

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8980

AN ACT PROMULGATING A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY AND A NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (ECCD), PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Section 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "*ECCD Act*".

Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote the rights of children to survival, development and special protection with full recognition of the nature of childhood and its special needs; and to support parents in their roles as primary caregivers and as their children's first teachers. The State shall institutionalize a National System for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) that is comprehensive, integrative and sustainable, that involves multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration at the national and local levels among government; among service providers, families and communities; and among the public and private sectors, non-government organizations, professional associations, and academic institutions. This System shall promote the inclusion of children with special needs and advocate respect for cultural diversity. It shall be anchored on complementary strategies for ECCD that include service delivery for children from conception to age six (6), educating parents and caregivers, encouraging the active involvement of parents and communities in ECCD programs, raising awareness about the importance of ECCD, and promoting community development efforts that improve the quality of life for young children and families,

Sec. 3. *Objectives.* - The objectives of the National ECCD System are:

- (a) To achieve improved infant and child survival rates by ensuring that adequate health and nutrition programs are accessible to young children and their mothers from the pre-natal period throughout the early childhood years;
- (b) To enhance the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, psychological, spiritual and language development of young children;
- (c) To enhance the role of parents and other caregivers as the primary caregivers and educators of their children from birth onwards;
- (d) To facilitate a smooth transition from care and education provided at home to community or school-based setting and to primary school;
- (e) To enhance the capabilities of service providers and their supervisors to comply with quality standards for various ECCD programs;
- (f) To enhance and sustain the efforts of communities to promote ECCD programs and ensure that special support is provided for poor and disadvantaged communities;
- (g) To ensure that young children are adequately prepared for the formal learning system and that both public and private schools are responsive to the developmental needs of these children;

(h) To establish an efficient system for early identification, prevention, referral and intervention for developmental disorders and disabilities in early childhood; and

(i) To improve the quality standards of public and private ECCD programs through, but not limited to, a registration and credential system for ECCD service providers.

Sec. 4. *Definitions.* - For purposes of this Act:

(a) Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) System refers to the full range of health, nutrition, early education and social services programs that provide for the basic holistic needs of young children from birth to age six (6), to promote their optimum growth and development. These programs include:

(1) Center-based programs, such as the day care service established under Republic Act No. 6972, public and private pre-schools, kindergarten or school-based programs, community or church-based early childhood education programs initiated by non-government organizations or people's organizations, workplace-related child care and education programs, child-minding centers, health centers and stations; and

(2) Home-based programs, such as the neighborhood-based play groups, family day care programs, parent education and home visiting programs.

(b) ECCD Service Providers include the various professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteer caregivers who are directly responsible for the care and education of young children through the various center and home-based programs. They include, but are not limited to, day care workers, teachers, teacher-aides, rural health midwives, social workers, community health workers, barangay nutrition scholars, parent effectiveness service volunteers, child development workers, and family day care providers.

(c) ECCD Curriculum refers to the age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate educational objectives, program of activities, organized learning experiences and recommended learning materials for children that are implemented by service providers through center and home-based programs. It shall consist of national program goals and guidelines, instructional objectives, and content outlines integrating local learning experiences and indigenous learning materials.

(d) Parent Education refers to the various formal and alternative means of providing parents with information, skills, and support systems to assist them in their roles as their children's primary caregivers and educators. These include public and private parent education programs linked to center, home and media-based child care and education programs.

Sec. 5. *System Framework and Components.* - The ECCD System shall include the following components:

(a) *ECCD Curriculum* - which focuses on children's total development according to their individual needs and socio-cultural background. It shall promote the delivery of complementary and integrative services for health care, nutrition, early childhood education, sanitation, and cultural activities. It shall use the child's first language as the medium of instruction.

(b) *Parent Education and Involvement, Advocacy, and Mobilization of Communities* - which harness and develop parents' strengths as providers of ECCD at home, active partners or other stakeholders, advocates for community concerns that affect children, and pillars of support for local and national ECCD programs through community organization efforts.

(c) *Human Resource Development Program* - which establishes mechanisms for the systematic professionalization of ECCD service providers, through enrollment in educational programs in site-based or distance educational modes, through pre-service or in-service training including continuing education programs, whereby a registration and credential system shall be developed in the ECCD System.

(d) *ECCD Management* - which focuses on a continuing process of planning, implementation, supervision, financial management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. It shall encourage the active involvement and build the capabilities of service providers, parents, and local government officials to sustain the program, and it shall be guided by the principles of decentralization as stipulated in the Local Government Code of 1991.

(e) *Quality Standards and Accreditation* - which ensures that each component in the ECCD System complies with national quality standards, to be established by the National ECCD Coordinating Council as provided for under Section 8 of this Act, linked to an accreditation process.

Sec. 6. Establishment of ECCD System. - The National ECCD System shall be established in at least three (3) regions each year, as may be determined by the National ECCD Coordinating Council, to achieve national coverage over a five-year period.

Sec. 7. Implementing Arrangements and Operational Structures. - The implementation of the National ECCD System shall be the joint responsibility of the national government agencies, local government units, non-government organizations, and private organizations that are accredited to deliver the services or to provide training and technical assistance.

(a) *Responsibilities of the National Government* - National government agencies shall be responsible for developing policies and programs, providing technical assistance and support to the ECCD service providers in consultation with coordinating committees at the provincial, city/municipal, and barangay levels, as provided for in Section 8 of this Act, and monitoring of ECCD service benefits and outcomes. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the National Nutrition Council (NNC) shall jointly prepare annual ECCD for work plans that will coordinate their respective technical assistance and support for the National ECCD Program. They shall consolidate existing program implementing guidelines that ensure consistency in integrated service delivery within the National ECCD System.

(1) The DECS shall promote the National ECCD Program in schools. ECCD programs in public schools shall be under the joint responsibility of their

respective school principal/school-head and parents-teachers-community association (PTCA) within the standards set forth in the National ECCD System and under the guidance of the City/ Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee for the effective and equitable delivery of ECCD services. It shall also make available existing facilities of public elementary schools for ECCD classes.

(2) Public and private pre-schools shall be registered by the Provincial or City ECCD Coordinating Committee upon the recommendation of the respective division office of the DECS. NGO-initiated, community, church, home, and workplace-based service providers shall be registered upon the recommendation of the provincial/city social welfare and development office. These public and private ECCD service providers shall operate within the standards set forth in the National ECCD System and under the guidance of the City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee for the effective delivery of ECCD services.

(b) *Responsibilities of Local Government Units* - Local government units (LGUs) shall be primarily responsible for:

(1) Implementing the National ECCD Program by providing basic public ECCD services;

(2) Supporting the organization of parent cooperatives to initiate the establishment of ECCD programs;

(3) Ensuring that service providers of public ECCD programs under their supervision shall be justly compensated, that adequate funds are made available, and their working conditions are conducive to fulfill national quality standards; and

(4) Providing counterpart funds for the training and continuing education of ECCD service providers, and supporting the operations of Provincial, City/Municipal and Barangay ECCD Coordinating Committees.

(c) *Responsibilities of Families and Communities* - The families and communities shall support the local ECCD programs by participating in various projects for the overall development of their children.

Sec. 8. Creation of National Coordinating Council and Coordinating Committees for ECCD. - To ensure the sustained inter-agency and multi-sectoral collaboration from the national, provincial, city/municipal to barangay levels, a National Coordinating Council and provincial, city/municipal and barangay coordinating committees shall be organized.

(a) *National ECCD Coordinating Council.* - The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) shall also function as the National ECCD Coordinating Council, hereinafter referred to as the Council, and shall hereby be under the Office of the President.

(1) *Composition.* - In addition to the existing members of the CWC, two (2) private individuals, who are ECCD practitioners and experts shall be appointed

by the President, upon recommendation of the Council, for a term of two (2) years subject to one (1) reappointment. The Council shall meet once a month or as often as necessary. The Secretaries of the DSWD, DECS, DOH, and DILG shall act as co-chairpersons of the Council and must be represented by a person with a rank not lower than an Undersecretary.

(2) *Council Secretariat.* - The CWC Secretariat shall also serve as the secretariat of the Council. It shall be headed by an executive director, who shall be appointed by the President, upon the recommendation of the Council. He/She shall have the rank, privileges, and emoluments of a Career Executive Service Officer I. Nothing herein shall prejudice any right vested prior to the enactment of this Act.

There shall be created two (2) permanent positions of Deputy Executive Directors to be appointed by the Council, one of whom shall be exclusively concerned with ECCD programs and activities and the other exclusively with the existing functions of the CWC. The Deputy Executive Directors shall be assisted by senior technical staff to be seconded from the DSWD, DECS, DOH, DILG, DOLE, DA, DOJ, NEDA and NNC for a period of at least two (2) years, subject to renewal, and shall be entitled to whatever additional remuneration the law allows for such secondment.

