

Early Childhood Services

Benchmarks for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Healthy policies

1. A whole service mental health and wellbeing policy is in place.

- The policy addresses the promotion of mental health and wellbeing through the creation of safe, inclusive and empowering environments; development of social and emotional skills that promote resilience; and family and community partnerships.
- The policy clearly identifies processes for recognising and responding to children who may be at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, including accessing support and making appropriate referrals.
- Educators, staff and families are involved in guiding mental health and wellbeing policy and practice.
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements.
- The diversity of the service and the community is considered when developing and implementing this policy.
- The policy aligns with the service's statement of philosophy and is cross referenced with other relevant policies (e.g. safe environments, occupational health and safety).
- The policy can be stand alone or incorporated into a whole service health and wellbeing policy.

2. The service has a staff health and wellbeing policy which supports mental health and wellbeing.

Healthy physical environment

3. The service provides a physical environment which is inclusive and safe

- A welcoming and inclusive physical environment is created which reflects the diversity and interests of the children, families, educators and staff.
- Outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, play equipment and resources are safe and enable access and active participation for every child.
- Outdoor and indoor spaces, and access to the natural environment, provide a range of opportunities for children to engage in physical, explorative and creative experiences.
- Service facilities are accessible and utilised for family and community activities where appropriate

Healthy social environment

4. The service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering social environment.

- The service, educators and staff promote a culture of respect, fairness and equality.
- A sense of belonging and connectedness is created through inclusive and participatory practices.
- The service encourages and values the contribution of children, families, educators and staff to a positive service environment.
- Respectful and supportive relationships are fostered between children, educators, staff and families.
- The service implements strategies to promote positive and responsible behaviour, and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination and harassment.

5. Educators, staff and families recognise they are role models and are encouraged and supported to demonstrate respectful relationships and a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing.

6. The service works together with families and professionals to support children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

- Educators and staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills for recognising and supporting children who may be at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties, including how to access support and make appropriate referrals.

Learning and skills

7. Social and emotional learning is embedded in the service program and practice.

- a) Spontaneous and planned learning opportunities support the development of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship skills.
- b) Children are provided opportunities to make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, manage change and cope with frustrations and the unexpected.
- c) Collaborative learning opportunities with peers are encouraged, supported and balanced with opportunities for children to engage and persevere in individual activities.
- d) Educators take opportunities to broaden children's perspectives and encourage consideration of the social and emotional wellbeing of others and an appreciation of diversity and difference.

8. Educators and staff are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Engaging children, young people, staff and families

9. Families, children, educators and staff are key partners in developing and supporting mental health and wellbeing initiatives.

- a) Families, educators and staff are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies on a regular basis to promote and support mental health and wellbeing in the service and at home.
- b) The service engages children in developing and implementing mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- c) Families are encouraged to participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives at the service.
- d) Educators and staff are encouraged to develop competencies to facilitate engagement of families and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Community partnerships

10. Educators and staff are encouraged to work with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase their capacity to deliver and promote mental health and wellbeing.

- a) Links are established with local health professionals, services and organisations to support mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- b) Referral policies, procedures and pathways to local mental health services are developed collaboratively with local providers.
- c) Cultural groups within the community are encouraged to participate in the service's mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- d) The service provides information to families about local mental health and wellbeing services, parenting and family services, and other resources that are available to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and families.
- e) Partnerships enable positive transitions within and between education and care settings.