



PHILIPPINES 2000



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AUG 07 2003 1473

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Administrative Order No. 71
Series of 2003

SUBJECT : Guidelines on the Implementation of the Day Care for Children with Autism

I. Rationale

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It is the result of a neurobiological disorder for which there is no known cure. It affects the functioning of the brain and interferes with normal development in the areas of reasoning, social inter-action and communication skills. The disorder makes it difficult for the person with autism to relate to his/her environment, communicate with other people, or become an independent member of the community. However, persons with autism, given early intervention in life, can and do live happy and productive life and can be integrated in society. They live the normal life span and some behavior associated with it may change or disappear over time.

Autism occurs roughly in 1 out of every 500 births and is four times more common in males rather than in females. It is found throughout the world respecting no race ethics, creed or social background. Family income, life style and educational levels do not affect its chances of occurring.

In the Philippines based on given formula and extrapolation of data approximately 156,000 filipinos come out as affected with autism. It is not a well known disability since it is not physically apparent. Awareness of this disorder became known in the Philippines only recently. It is mistakenly classified under mental retardation. The Elsie Gaches Village (EGV), the National Center for Mentally Retarded of the Department of Social Welfare and Development has been providing services to mentally retarded individuals since the 1960s. Some of this persons with mental retardation must have been autistic based on the July 2002 data of EGV that out of the 22 mentally retarded clients the center served four are autistic children. The Department of Education also had provided services to mentally retarded individuals since 1960 in their SPED schools in the Metro Manila area.

A more heightened awareness of autism was in 1983, when a mother of a five year old boy with autism was featured in the newspaper, "The Philippine Daily Express". After the feature story, the mother received many letters and phone calls from other mothers saying that their sons/daughters showed similar behaviors like her son but did not know that it was autism. Four years later (1987) the mother together with 10 parents of children with autism bonded together to form the now Autism Society of

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the Philippines (ASP). It became the venue for parents to find comfort, share experiences, and be able to disseminate information on autism to fellow Filipinos.

In January 1996, then President Fidel V. Ramos signed Proclamation No. 711, declaring the third week of January as Autism Consciousness Week. Along this first observance was the holding of the First National Symposium on Autism. Parents and teachers from as far as Mindanao and the Visayas began to inquire about autism. Most of them have no resource for assistance since the government has limited or no program at all for children with autism in the rural area. There are also no schools or teachers in their locality who are qualified or experienced in handling autistic children.

Responding to these problems, the Department of Social Welfare and Development through the then Bureau of Disabled Person's Welfare integrated autism in its nationwide implemented Social Mobilization of Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens and their Families (SOCMOB) Project. Corollary to this, selected DSWD Central Office and Field Office Staff regular and MOA staff underwent training on the identification, care and management of children with autism at the CAHBRIBA Alternative School, a school in Los Baños Laguna with expertise in autism. The objective was to acquire basic knowledge and skills in identification, care and management of people with autism.

The Day Center for Children with autism was developed to respond to the following concerns:

- Scarcity of facilities and school for children with autism in other areas of the country, since most are concentrated in the Metro Manila area.
- Low level of awareness on autism even among the medical community, thus many autistic persons are not properly diagnosed and are sometimes treated as mentally ill patients, which they are not.
- Provision of appropriate interventions and therapy to children with autism.
- Lack of know-how of affected families on the management of children with autism.
- The urgent need for organized parents and sibling support group.

II. Project Description

The Day Care Service for Children with Autism aims to provide early childhood enrichment activities to children with autism to a maximum of 15 children at any given time. A worker trained on early intervention, childhood care and development will provide the care and management of male and female, 3 to 6 years old children with autism who are physically healthy. The children must be assessed by a developmental pediatrician to find their level of autism.



The Day Care shall likewise serve as the vehicle for capability building of parents and family members in managing home based intervention for autistic children.

The project shall be implemented by the Local Government Units (LGUs), Non-Government Organizations (NGO) or other Government Organizations (GOs) through the Municipal/City Social Welfare Development Office. Technical Assistance and resource augmentation shall be provided by the DSWD through its field office.

The project will involve the active participation of the parents and siblings of autistic children and members of the community, civic and religious organizations, people's organization in activities when and where they are needed.

II. OBJECTIVES

General:

For children with autism to develop fully their potential towards becoming independent, self-reliant, productive, and socially accepted members of society.

Specific:

- 1) To help the child with autism develop his/her physical, mental, social, verbal and language skills, to prepare him/her for mainstreaming into regular day care service program.
- 2) Include the parents and siblings of children with autism, LGU workers, day care workers, volunteers and other service implementors in the training/skills enhancement activities.
- 3) Increase the level of awareness of the families and the community on autism.
- 4) Establish a day care for children with autism where non is existent
- 5) Integrate Day Care Service for autistic children to existing DSWD licensed/accredited NGOs targeting such age group.
- 6) Strengthen linkages between NGO and LGU on Social Welfare Services.

III. TARGET AREAS

The Day Care for Children with Autism project shall be established at least one in every region. Sites of implementation must have the following features:

Incidence of autism is high

- Accessible and strategically located
- Availability of a developmental pediatrician in the area or region or at least a child psychiatrist and psychologist trained and with experience in detecting autism
- Local Government Units, Non-Government Organization responsive to the idea
- Stable peace and order situation

IV. Components

To ensure the effective implementation of the project the following component must be considered.

