

Empower Simcoe
EarlyON Child and Family Center
Community Multi-Sensory Environment Handbook





Goal of the Multi-Sensory Environment at Empower Simcoe

Our goal is to provide quality supports to children who may have or be at risk for developmental delays which may prevent them from accessing more traditional community resources, such as EarlyON Child and Family Centers. We strive to create a safe and inviting environment where children and their families can access developmentally appropriate materials and equipment to support self-regulation, emotional development and overall growth.

What is Snoezelen (multi-sensory environment)?

Originally developed in Holland in the late 1970's, Snoezelen is a combination of 2 Dutch words: 'snuffelen' meaning to seek out or explore, and 'doezelen' meaning to relax or to be in a wonderful place. The word 'snoezelen' is meant to convey the feeling of contentment gained in a setting that is comforting and pleasurable to the mind and body. The room is a created space that uses music, lighting, gentle vibrations, tactile sensations and aromatherapy to help users relax and chose activities at their own pace. The premise of Snoezelen is that people react to their immediate environment; when you alter the environment, you alter behavior.

Who can access the Snoezelen room?

The community multi-sensory environment at Empower Simcoe, is open to families in Simcoe County. Children with developmental disabilities, self-regulation and behaviour concerns are welcome. Primary care providers, and their therapeutic support staff if applicable, are invited to an orientation session prior to the child's first visit so that they can be introduced to the environment and address any questions or concerns.

Pre-booking and pre-payment are required to access the room. External agencies who support children are also able to book space in the room once they have participated in orientation.

Staffing and Training:

The administration of the Snoezelen program is directed through a designated coordinator. All bookings, payments and requests are made through, and confirmed by the coordinator.

Staff working in the room, and providing orientation to care providers and therapists are skilled and trained in proper use and application. Trained EarlyON Child and Family Center Facilitators are experts in child development, and sensitive communicators who are able to assist with tailoring a program to the needs of the child.

Snoezelen room orientation is required before community service providers and primary caregivers are able to access and use the space with the child. Orientation can be booked and paid for through the coordinator.

Risk Management:

While the Snoezelen room has been designed to be as safe as possible for all users, certain restrictions still apply.

- All care providers and community partners are required to complete orientation and sign a rights and responsibilities form prior to accessing the room independently. (see appendix A).
- When a session is in progress, the door may be fully closed, but must remain unlocked at all times. EarlyON Facilitators have the right to enter the room at any time to ensure that a session is being administered safely, and to provide support.
- No child is to be left alone in the room, regardless of ability.
- No child under the age of 16 is allowed to supervise a child in the room, even for a short period of time.
- This is special time with your child. Siblings and other family members are welcome, provided their presence is not a distraction for you or your child.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the room, with the exception of water bottles.
- Participants should dress in loose, comfortable clothing. No shoes, belts, buckles or items that can scratch mats are permitted. Loose jewelry should be removed prior to entry.
- For hygienic reasons, no bare feet are permitted on the mats. Participants are asked to wear socks.
- Please DO NOT change diapers in the Snoezelen room. An accessible washroom with a change table is available.
- The support to child ratio is a minimum of 1 caregiver to 2 users. A maximum of 4 people are allowed in the room at the same time.
- If at any time, participants, or staff have concerns regarding the room they should contact the coordinator or supervisor immediately so that concerns may be investigated.

Booking a session:

All bookings and payments are made in advance, through the coordinator. Participants must be on schedule, so that they are able to get the most out of their booked time. There are 3 types of bookings available:

- **Individual:** A one to one arrangement, usually with a parent or care provider where specific needs can be met more selectively. During orientation, the EarlyON Facilitator will assist with program suggestions, based on caregiver interview and observation.



- **Group:** Where a single family or small group of children are supported by a community agency to attend the Snoezelen room. Sessions are facilitated through community agency staff members who have participated in orientation. EarlyON Facilitators are available to provide programs suggestions based on caregiver and partner interview and observation.
- **Assessment:** Planned and specific activity undertaken by a clinical therapy partner for the purpose of intervention or assessment. When necessary, and EarlyON Facilitator can co-facilitate the session to ensure the equipment is used in the most optimal way for assessment.

Maintenance and Cleaning:

Routine maintenance is the responsibility of Empower Simcoe. All breakages or equipment issues should be reported to the coordinator or supervisor as soon as possible.

General cleaning duties will be performed by EarlyON Facilitators daily. At the end of the day, room mats and equipment are sanitized. A scheduled deep clean is done at the end of each quarter, unless required sooner.

Caregivers assume the responsibility for ensuring that the room is returned to its original appearance after each use: toys returned to their homes, untangling fiber optics, returning mats and blankets. Certainty wipes are provided to sanitize surfaces and objects in the room that have been touched. Any small toy that has been mouthed should be left in the bin provided for sanitization.

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