



Australian Early Childhood
Mental Health Initiative

KidsMatter Early Childhood is the first national mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative specifically developed for early childhood services.

www.kidsmatter.edu.au

KidsMatter Early Childhood aims to support early childhood services to implement evidence based strategies which will:

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



Mental health and early childhood services

KidsMatter Early Childhood involves the people who have a significant impact on children's lives – families and early childhood professionals, along with a range of community and health professionals – in making a positive difference to children's mental health during this important developmental period. Early childhood services that promote positive mental health and wellbeing can make a significant difference to the lives of children.

Good mental health in childhood is integral to positive social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. It means that children are able to form close and secure relationships, identify and express their emotions and explore and discover the world around them. Establishing these skills early is associated with more positive outcomes later in life – in education, employment and forming and maintaining relationships.

KidsMatter Partners

KidsMatter has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society and Early Childhood Australia.



KidsMatter Early Childhood Components

Component 1: Creating a sense of community

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

Component 2: Developing children's social and emotional skills

Research shows that the development of social and emotional skills is fundamental to children's mental health, ability to learn, moral development and motivation to achieve. Children who develop these skills find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, resolve conflict and feel positive about themselves and the world around them.

Component 3: Working with parents and carers to improve children's mental health and wellbeing

Through engaging with families, early childhood services can share important information about the child's life, experiences, preferences, and activities. They are an excellent access point for information and education about parenting, child development and children's mental health.

Component 4: Helping children who are experiencing mental health difficulties

The earlier that effective support can be provided for a child experiencing difficulties (and their family) the better the outcomes. Services are in an effective position to identify problems early, implement strategies to assist the child and support families to seek additional help, improving their quality of life.





KidsMatter Pilot 2010 – 2011

KidsMatter Early Childhood is being piloted nationally in over 100 preschools and long day care centres throughout 2010 and 2011.

Early childhood services implementing the initiative are provided with:

- a guiding framework for the initiative;
- supporting resources that provide detailed information on each component of the initiative, as well as implementation tools, suggested strategies and factsheets for staff;
- a Facilitator to work directly with the service to support implementation;
- professional learning for staff;
- information and resources for families.

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



With the assistance of the provided tools and resources, services are supported to develop their capacity to promote children's mental health and wellbeing and to respond effectively to the mental health concerns of the children in their care.

For further information and to register your interest in this initiative please contact kidsmatter@earlychildhood.org.au



www.kidsmatter.edu.au



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



beyondblue
the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au

The
Australian Psychological Society Ltd



Early Childhood AUSTRALIA INC.
... voice for young children

