

Treat Early in Life, Treat Preschoolers

The chances for change and improvement after treatment are significantly greater in the early years of a child's life. An enormous amount of learning takes place prior to any formal academic learning (Denckla, 1974). The preschool period is the optimal time to treat problems (cf. Appendix 1). Before the adaptive patterns begin to solidify the difficulties have not yet become an entrenched part of the child's behavior (cf. Brusiloff & Witenberg, 1973; Witenberg & Brusiloff, 1972). "The earlier in a child's life that one can detect signs of emotional and social problems, the greater is one's capacity to reverse the process and prevent severe consequences for the child and his family" (Williams, 1972, p.21). So a serious attempt should be made to detect and treat those problems as early as possible and not just when the child starts school and is referred for treatment by his teacher (cf. Mason, Richmond & Fleurant, 1976).

Economic Reasons to Treat

There are other reasons, independent of the child and his age, why a disturbed child should be treated, such as legal and social factors (cf. Ellis & Cross, 1977), but especially economic factors. Early treatment can save a child from later costly institutionalization. A successfully treated child will pay taxes to the state as a working adult. Braddock