Milestone One: Draft of Introduction

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Child Growth and Development

Human development focuses on changes that individual experiences, the patterns of these changes, and uniformity in people of the same age. The early years of life are critical in determining the health and development of children. The following discussion examines the Head Start program that targets children between three and five years. The discussion examines gaps in development needs and risks. It also addresses development gaps in the Head Start program and the best intervention for bridging the gap.

**Program Identification**

The identified program for this assignment is Head Start. It is a community service funded by the government and designed to promote the readiness of children from low-income families to join the school. The children benefit from free healthcare (dental and medical) services, a healthy diet and playing in safe environments.

**Targeted Age Group**

The target age group for the program is children between 3 and 5 years. Early Head Start serves children below the age of three years. It also includes their parents and pregnant women (Office of ChildCare, n.d). The parents' involvement is encouraged through frequent visits to the child's home and numerous opportunities for parents to volunteer in the programs' welfare. The age group of between 3 and 5 years is considered for discussion.

**Developmental Needs and Risk Factors**

Children between 3 and 5 years learn to take control of their bodies. They become more aware of their bodies' limits, and coordination of balance becomes a critical component in learning simple activities like buttoning. Children at this age should be provided with opportunities for physical development skills (Vilaseca et al., 2019). The learning opportunities should include exercising, feeding, brushing teeth and opening doors, among many other simple activities.

Cognitive development relates to thinking and learning skills. They include asking questions, attention, problem-solving skills and simple reasoning. Children between the ages of 3 and 5 are defined by their inquisitive characteristics, collecting things and repeatedly practicing the same thing. They are fond of taking risks and trying new things.

Children in this age group have a wide range of social and emotional development. They regulate emotions and behaviors and build friendships with other children and adults. The children also build positive personal identities like self-confidence and participate in the learning process (Brown et al., 2012). They are naturally curious but need support in managing feelings and responding to social situations.

Development risks are factors that increase the susceptibility of individuals to harm, forestall or delayed normal development.

A common risk factor in development for children between 3 and 5 years is parenting. Lack of supportive parents and poor parenting styles increase the risks of problematic child behavior. Familiar factors like violence, stress and family separation contribute to a child's stress and delayed development (Brown et al., 2012). Some sicknesses during infancy have negative impacts on development at this age. For example, some children born preterm or have low birth weights are at higher risks of cognitive impairment and behavioral challenges than children born full-term. They may also develop some psychosocial difficulties mediated through the behaviors of caregivers.

**Program Description**

The Head Start program targets children from a low-income households in the community, which is a significant concern in the children development. The parents' demographic mostly include low education, single parenthood, young parenting age, and a large number of dependent children. A combination of these factors poses a significant threat to children's development. Familial and demographic factors impact the child's developmental outcomes and socioeconomic statuses (SES) (Vilaseca et al., 2019). For example, higher parental education is closely correlated with better development outcomes for the children (Vilaseca et al., 2019). A family with a low-income translates to limited opportunities for the child that may limit or delay the child’s development.

**Intervention**

The proposed intervention for addressing the gap in demographics for children in the Head Start program increases the benefits of low-income families. This proposal is recommended because the federal government runs the program and, therefore, policy intervention can be suitable for bridging the programs' gap. The intervention should include offering a universal tax credit for parents with children below five years (Berger, Cancian & Magnuson, 2018). The approach can allow the flow of financial indirect financial support to the targeted families to increase their children's access to developmental opportunities such as safe housing, quality healthcare services and playing material.

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