(3) *Functions of the National ECCD Coordinating Council.* - The Council shall:

(i) Promulgate policies and implementing guidelines for ECCD programs in consultation with stakeholders at various levels, including the regional level when appropriate, consistent with the national policy and program frameworks as defined in this Act;

(ii) Establish ECCD program standards that reflect developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant practices for ECCD programs, which shall interface with the primary school curriculum of the DECS;

(iii) Develop a national system for the recruitment, registration, continuing education and equivalency, and credential system of ECCD service providers, supervisors and administrators to improve and professionalize the ECCD sector and upgrade quality standards of public and private ECCD programs;

(iv) Develop and implement a system of awards and recognition to deserving ECCD program implementors and service providers;

(v) Coordinate the various ECCD programs of each line agency and monitor the delivery of services to the ECCD program beneficiaries nationwide;

(vi) Evaluate and assess the impact and outcome of various ECCD programs nationwide through an effective information system;

(vii) Develop and establish a national system for early identification, screening, surveillance of early childhood disabilities, developmental problems, and giftedness;

(viii) Develop and implement various support mechanisms that maximize the public and private resources for implementing ECCD programs, giving priority to the needy and high risk children from poor communities;

(ix) Provide counterpart funds to poor and disadvantaged communities for the establishment and expansion of public ECCD programs, improvement of physical facilities and for hiring of ECCD service providers;

(x) Promote and encourage private sector initiative for the establishment of ECCD programs; and

(xii) Provide guidelines for ECCD Coordinating Committees at the provincial, city/ municipal and barangay levels for the conduct of solicitations and requests for assistance from local and international civic organizations, private philanthropic foundations to supplement available resources.

(b) *Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee. Composition, Function, Secretariat.* - There shall be created in every province a Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee.

(1) *Composition.* - The Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee shall be composed of the Governor of the Province as Chairperson, Division Superintendent of DECS, Provincial Planning and Development Officer, Provincial Budget Officer, Provincial Health Officer, Provincial Director of DILG, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer, Provincial Treasurer, President of the Provincial League of Municipal Mayors, and two (2) representatives of non-government organizations operating ECCD programs appointed by the Committee, for a two-year term, subject to one (1) reappointment, as members;

(2) *Functions.* - The Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee shall be under the Provincial Development Council and shall perform similar functions as the National ECCD Coordinating Council as appropriate, including other functions that may be provided in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of this Act. It shall coordinate the delivery of services and support from the National ECCD Coordinating Council and the national line agencies involved in ECCD programs. It shall also support and complement the resources available to municipalities and barangays in the province in the expansion and improvement of ECCD programs, as well as be responsible for the registration of ECCD programs and service providers; and

(3) *Secretariat.* - The Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee shall organize a secretariat which shall coordinate and monitor the effective implementation of ECCD programs in the province. It shall be headed by the provincial ECCD Officer, who shall be appointed by the Governor, upon the recommendation of

the Provincial ECCD Coordinating Committee. He/She shall have the rank, privileges and emoluments of a Department head.

For the first three (3) years of the establishment of the ECCD system in the province, the salary, allowances and other benefits of the Provincial ECCD Officer shall be paid for by the Council. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the salaries, allowances and other benefits of the Provincial ECCD Officer shall be provided by the province.

(c) *City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee; Composition, Functions, Secretariat.* - There shall be created in every city and municipality a City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee.

(1) *Composition.* - The City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee shall be composed of the City/Municipal Mayor as Chairperson, the Division Superintendent/ District Supervisor of DECS, City/Municipal Planning and Development Officer, City/ Municipal Budget Officer, City/Municipal Health Officer, City/Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer, City/Municipal Local Government, Officer, City/Municipal Treasurer, City/Municipal Nutrition Officer, President of the Association of Barangay Captains in the City/Municipality, President of the Parent Teachers-Community Federation in the City/Municipality, and two (2) representatives of non-government organizations involved in ECCD programs in the City/Municipality appointed by the Committee for a two-year term, subject to one (1) reappointment, as members.

(2) *Functions.* - The City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee shall be under the city/municipal development council and shall perform similar functions as the council as appropriate, including other functions that may be provided in the Implementing Rules and Regulations. It shall likewise support and complement the resources available to barangays in the expansion and improvement of ECCD programs, coordinate and monitor the delivery of services at the barangay level, ensure accurate reporting and documentation of service delivery, as well as mobilize and encourage private sector initiatives for the establishment of ECCD program implementors in the city/municipality that conforms to National ECCD System Standards.

(3) *Secretariat.* - The City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee shall organize a Secretariat which shall coordinate and monitor the effective implementation of ECCD programs in the city/municipality. It shall be headed by the City/Municipal ECCD Officer, who shall be appointed by the mayor, upon the recommendation of the City/Municipal ECCD Coordinating Committee.

(d) *Barangay ECCD Coordinating Committee* - The Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC), created under Presidential Decree 603, shall also function as the Barangay ECCD Coordinating Committee. The BCPC shall be responsible for the proper and effective implementation of public ECCD programs and maintenance of database system at the barangay level. Pursuant to this, all barangays shall organize BCPCs in their respective areas.

