



South African Early Childhood Review 2024

Hall K, Almeleh C, Giese S, Mphaphuli E, Slemming W, Mathys R, Droomer L, Proudlock P, Kotze J, and Sadan M. South African Early Childhood Review 2024. Cape Town: Children's Institute University of Cape Town and Ilifa Labantwana

The Essential Package of ECD services

Children's long-term development is a function of a package of **interrelated and integrated services** covering the period from conception to six years of age. The Essential Package is a **pre-condition to realise children's constitutional rights**.



**Maternal, newborn
and child health
services**



**Nutritional
support**



**Support for
primary
caregivers**



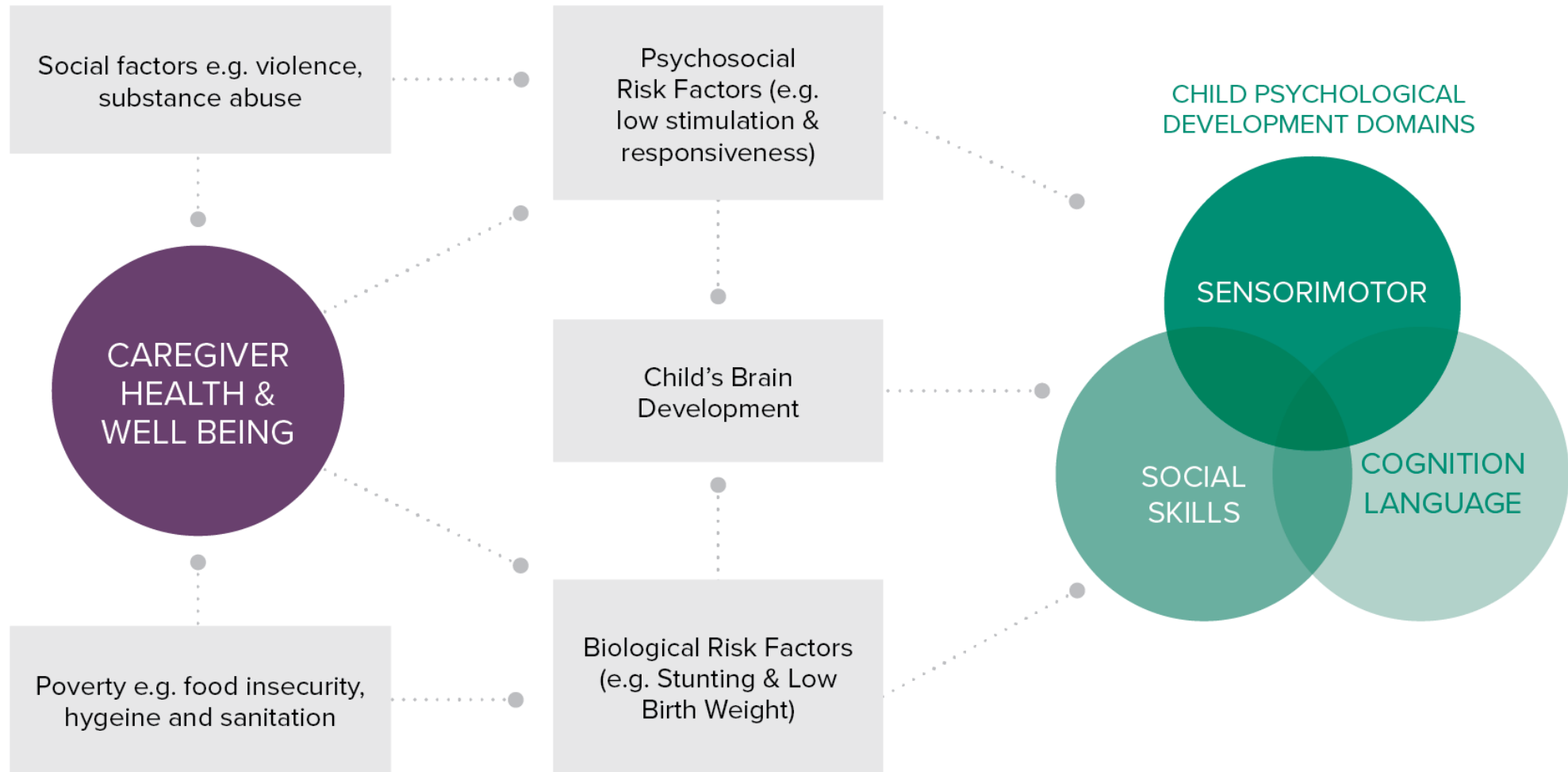
**Social services
and protection**



**Quality early
care and
education
programmes**

The South African Early Childhood Review brings together available data across the components of the Essential Package. It monitors how the country is progressing towards meeting national goals on ECD, including the National Integrated ECD Policy of 2015.

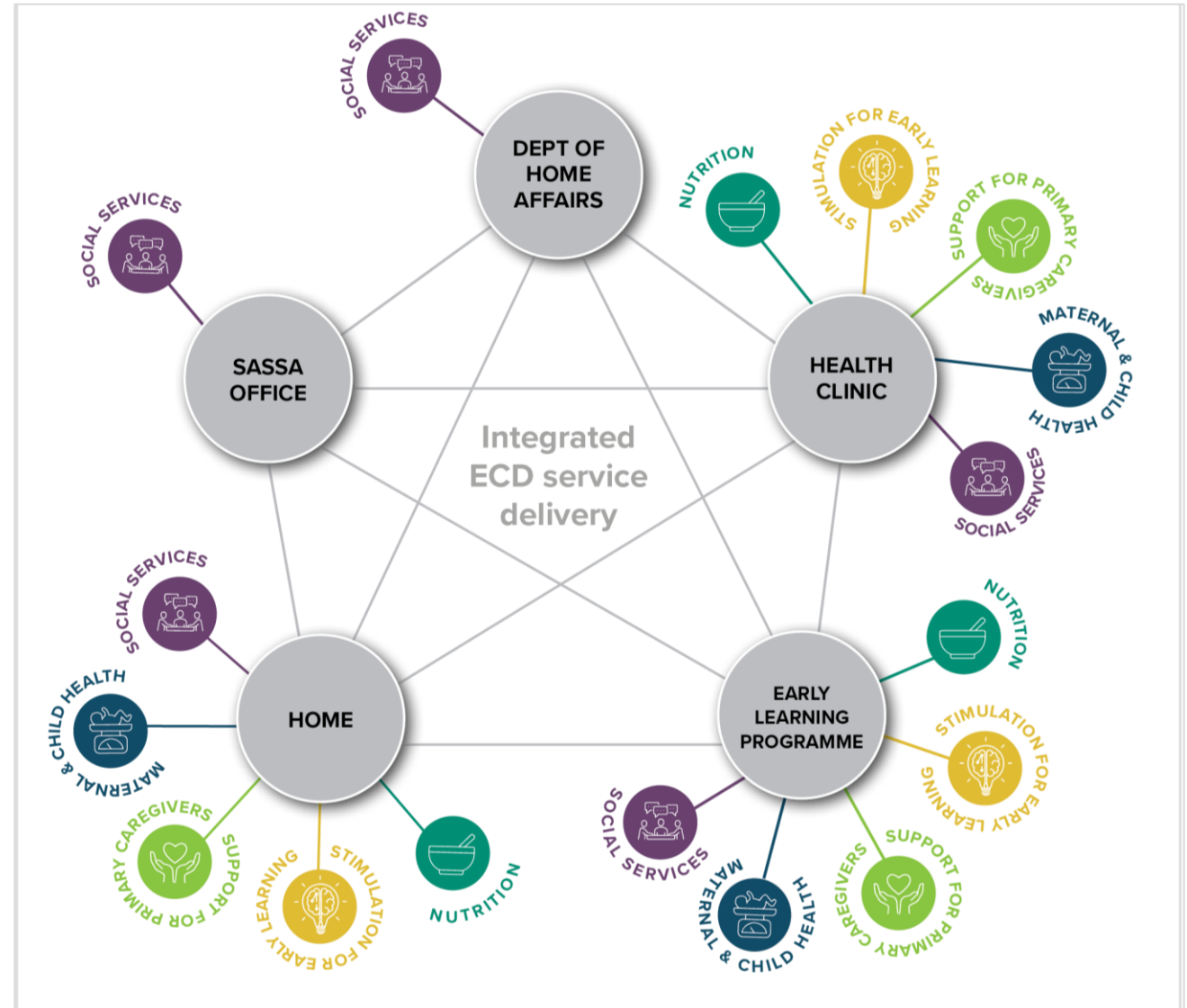
FIGURE 1: FACTORS AFFECTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



