



KidsMatter

Australian Early Childhood
Mental Health Initiative

www.kidsmatter.edu.au

KidsMatter is a mental health and wellbeing framework for primary schools and early childhood education and care services, and it is proven to make a positive difference to the lives of Australian children.

KidsMatter Early Childhood aims to support early childhood education and care services to implement evidence-based strategies that will:



- improve the mental health and wellbeing of children from birth to school age
- reduce mental health problems among children
- achieve greater support for children experiencing mental health difficulties, and their families.



KidsMatter Early Childhood Guiding Principles

The early years are critical to development and wellbeing throughout life.

Children develop mental health within sensitive, nurturing and responsive relationships.

Reflective practice supports educators to understand and respond to children's emotional needs.

Families are recognised as the most important people in children's lives.

Play is essential to help optimise children's wellbeing, development and learning.

Parenting and child development occurs within a diverse range of family systems, values and beliefs.

KidsMatter Partners

KidsMatter provides expert knowledge, tools and support to help grow happy and healthy young minds. It is funded by the Australian Government and backed by the expertise of the Australian Psychological Society, *beyondblue* and Early Childhood Australia.





KidsMatter Early Childhood Components

COMPONENT 1:

Creating a sense of community

Creating a sense of community within the early childhood education and care service promotes feelings of belonging, connectedness and inclusion for all children, families and early childhood educators. This has been shown to have a positive effect on children's mental health.

COMPONENT 2:

Developing children's social and emotional skills

Children's social and emotional skills develop through supportive relationships and experiences. During early childhood, children develop a sense of self, social skills used to relate to other people and emotional skills, such as recognising, expressing and managing a wide range of feelings. The development of social and emotional skills in early childhood benefits all aspects of children's learning, development, mental health and wellbeing.

COMPONENT 3:

Working with parents and carers

Engaging with families allows early childhood education and care services to share important information about the child's life, experiences, preferences, and activities. Working together with families will make a substantial difference to the mental health of children.

COMPONENT 4:

Helping children who are experiencing mental health difficulties

Early childhood educators are well placed to notice when children show early signs of difficulties and to respond by assisting the child and supporting families to access support services. The earlier that effective support can be provided for a child experiencing difficulties the better the outcomes.

Participating in KidsMatter Early Childhood

Early childhood education and care services participating in KidsMatter receive:

- a mental health and wellbeing framework
- professional learning for all staff
- implementation tools and guided implementation support
- information and resources for families.

Implementing KidsMatter Early Childhood requires a coordinated approach from directors, management, staff and families.



With the assistance of the KidsMatter tools and resources, early childhood education and care services are supported to develop their capacity to promote children's mental health and wellbeing, respond effectively to the mental health concerns of the children in their care and meet many National Quality Standard requirements.





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Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