The BCPC shall be composed of, among others: the Barangay Captain, the school head/s in the barangay, the Barangay health midwife, the Barangay health worker, the Barangay nutrition scholar, the day care worker/s, parents, the Sangguniang Kabataan Chairman, and a representative from child-focused non government organizations/ people's organizations, as members. The members of the BCPC shall elect from among themselves the Chairperson.

Section 9. *Financing ECCD Programs.* - ECCD programs at the community level shall be financed through a combination of public and private funds. All public ECCD program providers shall prioritize young children from families who are in greatest need and who can least afford private sector programs.

(a) *Public support for ECCD programs.* - The government shall support public ECCD program through cost-sharing arrangements that shall involve the LGUs, and counterpart funds from the national government agencies for technical assistance and support. Additional funds may be generated from intergovernmental donors and financial institutions by the appropriate government agencies through the NEDA to support the public programs in fourth, fifth and sixth class municipalities including the urban poor. Funds shall be accessible to qualified LGUs through the Municipal Development Fund or other financing mechanisms as prescribed by the Department of Finance (DOF) and based on guidelines from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). The Council may establish a trust fund to assist LGUs in the expansion and upgrading of ECCD programs.

Primary health care programs, pre-natal and post-natal care, growth, monitoring and promotion, and supplementary nutrition programs shall continue to be funded through the LGUs with technical support and additional resources from the DOH.

The Day Care Program, Parent Effectiveness Service, Child-Minding Centers, Family Day Care and Parent-Child Development Programs shall continue to be supported by the LGUs in the form of construction of basic infrastructure, provision of facilities, materials and equipment, and compensation for the service providers. The DSWD shall provide for technical assistance.

The kindergarten program in public schools shall continue to be supported by the DECS in cooperation with the PTCAs, where applicable, by providing teacher training, supplementary learning materials and reference materials for ECCD programs.

The DSWD, DECS, DOH, and DILG shall support the implementation by LGUs of the National ECCD Program and shall include in their respective annual general appropriations beginning the fiscal year following the approval of this Act the necessary funding to achieve the goal of national coverage within a five-year period and sustain the Program from thereon. The work and financial plan of the DSWD, DECS, DOH, and DILG shall be coordinated with the Council.

(b) *Support for ECCD Programs.* - Supported for ECCD programs can be solicited from local and international civic organizations, private philanthropic foundations to supplement available resources.

Workplace-based or related ECCD programs should be supported by corporations and employers in the form of physical facilities and recurrent operating costs. The operating

cost incurred for employer or corporate-sponsored ECCD programs can be deducted from taxable income: *Provided*, That the employer or corporation will not charge user fees.

(c) *Costs to be Shouldered by Families.* - The Council shall monitor user fees and contributions allowed for both public and private programs to ensure that these are affordable and within reasonable limits.

User fees for public programs should be limited to monthly contributions intended to subsidize recurrent costs. Parents are encouraged to contribute their time and services especially in cases where they are unable to afford the regular contributions.

Sec. 10. *Appropriations.* - For the implementation of this Act, the amount of Four hundred million pesos (P400,000,000.00) per year for five (5) years is hereby appropriated for the National ECCD Program of the council effective upon approval of this Act. Said amount shall be funded from the gross income of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation and shall be directly remitted in four (4) quarterly installments to a special account of the Council. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the operations of the Council shall be included in the General Appropriations Act.

A supplementary appropriations in the amount of Thirty million pesos (P30,000,000.00) shall be provided to the Council from the President's Organizational Adjustment Fund upon approval of this Act.

The above appropriations shall be separate and distinct from the annual budget of the CWC.

Expenses for ECCD programs and technical support packages provided by the DSWD, DECS, DOH, DILG, DOLE, DA, DOJ, NEDA, and the NNC shall be specified as separate line items in their respective annual budgets in the General Appropriations Act. Their annual ECCD workplans shall be the basis for these budgets and shall be released directly to their regional or provincial offices whenever applicable.

Sec. 11. *Annual Report.* - The Council shall, at the close of each calendar year, submit an annual report to Congress, giving detailed account of its proceedings and accomplishments during the year making recommendations for the adoption of measures that will improve the National ECCD System.

Sec. 12. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the other provisions thereof.

Sec. 13. *Repealing Clause.* - Pertinent provisions of Presidential Decree No. 603 and Executive Order No. 233, all laws, Decrees, executive orders, presidential proclamations, rules and regulations or parts thereof contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 14. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The Council in consultation with all appropriate government agencies and non-government organizations shall formulate and issue the necessary rules and regulations for the implementation of this Act within ninety (90) days after the effectivity of this Act.

Sec. 15. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved: December 05, 2000.