A. Capability Building – this will involve:

- Orientation of the DSWD, LGU and local officials and leaders, other government agencies, NGOs, civic and religious organizations and business group to generate their commitment and involvement in the program/project.
- Training/orientation of family members and other service providers involved in handling autistic children. This will also include conducting early detection clinics in barangays to assess autistic children which will help establish the data base on children with autism/autism. Roving Day Care workers shall be utilized to train other Day Care workers, particularly in the remote areas, in early intervention.
- Development of training modules on the care and management of children with autism, and specialized modules which may be included in the regular modules of the day care workers.

B. Advocacy

Advocacy shall include the following:

- Organization of parents and sibling group as advocates and self-help group as focal point in advocacy and resource mobilization for the sustainability of the project.
- Production, replication and distribution of information materials such as posters, comic books, literature on autism.
- Conduct of symposium or talakayan on autism.
- Regular radio and TV guesting for parents and advocates for autism whenever feasible.

- Organization of autism hotline where distraught person who has learned his/her child is autistic can talk to volunteers, parents, counselors.
- Other advocacy efforts that are locally effective and applicable.
- Development of an advocacy plan.

C. Direct Services to Children with Autism and their Families

The services shall be provided by the DSWD through LGU, NGO and other agencies.

- 1) **Day Care Services** – all services available to day care children shall also be made available to children with autism such as supplemental feeding, growth monitoring, and others.
- 2) **Medical and Dental Services** – provision for medical and dental examination and treatment to lessen physical impairment and improve health condition.

This shall also include accessing of services of developmental pediatrician, speech therapist, and other paraprofessionals.

- 3) **Psychological Services** – administration of psychological tests to determine the children's level of psychological functioning and areas of strength as well as areas requiring intervention.
- 4) **Special Education Services** – aimed to provide special education opportunity for high functioning autistic children in close coordination with DepEd. This include training clients along self-care and grooming, social skills and the functional 3R's to develop positive attitudes and self-confidence.
- 5) **Social and Recreational Services** – such as social interaction with peers, participation in sports, artworks, recreation and socio-cultural activities.
- 6) **Counseling Service** – provision of counseling by the social workers to parents, siblings of children with autism needing them. The counseling needs of parents and sibling shall be closely coordinated with other staff.
- 7) **Volunteer Service** – volunteer works where volunteers willing to be involved in the Day Care for Autistic Children project/program can share their time, talent and resources.

- 8) **Other Services** – which the DSWD and other coordinating agencies may deem necessary to the benefit of children with autism.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

To determine the impact of the implementation of the project, a program review and evaluation shall be conducted at the end of the first year of implementation and annually thereafter. This will provide the DSWD the gaps, the strengths and weaknesses of the project for follow-up and technical assistance.

E. Documentation of the Project

The documentation of the project shall be done for purposes of supervision, research, administration and serve as a basis for enrichment of program manuals.

V. Delineation of Responsibilities

A. DSWD Central Office

1. Prepare guidelines and other program material including training and specialized modules for the project
2. Oversee the overall implementation of the project
3. Provide funds for the capability building and skills training activity for pilot implementors and field office's focal persons.
4. Monitor, evaluate and provide technical assistance to the DSWD Field Offices on the operationalization of the project
5. Conduct national evaluation workshop.
6. Consolidate and analyze reports submitted by the regions
7. Conduct research, documentation and publication of the project

B. DSWD Field Office

1. Conduct consultation with LGUs, NGO and other GOs to determine their interest, readiness, commitment and capability to implement the project.
2. Conduct orientation/demonstration of the project to LGUs implementors
3. To initiate advocacy activities that will create public awareness on autism to ensure proper care of children with this disability
4. Monitor and provide technical assistance to LGU implementors.
5. Develop and maintain linkages with local officials, NGOs, and GOs in the area relative to project implementations.
6. Assist in the evaluation research and documentation of the project
7. Ensure judicious disbursement of funds
8. Prepare and submit quarterly reports and update of the project including funds disbursement and utilization.
9. Maintain updated data/profile of children with autism in the area.

C. Local Government Units (LGUs) NGOs and other GO's

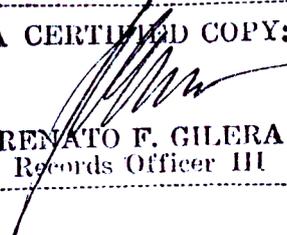
1. Implement and supervise the implementation of the project in their respective agencies.
2. Provide administrative support in the implementation of the project and hiring of permanent worker for the project per memorandum of agreement.
3. Identify and mobilize resources for the provision of social services.
4. Organize parents of autistic children and volunteers as support groups.
5. Develop and maintain linkages with NGOs and other GOs.
6. Support public awareness raising campaign concerning persons with disabilities, particularly children with autism.
7. Work for the passage of local resolution in support to the implementation of a Day Care Service for children with autism.
8. Prepare and submit quarterly reports to the DSWD Field Office.

VI. Effectivity

These guidelines shall take effect immediately and revokes issuances inconsistent herewith.

Issued in Quezon City, this 4th day of Aug., 2003.


CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN
Secretary
Department of Social Welfare and Development

A CERTIFIED COPY:

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Records Officer III