other caregivers, teachers and the community is very important.

All children grow and develop in similar patterns, but each child develops at her or his own pace. Every child has her or his own interests, temperament, style of social interaction and approach to learning.

**MAIN AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT:**

- gross motor skills (large muscles) for example crawling, jumping or running
- fine motor skills (small muscles) such as writing and drawing
- speech (language) and communication
- cognitive or / and intellectual, such as: recognizing familiar objects, domestic animals... etc / - Sorting objects according to colour, size, shape. etc
- social and emotional skills, such as: playing with other children and be able to share toys or objects, wait patiently, take turns, express her/his emotions

**HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT:**

Here are some ideas of what you can do at home to support your child.

0 - 6 MONTHS	6 -12 MONTHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make skin-to-skin contact and breastfeed within one hour of birth</li> <li>• support the baby's head when you hold the baby upright</li> <li>• massage and cuddle the baby often</li> <li>• always handle the baby gently, even when you are tired or upset</li> <li>• breastfeed frequently and on demand</li> <li>• always safely dispose of the baby's faeces and wash hands with soap and water after changing the baby's diaper</li> <li>• talk, read and sing to the child as much as possible</li> <li>• give consistent love and affection</li> <li>• visit a trained health worker with the infant during the first week and again six weeks after birth.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advice for parents and other caregivers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lay the baby on a clean, flat, safe surface so she or he can move freely and reach for objects</li> <li>• continue to hold and cuddle the baby every day, giving consistent love and affection</li> <li>• prop or hold the baby in a secure position so she or he can see what is happening nearby</li> <li>• continue to breastfeed on demand day and night, and start adding other foods (two to three meals a day starting at 6 months; three to four meals a day from 9 months)</li> <li>• talk, read or sing to the child as often as possible, not only when she or he is hungry or getting ready to sleep.</li> </ul>

**12 -24 MONTHS**

- point to objects and name them; play with, talk, sing and read to the child frequently
- use mealtimes and other family activities to encourage interaction with all family members
- give consistent affection and be responsive both when the child is happy and when upset
- if the child is developing slowly or has a physical disability, focus on the child's abilities and give extra stimulation and interaction
- do not leave a child in one position for many hours
- make the area as safe as possible to prevent accidents, and keep dangerous objects, such as sharp objects, plastic bags and small items a child can choke on, out of the child's reach
- continue to breastfeed and ensure that the child has enough food and a variety of family foods
- help the child experiment with spoon and cup feeding
- make sure the child's immunizations are up to date and that she or he receives all recommended doses of nutrient supplements
- keep the child's hands clean and begin teaching the child to wash them with soap.

**2 -3 YEARS**

- read to and sing or play games with the child
- teach the child to avoid dangerous objects
- talk to the child normally – do not use baby talk
- continue to breastfeed and ensure the child has enough food and a variety of family foods
- make sure the child is fully immunized
- encourage, but do not force, the child to eat
- provide simple rules and set reasonable expectations
- praise the child's achievements and when she /he does something good, provide reassurance when the child is afraid and continue to give consistent affection every day.

**3-4 YEARS**

- read and look at books with the child and talk about the pictures
- tell the child stories and teach rhymes and songs
- give the child her or his own bowl or plate of food
- continue to encourage the child to eat, giving the child as much time as she or he needs
- help the child learn to dress, use the toilet or latrine and wash her or his hands with soap and water after using the toilet and before touching food and eating
- listen to and answer all the child's questions and encourage creative play
- give the child simple tasks, such as putting toys back in their place, packing up her / his clothes to build responsibility
- avoid allowing your child watching videos on your phone, limit television watching TV and ensure that the child does not watch movies/films that are violent
- acknowledge and encourage positive behaviour and set clear limits. Rules and consequences must be understandable and make sense
- provide consistent love and affection every day
- enrol your child in a ECD centre (kindergarten)

**5-6 YEARS**

- listen to the child
- interact frequently with the child
- read, tell stories and sing songs together
- encourage the child (both girls and boys) to play and explore
- listen to and answer all the child's questions, have conversations (with both girls and boys)
- encourage creative play, building and drawing
- avoid allowing your child watching videos on your phone, limit television watching TV and ensure that the child does not watch movies/films that are violent
- acknowledge and encourage positive behaviour and set clear and consistent limits
- provide consistent love and affection every day
- enrol your child for Pre-Primary

**Other things you can do, to support your child:**

- Apply for a birth certificate for your child
- Enrol your child / children in ECD centres (kindergarten) at an early age
- Assist and participate in the events at the ECD centre (kindergarten)
- Get to know the teachers / educarers of your child /children
- Discuss homework and offer your support
- Take an interest in what your children are doing and discuss it with them

