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Early Childhood Intervention in Austria: An Overview of 30 Years of Development and Future Challenges

Abstract

The situation of early childhood intervention in Austria is described from its beginning in the 1970s up to the present situation and future challenges. Children with disability or at risk of being disabled qualify for early childhood intervention as well as partly and to some extent also children in the context of socially disadvantaged families. Based on nine provincial laws, the structure of early childhood intervention in Austria is heterogeneous. A consensus regarding key terms, the age of the child (0 – 3 or 6), and home-based services exists. Future challenges focus on early identification of vulnerable target groups by increased communication with community based networks (social worker, mental health specialists) as the number of children with unspecific developmental delays or vulnerability will increase. The training programmes for early intervention professionals, as proposed for example in the project PRECIOUS (www.precious.at), must include the need for professionals to work with vulnerable families in general to a greater extent.

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