

## **Play Center for Children with Special Needs**

The Department of Human Development and Family Studies, has been offering services for children with special needs since 1967. The departmental services have assumed different focal points through the years. Starting with recreational services for a small group of children with disability managed by their parents it has grown into an early stimulation and intervention set up, with well planned individualized developmental packages. It offers services for children with mild to moderate disability (Mental Retardation, Cerebral Palsy, Emotional behaviour problems, Learning Disabilities etc.) in the age range of 2-6 years. It is housed in the premises of Chetan Balwadi, the laboratory nursery school of the department. The center is managed by qualified and trained personnel with developmental and special needs background. Contact is maintained on a regular basis with other paraprofessionals in the area and each child's program is worked out in co-ordination with other ongoing therapeutic inputs like physiotherapy, speech, play therapy etc.

The program is based on the philosophy that young children benefit immensely from stimulation through play in their overall development. A unique feature of the center is active parent participation on a day to day basis with the aim of training them and enabling them to carry out the program as effectively in the home. Integrating these children in the Chetan Balwadi classes or schools elsewhere in the city once they have achieved basic functional and cognitive skills is a major aim of the center.

The center also enables students in the department to put their theory into practice through field work placements in the ongoing program when they undertake intensive work with individual children for extended periods of time.