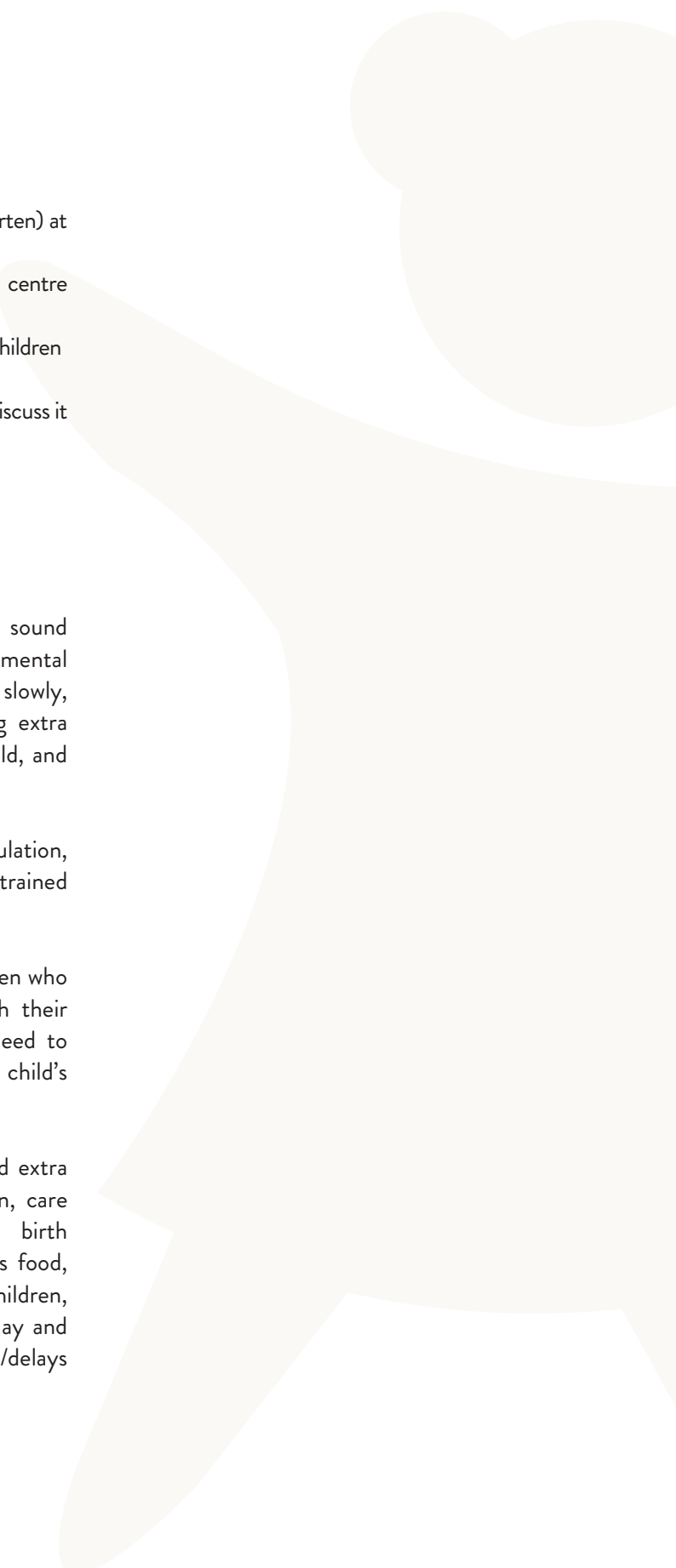
**EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS AND / OR DISABILITY**

By observing how young children respond to touch, sound and sight, parents can identify signs of possible developmental problems or disabilities. If a young child is developing slowly, parents and other caregivers can help by spending extra time with the child, playing and talking with the child, and massaging the child's body.

If the child does not respond to attention and stimulation, parents and other caregivers need to seek help from a trained health worker.

Taking early action is very important in helping children who have developmental delays and disabilities to reach their full potential. Parents / guardians and caregivers need to encourage the greatest possible development of the child's abilities.

A girl or boy with a disability needs lots of love and extra protection. She or he needs all the same attention, care and support every other child needs; for example: birth registration, breastfeeding, immunizations, nutritious food, and protection from abuse and violence. Like all children, children with disabilities should be encouraged to play and interact with other children. Children with disabilities/delays also have the right to go to school.





## 2. RESPONSIVE PARENTING AND CAREGIVING

### AFFECTION AND PROTECTION

- Showing love and affection is important for children's emotional development. This helps them to develop strong friendships and healthy relationships later in life.
- Hug your children, tell them you love them and praise them when they do well.
- Violence and physical punishment can stunt a child's brain development and lead to children becoming violent.
- Any suspected abuse or neglect of child abuse should be reported to the police or a social worker.

### FATHERS INVOLVEMENT

- Both parents should be involved in the development of the child.
- Children whose fathers are actively involved in their lives are more likely to be happy, healthy and successful.
- Even when parents are not in a relationship, both parents should be actively involved with the children. Paying maintenance money is important, but fathers should also spend time with their children and develop an emotional bond with them.
- Step-parents should treat all children in their household equally.

## POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

### What is positive discipline?

Positive discipline is a very effective way of teaching and guiding children by letting them know what behaviour is good or bad in a way that is safe and kind. Young children can experience excessive stress if they are physically or emotionally punished, are exposed to violence, are neglected or abused, or live-in families with mental illness, such as depression or drug / alcohol abuse. These stresses interfere with the developing brain and can lead to cognitive, social and emotional delays and behaviour problems in childhood and later in life.

Children who are physically or mentally punished in anger are more likely to become violent themselves. Positive and effective ways to address children's behaviour can include:

- providing a child with clear explanations about what to do and what not to do;
- responding consistently to certain behaviours;
- praising good behaviour.

### More guidelines for applying positive discipline:

- Redirection: if the child is playing with something dangerous, do not just grab it from her or him, offer the child something else and explain why the other thing is not appropriate to play with.
- Be a good role model: Your child will learn from your behavior, and she or he will start acting with kindness in return.
- Be consistent: Stick to your guidelines without backing down. Rules helps children to know what is expected from them.
- Be calm and brief: Short and sweet comments work just as effectively.
- Be quick: Discipline your child as soon as possible, even if you're in public, so the reason for discipline is clear.

- Be realistic. For example; do not expect a 4-year-old to sit quietly for an hour while you are busy talking to the visitors.
- Catch your child being good. "Your child craves your attention. Show your child love and tell her or him how good and proud you are.
- Remind your child that you love them. Remember that even though your child may behave badly, the child himself isn't bad. Follow your discipline with hugs and sweet words such as I love you.

## SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENTS

Children are very susceptible to illness and injury, so spaces for children should be kept safe and clean (this includes homes, ECD Centers, play areas, outdoor spaces).





### 3. CHILD PROTECTION

#### WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse or maltreatment is all forms of physical and /or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation which harms the child's health, survival, body, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, or has the potential to cause such harm.

Child abuse can be defined as the act or failure to act on the part of a parent or care-giver which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation or which comprises an act or failure to act which poses an imminent risk/real threat of harm.

#### TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE:

- **Physical abuse** – beating the child, bashing the child, kicking the child, burning the child with a hot object, shaking, pushing or throwing the child, choking a child or cutting off the child's air, breaking the child's limbs or ribs or dislocating a child's shoulder, pinching or biting a child;
- **Emotional or psychological abuse** – continuing criticism, habitual blaming, bullying, harassing, ridiculing, frightening or rejecting a child, verbal behaviour that terrorises, intimidates or humiliates the child; treating children in the same family unequally;
- **Neglect – failing deliberately** (not through poverty) to provide for children's physical medical emotional, material and safety needs; failure to provide for children's intellectual and growth

needs, inadequate supervision and guidance, failure to ensure children are not exposed to potential hazards (eg poisonous materials, live electrical points, water pools in which they could drown, not allowing or sending the child to school).

- **Sexual abuse** – actual or likely exploitation of the child or teenager by an older person with a sexual aim, using bribes, threats, or force to persuade a child to participate in sexual activities; these can include ‘showing’, touching, watching as well as physical activities with a sexual element.

#### **Abusing children has the following consequences on their emotional and behaviour:**

##### **Emotional:**

- Low self esteem
- Depression and anxiety
- Relationship difficulties
- Aggressive behaviour/anger
- Alienation and withdrawal
- Personality disorders
- Clinginess and flashbacks nightmares

##### **Behaviour:**

- Problems at school
- Dropping out of school and suicide
- Risky sexual behaviour
- Criminal or anti-social behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Alcohol and drug abuse

## **4. SAFETY AND SECURITY**

### **ii. Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

- Alcohol and substance abuse in homes increases the risk of children being mistreated and can severely impact child development.
- Do not drink or use substances while pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Do not expose children to drugs or alcohol, or to adults under the influence of substances.
- Protect children from alcohol within communities and keep them away from shebeens.

### **iii. Violence**

- Keep children protected from violence and shield them from violence by providing love and care.
- Speak to your child about the risks of child abuse. “Talk with your child about her/his body, which body parts are private and that no one is allowed to touch her/him. How to react, to say “NO” and “STOP”. Encourage them to tell you about anything that makes them uncomfortable.
- Remember – its very rare for children to lie about abuse and in most instances, child abuse is committed by someone known to the child (family member. teacher, principal, community members, friends, neighbours).

## WHERE TO GET HELP:

Child abuse is a crime. Help protect children in your community and report incidents of child abuse to any of the following numbers:

### **Windhoek**

#### LIFELINE/CHILDLINE

Counselling, parenting advise and referral service

Call Toll-free counselling service number: 116

Call Toll-free Gender Based Violence Support number: 106

In person counselling

45 Simon Shixungileni Street, Windhoek

Tel: 061 226889,

[www.lifelinechildline.org.na/counselling](http://www.lifelinechildline.org.na/counselling).

#### REGAIN TRUST

Counselling and violence support

Call social worker 081703 3202/ 0815584004

#### LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Legal/Family/Maintenance support and Information

[www.lac.org.na](http://www.lac.org.na)

Call: 061 223356

Visit office: 4 Marien Ngouabi Street  
Windhoek, Namibia



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