

# BEST PRACTICE 2

## EARLY IDENTIFICATION

**The ECD practitioner**, is an important link in the early identification of special needs. While some parents may notice that their child is not meeting developmental milestones and seek help, others may not notice or may choose to ignore the issue. Some parents try to compensate for the child's difficulty without realising it by talking louder or doing things for the child.

The earlier a problem is identified, the sooner the child can receive appropriate support and continue to learn without lagging behind developmentally. It's easier to adapt activities in the classroom with informal environments without the child becoming too aware of the individual attention.

### Special need or a barrier to learning?

Here are some reasons why it's not always easy to identify special needs in the ECD phase:

- Careful observation and sound knowledge of developmental phases are needed
- ECD is informal, so children are not expected to perform at the same level as children in primary school/foundation phase
- Children will avoid activities they find difficult which makes problem areas more difficult to observe
- Young children are not consistent on a day-to-day basis
- Some may be late or slow developers

**Caregivers of babies and young children** have a responsibility to help identify children at risk or children with disabilities.

### Important factors that may highlight concern:

- The small child is slower than other children with regards to their physical development
- The child has unusual features
- The child struggle with movement and body control
- The child does not respond to sound
- The child has abnormal stiff or floppy muscles
- The child is extremely sensitive to light
- The child sometimes has fits
- The child's behaviour is extreme, i.e. withdrawn or uncontrollable
- The child has eating problems
- The child is often ill for extended periods of time

## Effective assessment promotes early identification

Assessment activities should always be fun. Encouraging the children and praising their efforts are all important to the process.

Here are some guidelines:

- Choose an assessment tool that will tell you what you need to know
- Be prepared to adapt your methods of assessment to include the child with possible barriers to learning
- Set aside enough time to observe the child and work with him/her individually. Ensure assessments are a true and accurate recording of his/her holistic development across all domains
- Incorporate some assessment processes into part of the everyday routines. Record all assessments and observations as soon as the child has completed the task/s given
- Assessments are private and confidential and should be handled in a professional manner

