



## Disability Early Intervention Centres

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### Why in News

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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

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- **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

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- 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**