

Cross- disability early intervention centres

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In news

The Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment virtually inaugurated 14 Cross-Disability Early Intervention Centres located at 7 National Institutes and 7 Composite Regional Centres under the DEPwDin

Need

- There is a need to identify children with disabilities or infants who are at risk of developing a disability, and provide them early assistance, so as to ensure optimal development of the child.
- According to the **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 percent of children in this age group suffer from some form of disability.
- These are expected to increase with the enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, as there are now 21 categories in the disability category instead of 7.
- 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.
- Keeping these things in mind, in the first phase, the Ministry has decided to set up 14 cross disability (Early Intervention) centers.

About the intervention centres

- The **objective** of these centers is **to make the differently-abled people virtually self-reliant in India and integrate them in the mainstream of society.**
- These **centres will provide screening and identification, rehabilitation, counselling, therapeutic services among others for different disabilities** under one roof and in a contiguous manner.
- These Centres have been equipped to provide services and facilities in a contiguous manner in an accessible and aesthetically designed environment under one roof.
- These services include facilities for screening of children to identify risk cases and refer them for appropriate rehabilitative care.
- Provision for **therapeutic services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy** have also been made in these centres.
- **Parental counseling and training as well as peer counseling** is an integral part of these centres with a view to enabling the parents to cope up with the needs of children with disabilities.
- **School readiness facilities** at these centres aims at improving physical and cognitive ability including communication and language skills of the children with disabilities for enabling them to live an independent life.
- These 14 Early Intervention Centers have been started in Dehradun, Delhi, Mumbai, Secunderabad, Kolkata, Cuttack, Chennai, Surendranagar, Lucknow, Bhopal, Rajnandgaon, Patna, Nellore, and Kozhikode.
- Ministry has also prepared the **Handbook on Early Intervention Centres for Children with Disabilities**, in which detailed information has been given regarding the structure and service profile of these centers and intervention strategies

Various initiatives of Central government

Following are the Union government's efforts with respect to PWDs:

- The Central Government has implemented the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which envisages an inclusive society for persons with disabilities.
- Accessible India Campaign
- Unique Disability Identification portal
- DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme
- Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / fitting of Aids and Appliances
- National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities