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Early Stimulation In Children

By

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Children
Health
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EARLY STIMULATION IN CHILDREN

Dr. Edith H. GROTBORG

Information sources

A variety of information sources were used to search for appropriate information on Early Stimulation in Children. These included the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), an international information system containing the majority of final reports on research and programs concerning children; then, the extensive and rich library of the International Children's Center was used. These two major sources were supplemented by reports of research in progress plus the experience of the writers of the materials on early stimulation. The intent was to abstract from the literature generalizable statements and facts which are useful to cultures which have different styles of living and child rearing.

Accommodation of materials to four audiences

The materials, written in French, English and Spanish, address four audiences. The reason for such accommodation was to help make the materials meaningful within the four audiences. Thus, the university and professional level provides a good deal of information on research. The primary care personnel, practitioners and parents level provides information on what to do for parents and babies and how to acquire some important skills for early stimulation. The policy makers level recognizes differences in people's needs, changes in society, such as working mothers, immigrants, and stresses the importance of the early childhood period as an area for policy decisions. The mass media level abstracts out from the other three levels the information most appropriate for media channels.

Substance : essential core information

The essential core information includes (1) the definition of early stimulation; and (2) basic facts and concepts about early stimulation.

(1) Definition :

Early stimulation occurs when adults provide materials, experiences, language and love to an infant, toddler or young child. The adults can be parents or other care givers.

(2) Basic facts and concepts

Children in poverty and immigrant children often need more stimulation for language, sensori-motor, and intellectual development than children not in poverty.

Parents can learn to provide the stimulation and the emotional support all children need to develop.

Preschool programs can supplement the parents in providing the stimulation and the emotional support all children need to develop.

Newborn babies can see, hear, taste, smell and feel. Early stimulation builds on these basic facts.

The kinds of stimulation change over time as the child develops through a recognizable sequence of stages. Children develop at different rates, but in the same sequence :

sitting before standing
babbling before talking
grabbing before manipulating, etc.

Limits of the Information

The information on early stimulation is generally culture-free and requires adaptation by the users to their own cultural needs. There are biases in the information, however, which should be noted. The information on early stimulation for the academic and professional level emphasizes the retarded development resulting from lack of stimulation; for the primary care giver level the emphasis is on the importance of the mother in early stimulation to the exclusion of the father and other adults; for the policy makers level the emphasis is on the problems of working mothers to the exclusion of what other members of the family and the community can do in early stimulation. These biases, however, do not minimize the accuracy and usefulness of the information.