

Involving Parents / Caregivers in Play in an Early Childhood Environment

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“A child who does not play is not a child, but the man who does not play has lost forever the child who lived in him.” - P. Neruda

Introduction

- Empirical evidence shows that play and interaction are important components of early childhood development. Play helps the child: build confidence, feel loved, happy and safe, develop social skills, language and communication, learn about caring for others and the environment, develop physical skills, (Cohen, 2016; Ginsburg 2007).
- Parents' engagement in activities of play is an important indicator of parenting practice. It builds lasting bonds and allows parents to appreciate the uniqueness of each child and is also a stress reducer for over-worked parents, (Anderson-McNamee & Bailey, 2010).
- The children in Liberia paid dearly for the deep-seeded hostilities that fueled the bitter civil war. Many children joined the fighting, while others did not understand what was going on and were therefore, subjected to unexpressed play which is an important tool for child development. The children spoken of are now parents / caregivers who have not understand the value of play to the development of a child, which indicates the inability of these parents /caregivers to impact the lives of their children positively (United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), 2006).

Goal

- The aim of the intervention is to provide parenting and caregiving support and education to improve parent-child interaction and learning opportunities for children age 2 -5 years.

Method

Participants

- There will be 25 participants. They will consist of fifteen semi-literate parents, five care-givers from the center and five Bank Street trained ECDCEAP Master Trainers, trained by the Ministry of Education, Republic of Liberia.

Procedure

- There will be community awareness entry meetings that will proceed the five days intervention. The intervention will consist of: four hours each day, interactive training workshop at the Butterfly Early Childhood Center in Kpan Town, Marshall City, Magibi County, Liberia.



Picture above: Parent and child interaction

Intervention Protocol

- Each workshop will be approximately 4 hours in length a day and has 4 parts that include discussion and exercises on:

I.
How children play learn -
Listening and sharing
together through dramatic

II.
Importance and Benefits of play -
Building a healthy brain

III.
Types and Stages of play--
Interacting with infant and
young children

IV.
Developing and appreciating
developmentally and culturally
appropriate play materials for
children.

Measure

Use the Kirkpatrick four levels of training to the intervention.

- Level 1 – Participants reaction to the knowledge provided .
- Level 2 – Participants acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Level 3 - Participants application of knowledge
- Level 4 – Participants learning outcomes and subsequent reinforcement.

Conclusion

Strength

- The successful implementation of this intervention will help strengthen the bond between parents / caregivers and the child by bridging the gap of parents' understanding of how children learn during their early years.

Limitations

- This intervention is being piloted in a very small community where over 75% of the parents are unskilled illiterate and 25% are unskilled semi-literate; school dropped outs.
- The social economic status of the dwellers is far below the average rate of US \$ 5.00 that has been proposed by the Liberian Senate.
- Therefore, the pressure of providing for their family can affect their active participation in this intervention. Economic constraints can also limit the participation of the target group except vigorous awareness campaign on child development and the importance of play is carried out.

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References

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