

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is an Indian government welfare programme that provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children under 6 years of age and their mothers. The [UPSC Syllabus](#) covers this scheme under the topic, welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and the States.

ICDS Scheme

The scheme was started in 1975 and aims at the holistic development of children and empowerment of mother. It is a Centrally-Sponsored scheme. The scheme primarily runs through the Anganwadi centre. The scheme is under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

ICDS Objectives

The chief objectives of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme are as follows:

- To improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years;
- To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child;
- To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout;
- To achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and
- To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

ICDS Provisions and Services

Integrated Child Development Services is Centrally-Sponsored and will provide the following six services to the beneficiaries:

1. Supplementary Nutrition (SNP)
2. Health & Nutrition Check-Up
3. Immunization
4. Non-Formal Education for Children in Pre-School
5. Health and Nutrition Education
6. Referral services

These services are provided from **Anganwadi centres** established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers.

Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP)

Under this segment of the ICDS, children below 6 years and pregnant and lactating mothers are identified within the community and are provided with supplementary feeding and growth monitoring services. The beneficiaries are given 300 days of supplementary feeding. By giving supplementary

feeding, the scheme tries to bridge the caloric gap between the national recommended and average intake of children and women in low-income categories.

Health & Nutrition Check-Up

This includes healthcare of children under six years of age, antenatal care of pregnant women and postnatal care of nursing mothers. Services offered include regular health check-ups, treatment of diarrhoea, deworming, weight recording, immunizations and distribution of simple medicines.

Immunization

Children are given vaccinations against the following preventable diseases: diphtheria, polio, pertussis, measles, TB and tetanus. Pregnant women are given vaccinations against tetanus that reduced neonatal and maternal mortality.

Non-Formal Education for Children in Pre-School (PSE)

This segment can be deemed to be the backbone of the ICDS scheme. All the services of the scheme converge at the Anganwadi centres in villages and rural areas, and urban slums. This preschool educational programme mainly for underprivileged children is directed towards providing and ensuring a natural, joyful and stimulating environment, with emphasis on necessary inputs for optimal growth and development. The early learning component of the ICDS is a significant input for providing a sound foundation for cumulative lifelong learning and development. It offers the child the necessary preparation for primary schools and also frees older siblings (particularly girls) from taking care of younger children in the family and thus enabling them to attend schools.

Health and Nutrition Education

Under this component, ladies in the age group of 15 to 45 years are covered for providing Nutrition and Health Education. This forms part of BCC (Behaviour Change Communication) strategy. The long-term goal is to build the capacities of women to enable them to look after their own health, nutrition and development needs as well as that of their children and families.

Referral Services

During the regular health check-ups, any case of conditions or diseases requiring immediate medical attention is referred to the hospital or any primary health centre, etc. The Anganwadi worker is also trained to detect disabilities in children so that early intervention can be done.

Beneficiaries of ICDS Provisions

The table below explains how the Integrated Child Development Services is beneficial to different groups of children and adults.

| Services | Targeted Beneficiary |
|----------|----------------------|
|----------|----------------------|

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|---|--|
| Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and lactating women. • Children under 6 years of age |
| Health & Nutrition Check-Up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and lactating women. |
| Immunization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and lactating women. • Children under 6 years of age |
| Non-Formal Education for Children in Pre-School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 6 years of age |
| Health and Nutrition Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and lactating women. • Children under 6 years of age |
| Referral services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and lactating women. • Children under 6 years of age |

Additional Scheme under the ICDS

The government uses the ICDS platform to run the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SABLA), which provides similar services to 11 - 14-year-old girls.

UPSC Questions related to ICDS

What is AWC in ICDS?

- Anganwadi centres provide basic health care in Indian villages. It is a part of the Indian public health-care system.

Who are the beneficiaries of ICDS?

- Children under 6 years of age, as well as Pregnant & Lactating Women (P&LW), benefit from ICDS.