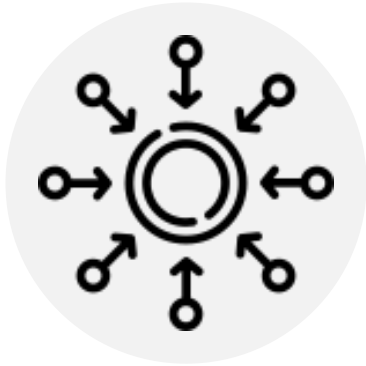
Source: Adapted from Dawes et al. Indicators for early childhood development. (2006).

Systems for integrated ECD service delivery are still needed

- Young children have a broad range of **interdependent needs**, and **multiple role-players** are involved in service delivery to meet those needs.
- South Africa needs **effective systems for co-ordination, referral, and follow-up** between the key sectors responsible for delivering services to young children – Health, Basic Education, and Social Development – as well as with other departments such as Home Affairs, Justice and Constitutional Development, the South African Police Services, and local government.



Priorities for the SA ECD sector



1. An effective **central mechanism** to mobilise, communicate, and coordinate a national programme for young children.






2. The ability and capacity to deliver **quality services at scale** – in particular, to implement strategies for nutrition support for pregnant women and young children, early learning, caregiver support, child protection for all children who need it, and enhanced support for children with disabilities.








3. Aggregated and individual-level **data systems** to routinely monitor access to and quality of ALL the services defined in the Essential Package.

Government departmental responsibilities for the ECD continuum of care

Government Department	Pregnancy	Birth	6 months	12 months	24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	
 Health (MNCH)	At least 4 antenatal care visits	Attended delivery								
		Immunisation								
			Deworming							
	Access to family planning and sexual reproductive health (including youth-friendly services)									
	Access to health care (integrated management of childhood illness)									
	Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (antenatal ARVs)									
		Screening for developmental delays, and hearing and visual impairment (3)								
		Counselling and prevention of smoking, drugs and alcohol consumption								
Prevention and treatment of parental depression										
 Health (Nutrition)	Counselling on adequate diet for pregnant women	Exclusive breastfeeding promotion	Complementary Feeding		Adequate, nutritious and safe diet					
			Therapeutic zinc supplementation for diarrhoea							
		Growth monitoring and referral								
	Iron-folic acid supplementation	Prevention and treatment of acute child malnutrition								
	Micronutrient supplementation and fortification									
 Social Development		Child protection services								
		Special care services for children with moderate and severe disabilities								
	Social assistance transfer programmes (e.g. Child Support Grant)									

Government departmental responsibilities for the ECD continuum of care (continued)

Government Department	Pregnancy	Birth	6 months	12 months	24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	
 Social Development	Child protection services									
	Special care services for children with moderate and severe disabilities									
	Social assistance transfer programmes (e.g. Child Support Grant)									
 Basic Education	Caregiver education about early stimulation, growth and development (1)									
	Group early learning programmes							Grade R	Grade 1	
	Inclusion of children with disabilities									
	Provision of adequate, nutritious and safe diet									
 Employment & Labour		Parental leave								
 Water and sanitation	Access to safe water									
	Adequate sanitation									
	Hygiene / handwashing (4)									
 Home Affairs		Birth Registration								
				Late registration of birth						