

CHILDREN'S AMENDMENT BILL SUBMISSIONS

Submission from the SA National Council for the Blind

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE DRAFT CHILDREN'S AMENDMENT BILL

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The SA national council for the Blind comprising more than 100 affiliates understands and appreciates the fact that the Children's Amendment Bill, which has been signed off by the president in December 2005, has provisions for children with both disability or chronic illness. Further, the afore-mentioned organization is sentient of the fact that with the Children's Amendment Bill, government is committing itself to redressing all discriminatory practices and imbalances of the past.

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S AMENDMENT BILL

We have noted with keen interest that the Children's Amendment Bill's various sections calls for: Clearly crafted plans to ensure equal access and equal opportunities for children with disability or chronic illness;

Norms and standards for inclusivity;

Norms and standards ensuring physical access and safety of children;

Norms and standards on personnel development.

ANALYSIS OF THE BILL

The Bill protects children from all forms of discrimination on the basis of disability (Chapter 2). It further gives recognition to children's disabilities, places where different services are rendered and an obligation on the Department of Social Development to create a conducive environment responding to children's unique needs. Based on that, we look forward to seeing/witnessing relevant, affordable and user friendly services.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE BILL

THE MEANING/DEFINITION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The meaning/definition of Early Childhood Development in its current state is narrow. Our suggestion is that it should as well include sensory and communication development.

ACCESS

The bill puts emphasis on physical access at the expense of other aspects such as access to information, ICT, etc. We do suggest that access to information, ICT, etc also be incorporated in the Bill.

WEIGHTING

Weighting (children to caregiver ratio) is not only vital for the safety of the children but it is also vital for the attention the children will receive from the caregiver. We suggest that this should be clear in the Bill as to how many children according to the degree and severity of disability should a caregiver, professionals and paraprofessionals be rendering services to.