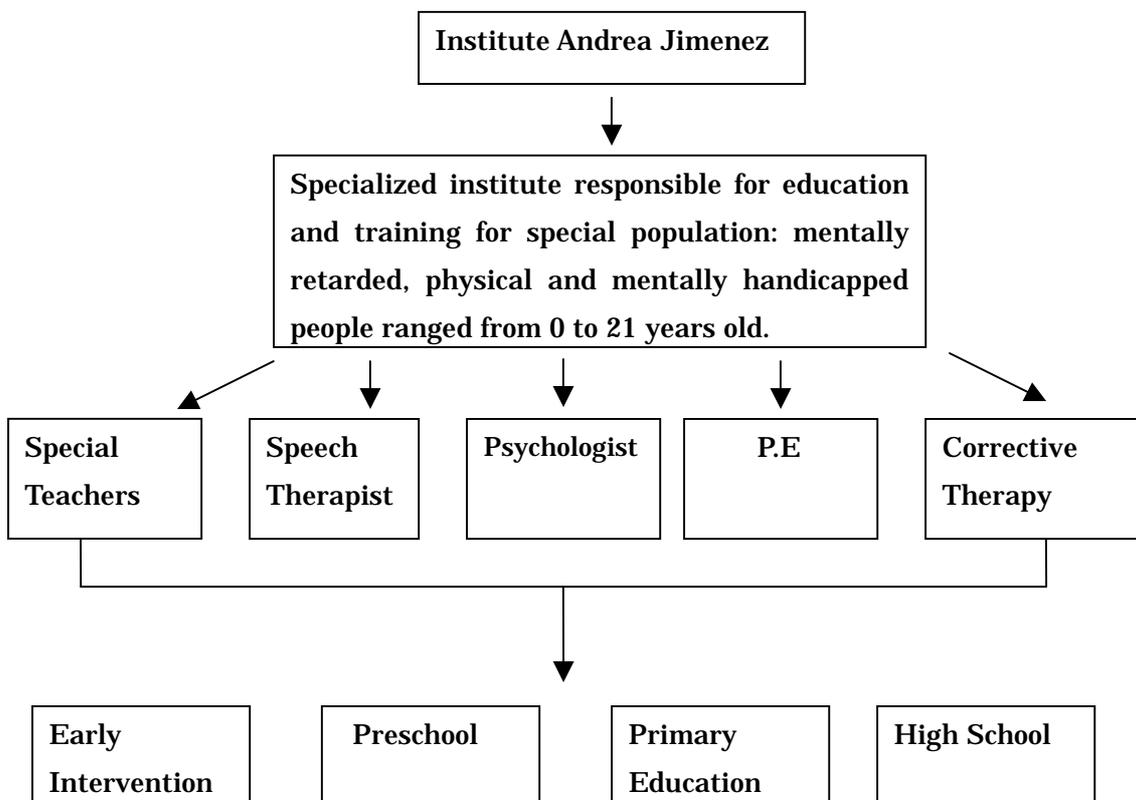


Country Report

Name of Participant: Miriam Elena Chacon Ramirez
Name of Country: Costa Rica
Name of Organization: Institute Andrea Jimenez

Organization Chart:



P.E (Physical Educ.):
---Corporal Scheme
---Sensorial/perceptual activities
---Recreational activities: games and camping.
---Presports games
---Adapted sports
---Health Fitness activities

Corrective Therapy:
---Corrective exercises for students with cerebral palsy or other motor disorders

The Current Situation and Trends in Rehabilitation Services.

Educational status:

The first Costa Rican Special Education School was founded in 1939, its was named Fernando Centeno Guell. This school provides special education and training to mentally retarded people. Later on in 1968, the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) was created. By 1974, the University of Costa Rica began to prepare teachers who majored in Mental Retardation, Learning Disabilities and Communication Disorders. The main principles were normalization and integration. Then, by 1973 vocational training for teenagers with disabilities started. In 1990, pre-schoolers and schoolers with disabilities were able to be integrated to public and private elementary institutions according with MEP normatives. However, children with severe and profound Mental Retardation continue attending special schools. Education in special schools looks for economic integration and vocational competence as well as physical and social independence of people with Mental Retardation and other disabilities. Furthermore, parents participation is requested, even though it is not an easy task to achieve.

Students in special schools are preferably arranged by age but this rule is sometimes flexible enough to respect student` own characteristics:

Early Intervention:	0 to 3 and 3 to 6 years old
Pre-school:	5 to 7 years old
First Level:	8 to 10 years old
Second Level:	11 to 14 years old
Third Level:	15 to 18 years old
Fourth Level:	19 to 21 years old

Welfare/social situation:

Usually the family takes care of their children with disabilities: send them to school and looks for medical services. The social welfare monthly helps some families when it is clear that they really need the money allowance.

