



POSITION STATEMENT

ADOPTED: APRIL 2000

Prevention of Social, Emotional, Physical and Cognitive Disabilities and the Promotion of Health, Safety and Well-Being

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children supports local, state, and federal initiatives to promote the health, safety, and well-being and the prevention of social, physical and cognitive disabilities including efforts taken to assure that children affected by disabilities do not acquire unnecessary secondary disabilities or exacerbation of their impairments.

Research has shown that the early childhood years build the foundation for a lifetime of health and development. Well-known factors have also shown that investing in prevention is cost-effective and that services need to be provided in natural environments with collaborative efforts to establish linkages with appropriate community-based systems, services and personnel.

Resources to address the biological and environmental components of risk factors for young children may include:

1. Prenatal care services for all pregnant women and their families;
2. Early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment, including well-child checks and safe vaccinations provided to all children who should receive these services as established in the concept of the medical home*;
3. Culturally responsive family and parenting education and support programs for families with risk factors (e.g., teenagers and other individuals at high risk);
4. Early intervention programs and other programs aimed at reduction of social and environmental factors related to risk conditions in early childhood (e.g., abuse/neglect, substance abuse, poverty, lead poisoning, violence) and at enhancing the child's capacity to negotiate those environments; and

5. Affordable, quality childcare environments ensuring that young children are in safe, healthy, nurturing environments that provide high quality early experiences to promote development and learning.

Therefore, DEC supports the advancement of programs, policies and practices supported through evidenced-based practice and empirical research. DEC believes that there should be substantial attention and resources devoted to prevention and intervention, including:

1. Research to develop and evaluate educational, behavioral, medical, and environmental interventions during the prenatal period aimed at buffering or ameliorating disabling conditions;
2. Practices that are developmentally and individually appropriate, family-centered and inclusive (vital to preventing or reducing the severity of many disabilities or at-risk conditions and prevent secondary conditions);
3. Service systems that are culturally responsive, family-centered, and coordinated across all states, provinces, and territories provided by qualified, credentialed professionals and paraprofessionals;
4. Support for families as decision-makers in partnership with professionals with regard to the health and well-being of their children;
5. Advocacy for informed, research-based, fully funded, and effectively implemented public regulations and policies aimed at services for young children with special needs that are provided in safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environments; and

Division for Early Childhood

27 Fort Missoula Road • Missoula, MT 59804 • Phone: 406.543.0872 • Fax: 406.543.0887

E-mail: dec@dec-sped.org • www.dec-sped.org



6. Dissemination of information that promotes the translation and transference of evidenced-based knowledge and empirically based research information to practice, resulting in higher-quality services for children and families.

*A medical home is not a building, house, or hospital, but rather an approach to providing healthcare services in a high-quality and cost-effective manner. (American Academy of Pediatric, from www.medicalhomeinfo.org).

RESOURCES

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