



Disability Early Intervention Centres

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Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has launched **14 cross-disability early intervention centres** across the country to provide support to **infants and young children** at risk of or with disabilities.

Disabilities

- Disabilities is an **umbrella term**, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.
 - An **impairment** is a problem in body function or structure;
 - An **activity limitation** is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action;
 - A **participation restriction** is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.
- The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
India has ratified the Convention and has enacted '**The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**'.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The **services provided at the centres will include** screening of children and referral to appropriate **rehabilitative care; speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy; parental counselling** and training and peer counselling.
 - These centers will also **focus on school readiness**.

- **Need:**
 - **Scenario from 2011 Census:**
 - There are **more than 20 lakh** children with disabilities in the age group of **0-6 years**, who belong to the categories of visually impaired, hearing impaired, locomotor disability etc.
 - This means that **around 7% of children** in this age group suffer from some form of disability.
 - **Expected Rise in Number:**

The number of such children is expected to increase as the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016**, increases the number of disabilities to 21 from 7.
 - **0-6 Years is a Critical Phase:**
 - Early Childhood (0-6 years) is the **most critical phase of brain** development. Early intervention can provide specialised support and services for infants and young children at-risk or with disability or developmental delay and their families to help their development, well-being and participation in family and community life.
 - This can **lead to lesser economic burden** by creating a better future and independent/less dependent lives.
- **Other Initiatives for Disabled:**
 - **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016**: Besides increasing the number of disabilities, it increases the quantum of reservation for people suffering from disabilities from 3% to 4% in government jobs and from 3% to 5% in higher education institutes.
 - **Accessible India Campaign**: Creation of Accessible Environment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
 - **Unique Disability Identification (UDID) Portal**: The project is being implemented with a view of creating a **National Database for PwDs**, and to issue a **Unique Disability Identity Card** to each PwD.
 - **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme: Financial assistance is provided to NGOs** for providing various services to PwDs, like special schools, vocational training centres, community based rehabilitation, pre-school and early intervention etc.
 - **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)**: Aims at **helping the disabled persons** by bringing suitable, durable, scientifically-manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances within their reach.
 - **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities**: To increase opportunities for students with disabilities to pursue higher education, 200 Fellowships per year are granted.
 - **Schemes of the National Trust** for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.

Way Forward

- Identification of at-risk cases, **especially in rural areas**, is an important aspect and it is also important to provide necessary assistance and counselling to their parents in time.
- Research shows that the **first 1000 days of a child's life are crucial** to ensure healthy development, so it is very important to identify the risk cases at an early age so that the severity of the disability can be reduced through appropriate measures.

Source: TH