

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Policy Number	P-Q5-B001	Version Number	1.00
Drafted by	Director of Education	Approved Date: Review Date:	February 2023 February 2024
Responsibility	The Board of Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre Association (Inc.)		
Related Service Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy • Anaphylaxis Policy • Asthma Policy • Curriculum Development Policy • Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy • Nutrition and Active Play Policy • Child Safe policy • Equal Opportunity, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes Policy • Excursions and Service Events Policy • Food Safety Policy • Hygiene Policy • Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy • Inclusion and Equity Policy • Occupational Health and Safety Policy • Staff Complaints and Grievances Policy 	
Legislation and Standards	Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 168, 301(3)(d), 323 • Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 168 • National Quality Standard 2011 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Area 2: Children’s health and safety - Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities - Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management 		
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009 • Guide to the National Quality Standard. Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, 2017 • Health Services Unit City of Port Phillip • Infant Feeding Guidelines, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2012 Nutrition Australia: www.nutritionaustralia.org • Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, for all children from Birth to Eight Years. Department of Education and Training, 2016 • Noah’s Ark Inc.: Supporting Positive Behaviour 		

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre Board of Governance on November 19th 2020.

PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

The educators, staff and management acknowledge the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing that contributes to good health and overall development.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- ensure the service environment is safe, inclusive and empowering for children, families, educators, staff, volunteers and visitors
- embed social and emotional learning in the educational program
- ensure families, children, educators and staff are key partners in mental health initiatives
- engage in partnerships with community networks.

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As a health promoting service we will promote positive social and emotional wellbeing for children, educators, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment, and developing community links and partnerships.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor/s, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre.

DEFINITIONS

Mental health and wellbeing: For the purposes of this policy and for the Healthy Early Childhood Services Achievement Program, the 'Mental Health and Wellbeing' health priority area focusses on social and emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Mental health in early childhood can be understood as a young child's ability to: 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development.'¹

BACKGROUND

Mental health and wellbeing for young children is about their emotions, what they experience and how they learn to manage and express them; the relationships they form and the child's ability to engage in close and positive relationships. It also covers their engagement with the environment and if they have opportunities to explore and discover. A strong sense of wellbeing and positive mental health provides children with confidence and optimism, which maximises their learning potential, gives them a greater chance of long-term success, and helps them build stronger relationships.

Early childhood services play a key role in promoting mental health and wellbeing in children and can affect children's long-term mental health, relationships and learning.

Whole service engagement

It is recognised that every member of the service impacts on the children's health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes positive mental health. All members of our service, including educators, staff, children, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Health policies

- Educators, staff, families and children are active participants in the development and implementation of the whole service mental health and wellbeing policy.
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements.
- If a child is suspected of being at risk of or experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties the service will:
 - Room Leader/Kinder Teacher to document areas of concern, discuss with co-educators about their observations in areas, use 'Framework for Supporting Positive Behaviour' steps (supplied by Noah's Ark Training) to support through any challenging behaviour
 - Discuss with Program Coordinator and/or Director of Education to gain further understanding and guidance in supporting child within the learning environment
 - Parents to be invited to discuss observations with Room Leader/Kinder Teacher and Program Coordinator and/or Director of Education. Parent's invited to discuss their child's behaviour at home environment

- Follow up with relevant professionals accessible at BWFCC including Maternal and Child Health Services and the Child Health Team at Star Health –Early Intervention Specialists and Healthcare Practitioners

Healthy physical environment

- The service environment is inclusive and safe.
- The diversity and interests of the children, families and staff are reflected in the welcoming physical environment.
- Outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, play equipment and resources enable access and active participation for every child.
- A range of opportunities are provided in the outdoor and indoor spaces and the natural environment, for children to engage in physical, explorative and creative experiences.
- Quiet and reflective spaces are provided for children, educators and families.
- Service facilities are accessible and used for family and community activities where appropriate.

Healthy social environment

- The service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering social environment, through:
 - a culture of respect, fairness and equality
 - a sense of belonging and connectedness being created through inclusive and participatory practices children, families, educators and staff contributing to a positive service environment
 - respectful and supportive relationships being fostered between children, educators, staff and families
 - strategies promoting positive and responsible behaviour, and preventing and responding to bullying, discrimination and harassment.
- As role models educators, staff and families are encouraged and supported to demonstrate respectful relationships and a positive approach to mental health and wellbeing.
- The service works together with families and professionals to support children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
- Educators and staff have 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

- Social and emotional learning is embedded in the service program and practice through:
 - spontaneous and planned learning opportunities supporting the development of self awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management and relationship skills
 - opportunities for children to make choices, accept challenges, take considered risks, manage change and cope with frustrations and the unexpected
 - collaborative learning opportunities being encouraged and supported with peers and being balanced with opportunities for children to engage and persevere in individual activities
 - educators taking opportunities to broaden children's perspectives and encouraging consideration of the social and emotional wellbeing of others and an appreciation of diversity and difference.
- Educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Engaging children, educators, staff and families

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

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- Information, ideas and practical strategies are provided to families, educators and staff, on a regular basis to promote and support mental health and wellbeing in the service and at home.
- Educators and staff engage children and families in developing and implementing mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Families and children from culturally diverse backgrounds are engaged to ensure cultural values and expectations about mental health and wellbeing are respected.
- Educators and staff are supported to learn about and care for their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Mental health and wellbeing information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction.
- Leadership practices and on-the-ground support enable a work environment that minimises stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for educator and staff.
- Strategies are implemented to promote positive conflict resolution and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination and harassment.

Community partnerships

- The service engages local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase educator and staff capacity to deliver and promote mental health and wellbeing.
- Referral policies, procedures and pathways to local mental health services have been developed collaboratively with local providers for children, staff, educators and families.
- Cultural groups within the community are encouraged to participate in the service's mental health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Information is provided 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.
- Partnerships have been developed with other education and care settings to enable children to move successfully from one setting to another.

ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider (Board of Governance) is responsible for:

The Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre Board is the Approved Provider and has ultimate responsibility for the management and control of the service.

The Board delegates operational responsibility and day to day management of the service to the Nominated Supervisor and monitors the performance of the organisation, including responsibilities contained in this policy, through regular reporting and by ensuring appropriate resources are available to carry out the organisation's functions.

The Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Person/s in Day to Day charge is responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports the social and emotional health of children and families
- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health for young children
- ensuring that all staff/educators are aware of a child's medical conditions at enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- supporting educators and staff to access resources and professional development to support mental health and wellbeing of children, staff and families
- ensure all staff are working in a safe working environment and are treated with dignity and respect

Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- being aware of a child’s medical conditions at enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports the mental health and wellbeing of children and families
- exploring and discussing diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles
- considering this policy when organising excursions and service events
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to Mental Health and Wellbeing
- providing daily opportunities for all children to participate in age-appropriate play
- promoting safe behaviour through daily practice as part of the program.

Parents/guardians are responsible for

- complying with the requirements of this policy
- communicating regularly with staff/educators regarding children’s specific mental health and wellbeing requirements

Volunteers and students are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Nominated Supervisor will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service’s policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Relevant Forms/Documents

Version History			
Date	Version	Author/s	Details
November 2020	1.00	Director of Education	New policy
February 2022	1.00	Director of Education	Policy reviewed and no changes made
February 2023	1.00	Director of Education	Policy reviewed and no changes made