Medical systems and services:

The Ministry of Public Health (M.S.P) and the Social Security System join efforts to prevent disabilities through information campaigns related to pre-natal and newborns care. Because of the significative demand of these services, the Social

Security Systems is no longer capable of covering in a good manner the whole population. Therefore many of these “special” families are forced to pay very expensive private medical services; many other families are unable to pay these services so in the medium or long term this problem would result in a worse situation. Although the MEP make efforts to provide schools with specialized medical services such as physical therapist, psychologist and speech therapist, other specialized medical services of the kind of cardiologist, neurologist and dentist are difficult to get in a proper manner. In addition, getting orthosis or special equipment such as wheelchairs, braces, adapted chairs, prone standards, tild tables, walkers, special shoes, is extremely expensive. Besides, the Social Security Systems does only cover a minimum amount for these needs.

Financial aids:

Most of the Special Schools and Special Classes belong to the public education system (salaries, equipment, materials and facilities), there exist some companies or corporations that are sponsoring specific projects in some special schools, for example: buying wheelchairs, painting schools, paying students fees and others.

Voluntary activities:

There exist several foundations and associations that work all year long to improve the quality of life of this population: Voluntary Ladies of the National Children Hospital, Association of Children with Cerebral Palsy, Rotary Club, and Lions Club, all of them had played an important role getting financial and moral aids. The Association of Parents, Friends and Person with Down syndrome works successfully informing people about what is and what to expect from individuals with Down syndrome. On the other hand, some Christian groups help organizing summer camps and other outdoor activities.

Philosophy on Rehabilitation Services for People with Mental Retardation.

Having a disability or just being different is not a cause to be neglected. The principle of individual differences has to prevail. Keeping this principle in mind has produced positive changes in the schools for special population as well as “normal schools”. The value and dignity of each human being are enough to justify any effort to integrate this population to own society. The lack of financial resources

and properly trained teachers as well as the lack of interest from those who can make important and significative decisions are obstacles that should be overcome as the public realize that all individuals need to be educated and prepared to be as independent as it is possible. We need a comprehensive approach that will involve many professions and professionals for serving the needs of the whole person. Our society has to establish a commitment: first and foremost, everyone has to realize that education is the agent of change, so it is necessary to bring education to the entire population. We have to keep in mind that those children without disabilities that just have started their studies will become the future parents so it is our responsibility to teach them a new idea about Mental Retardation and other disability conditions.

In Costa Rica, many elementary school teachers have demonstrated their concern and worries about the new M.E.P politics related to integration of children with disabilities to their regular classrooms. This is a comprehensive preoccupation: by this time they are not well prepared. The preparation and sensibility needed to work with this population is not yet well established.

Some special schools such as our "Institute Andrea Jimenez" are trying to diminish this problem by the way of training teachers in elementary and pre-schools institutions. We are responsible for supervising integrated children, besides our institutions keep continuous contact with families of integrated children. The Physical Therapy (P.T), Corrective Therapy or Occupational Therapy (O.T) are not common professionals in our country. The University of Costa Rica has been offering these careers but as a technique. Fortunately, one private university started 3 years ago a major in O.T and P.T.

Community Based Programs Provided for People with Mental Retardation in the Country.

The National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education (C.N.R.E.E) and the M.E.P work together in a project called SILOR. SILOR offers vocational training to the population with disabilities related them with the principal industries in each rural community. There are SILOR located in some rural communities where the incidence of population with disabilities is very high. Special teachers and other professionals work with the community and the families and they all share the responsibility for the program.

There exists some community based rehabilitation programmes that functions such as sheltered workshops. Some programs are sponsored by the National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education and private non-lucrative associations, their income come from the government, grants, foreign countries and donations.

Service Delivery Systems and Relevant Laws and Regulations.

The Special Education System rely on the Ministry of Public Education (M.E.P) and the National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education (C.N.R.E.E.) politics, procedures and regulations. The M.E.P has the responsibility for designing educational programs. During the last six years there have been a lot of changes and many others are still in process. It was last year that a new law: "Equality of opportunities for people with disabilities in Costa Rita" was approved by the Congress.

There are many international declarations and national programs that Costa Rica had signed:

- 1948 Universal Declarations of Human Rights (United Nations)
- 1949 Republic of Costa Rica Politic Constitution that declares the equality of everyone without any kind of discrimination.
- 1975 Declarations of Rights for disabled people (United Nations)
- 1982 Worldwide Action Program for Disabled.
- 1989 National Politics on Prevention of Deficiency, Disability and Integral Rehabilitation (Costa Rica)
- 1994 World Declaration of Education for All (Thailand)
- 1994 Declarations of Salamanca (World Conference for People with Special Needs). Spain.
- 1996 The Law "Equality of opportunities for people with disabilities in Costa Rica" was approved by the Congress.

**Ministry of Education
M.E.P**



Department of Special Education



Vice-Minister of Education



Minister of Education

**National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education
C.N.R.E.E**



SILOR



Occupational Insertion Program



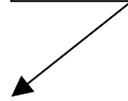
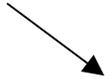
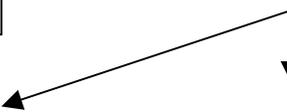
Department of Technical Help



Sheltered Workshops



Local Rehabilitation Services



Director of the C.N.R.E.E