

Resolution 5.9.03

Early Childhood Development

Whereas, research indicates that virtually every aspect of early human development, from brain formation to the development of the capacity for empathy, is heavily influenced by the environments and experiences beginning early in the prenatal period and extending throughout the early childhood years.¹

Whereas, there are certain windows of time during which infants are especially sensitive to their environments (ages 0-2: emotional control, vision, social attachment; ages 0-3: vocabulary; ages 0-10: second languages; and ages 1-4: math/logic)³, and therefore may suffer permanent damage if not exposed to proper stimulation.

Whereas, optimal brain development depends on children receiving adequate nutrition and being raised in nurturing, consistent, and stimulating environments.⁴

Whereas, long-term studies show that children who have secure attachments early in life are more capable of engaging in meaningful relationships and achieving in school.⁵

Whereas, studies show chronic stress (caused by extreme social and emotional deprivation) can adversely affect the brain, and may result in developmental delays.⁶

Whereas, research studies and longitudinal surveys show that high quality child development programs with parent involvement have lasting benefits for children and their families.⁷

Whereas, investments in programs addressing the early years have much higher rates of return compared to social policies that intervene in later years in life.⁸

Therefore, be it resolved, that PCA America supports:

Implementing voluntary programs and services starting in infancy, such as voluntary home visitation, parent mutual support programs, and early childhood education programs, that provide a safe and nurturing environment for all children, promote parent-child relationships, and educate parents on parenting skills and community resources.

Increasingly directing resources toward early childhood development, the time when such resources will make the greatest impact.

Training of all supervisory staff, child care workers, and family caregivers on the most effective ways to care for young children, provide stimulating and developmentally appropriate activities, and engage parent involvement.

Funding further research on the relationship between social and economic well-being and early human development.

Improving parental leave benefits so parents have the time and resources to appropriately care for their newborns.



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- ¹ Shonkoff, Jack P. and Deborah A. Phillips, Eds. (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Institute of Medicine.
- ² Begley, Sharon. (1996). "Your Child's Brain." *Newsweek*. February 19, 1996, pp. 55-61.
- ³ Willms, Douglas J. (2000). "Early Years: New report calls for responsible community support of early childhood experience." *The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter*. Vol. 16 No. 1.
- ⁴ Teo, A., E. Carlson, P.J. Mathieu, B. Egeland, and L.A. Sroufe. (1996). "A Prospective Longitudinal Study of Psychosocial Predictors of Achievement." *Journal of School Psychology* 34 (3), pp. 285-306.
- ⁶ Gunnar, M.R. (1996). *Quality of Care and the Buffering of Stress Physiology: Its Potential in Protecting the Developing Human Brain*. University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development.
- ⁷ Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs: Analysis and Recommendations.
- ⁸ Heckman, James and Ounce of Prevention Fund (2000). "The real question is how to use the available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the Very Young." Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies.

Prevent Child Abuse America

200 South Michigan Avenue 17th Floor Chicago, Illinois 60604.2404
312.663.3520 *tel* 312.939.8962 *fax* www.preventchildabuse.org