



# Checklist for Setting up and Running a Toy Library

## **INTRODUCTION**

A toy library is an important resource for families with young children. It is a community venue where children, their families and carers can go to borrow toys, games and books and bring them home and play together with them there. It is also a meeting place where families with young children can be supported in their parenting role. Typically, families using the toy library need to become a member.

The most important resource in the toy library is the toy library assistant(s). She/he, with support from the toy library committee and volunteers, is responsible for the day to day running of the toy library, which includes getting to know and building strong relationships with member families (parents and children); providing advice to parents about play and child development; demonstrating toys and games, as well as overseeing the daily administration connected to borrowing and returning toys.

Above all else the toy library assistant needs to be very enthusiastic about the power of play in children's lives and can communicate this to families.

The following checklists provide pointers to setting up and running a REF supported toy library. The complete Guidelines are available from Roma Education Fund, Budapest, Hungary, Terez krt. 46, or [info@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:info@romaeducationfund.org),

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## THE TOY LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

### PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Has the concept of toy library been introduced to the community in an informative and playful way?
- Has a toy library committee been set up with clear roles and responsibilities for all committee members?

### THE OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT

- Is the building safe and well maintained?
- Is it in a good location for families to bring small children?
- Is it accessible for children and adults with disabilities?
- Is there clear and attractive signage, which also displays opening hours of toy library and any closures during holidays or other unforeseen circumstances?

### THE INSIDE ENVIRONMENT

- Is the space warm, well-lit and welcoming for families with young children?
- Are toys and books, visible and accessible and organized in way that is easy for parents and young children to select toys?
- Is there space for children and parents to play with toys on floor or at low tables?
- Is there a place for parents to sit and relax? (This will help with engaging parents)
- Is there an information board which is regularly updated?
- Is there access to water/sink for washing and cleaning toys?
- Is there toilet facilities available?
- Is there an area for administering returns/loans and storing records securely?
- Is it possible to lock room securely during closing hours?

## CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING TOYS AND BOOKS

- Are the toys and books appealing to children?
- Are children and parents involved in choosing toys and books for purchase?
- Are the toys of good quality and brands with good reputations?
- Do suppliers provide replacement parts if necessary?
- Are the toys and books strong and durable and easy to clean and repair?
- Do toys meet safety standards?
- Do the toys develop a wide range of skills and support different types of play (physical, creative play, pretend play, language play, games with rules)?
- Can the toys be used in different ways (i.e. have more than one function, encourage creativity)?
- Are there plenty games with rules of different levels of difficulty that can be played by a wide range of age groups?
- Do the toys and books reflect diversity and the positive aspects of children's homes and communities?

### **AVOID**

- Toys with many different small pieces
- Battery-operated toys and books with electronic features.
- Soft toys like teddies
- toys that encourage violent play
- fad toys like film, TV, computer game merchandise

## CHECKLIST FOR TOY LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION

- Do you have a budget for the running, furnishing and stocking of the toy library (e.g. purchase of toys, books, and other materials, cleaning equipment, stationery)?
- Do you have the correct equipment for the daily running of the toy library (e.g. cleaning equipment, stationery, rent, heating, lighting)?
- Have you marked each toy (and part of toy) with a unique ID number and recorded the ID number on the toy stock sheet?
- Have you an up-to-date toy stock sheet?
- Is there a completed a toy card for each toy with ID number, description of toy and how it should be used and space for borrower information?
- Have you created a toy catalogue?
- Do you have membership rules, including borrowing procedures and what happens in case of missing or broken toys?
- Do you have membership forms and member folders for each member and are these stored in locked cabinets?