



Early Childhood Development Support Centers in Serbia 2012/2013

FACT SHEET

- Pilot project: Two Early Development Support Centers (EDC) were opened in August 2012 in two cities in Serbia (Belgrade and Nis). Third EDC was opened in May 2013 in Belgrade with the support of local authorities (City of Belgrade).
- Program is based on the principles of the Ontario Early Development Center program. In the pilot phase, program was tested and adapted in accordance with the specific needs of the EDC users, continuously assessed during the project implementation.
- Goal: to explore the prerequisites for the creation of the sustainable model for development of EDCs in Serbia, to lay foundations for the development of the related policy frameworks, and to offer parental support programs aimed towards strengthening of parenting competencies.
- Target groups: Parents and caregivers of children up to 5.5 years who are not included in any preschool program/kindergarten; Socially and economically disadvantaged parents and children (Roma families, families with children at risk and with children with developmental disabilities)
- Focus on parents empowerment and parent/child joint activities
- Three types of activities: Play and Learn (joint workshops for parents and children), parenting workshops and expert lectures
- 296 workshops and lectures held so far and 354 families applied to participate in the program (and they are applying on a daily basis)
- Majority of the children are between 2 and 4 years of age (68%)
- 92% do not attend kindergarten, and two-thirds of the children involved in the program does not attend any activities other than the activities in the EDC .

PARENTS' FEEDBACK

Here he started talking. He listens to other children. He behaves better. He is different now, he approaches other children

The overall impression is positive, our opinion is accepted, communication in the Center is great; we, parents, learned a lot about child development.

The child keeps asking what day it is, and whether it is a day when we go to the Center.

We are privileged to have the opportunity to be part of this program. I learned a lot from this program.

The program is beneficial for both me and my child. She learned a lot, and her social skills improved considerably.

ACTIVITIES



Core activity: Play and Learn Program

Play and Learn program offers a set of organized, semi-organized and free **joint activities** for both parents/caregivers and child. As a part of this program playgroups are formed, where parents and kids have an opportunity to **perform planned activities, socialize and play** together. Play and Learn program have a **strong developmental emphasize**, with activities designed in such way to stimulate specific developmental aspects in a preschool child (speech and language development, visual perception, motor development, tactile perception, recognizing and understanding emotions etc.)

Six theme days have been created, each of them targeting specific developmental area of the preschool child:

- Reading day
- Music day
- Sports Day
- Art day
- Play Day
- Optional activities (conceived in such way to cover different topics and developmental aspects that have not been covered with other theme days)

Each of the theme days have a **specific list of activities and workshops** that can be conducted depending on the size of the group, age of children or/and budget. Workshop coordinators can choose from the list of suggested activities and make a specific plan for every workshop.

Parenting Workshops

Workshops are **interactive, focused on sharing experiences**, and providing practical advices for handling a particular situation. **Child minding has been provided** for all parents participating in the workshops. Some of the topics covered in the workshops were:

- Partnership relations after the birth of a child
- When to start potty-training?
- Children and the Media
- Breastfeeding
- Temper tantrums
- Problems with eating
- Preschoolers and the Internet

Expert Lectures

Expert lectures were held by professionals from different backgrounds, as guest voluntary lecturers, **covering a wide area of parenting and child –upbringing related topics**, for example:

- When to go to a doctor's office?
- Fear and anxiety in children
- The sexual development of children
- How to talk to your child about divorce?
- Domestic violence

- Manual dexterity and writing

