

Day-Programs for Moderately Behaviorally Disturbed
Preschoolers in the United States of America
A Guide to Literature and a Questionnaire Study

Classifications, Definitions, and Selective Criteria

The Problem with Classification Systems of Childhood Disorders

There are as many ways to classify and describe emotional disorders as there are definitions of emotional disturbance.

"...there is no general agreement on whether diagnostic nomenclature should be based on etiology, presenting symptoms, prognosis, or a combination of these factors" (Chess, 1969, p.97). Further Chess (1969) writes that there is even less unanimity regarding schemata for childhood disorders than for those in adulthood. Indeed some factors make diagnosis especially difficult with children (cf. C.E.L.D.C., 1970).

One important factor is, for example, that children's disturbed behavior is less fixed than that of adults. The major classification systems, described and critically reviewed by Prugh, Engel and Morse (1975) (cf. Duffy, 1977; Noshpitz, 1979), are often criticized, and are, especially for children, not very useful (cf. C.E.L.D.C., 1970; Graubard, 1973; Safford, 1978).

Why do we need classification?