

## Accessing support: Suggestions for families and staff

It is important to know that help for children's mental health difficulties comes in many shapes and forms. Brochures, fact sheets, high-quality websites, family, friends and health professionals are all good sources of information and support. Support may be directed at children, parents and carers, the family as a whole or early childhood services, because the ultimate goal is to provide the best possible pathway to improve a child's mental health and wellbeing. When partnerships are formed and both families and children feel valued, understood and respected, this goal is more easily reached.

### Suggestions for families

- ▶ Ask a friend or family member to help you gather information about children's mental health.
- ▶ Make a list of questions to ask services or professionals.
- ▶ Consult a GP for initial professional advice.
- ▶ Look at high-quality websites for more information (e.g., [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)).
- ▶ Remember to look after yourself (for more information on self-care, refer to *Component 3: Working with parents and carers 'Positive mental health for parents and carers'*).
- ▶ Keep in mind there are lots of different ways to access help for your child (e.g., talking to a friend, visiting a doctor, phoning a specialised service).



## Suggestions for staff

- ▶ Display a board at your service showing families where they can look and go for advice and support. Promote positive attitudes towards seeking help as part of your service.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for families to connect with one another, for example assisting families by drawing on resources within the service and the community and acting as 'information hubs'.
- ▶ Include resources on children's mental health and details of professional services in your newsletters or emails to families.
- ▶ Become aware of signs of mental health difficulties in children (e.g., stress or anxiety) and discuss these with parents and carers when you are concerned about a child.
- ▶ Promote empathy in the early childhood service and with parents, for example showing an understanding that parenting can be impacted by an individual's life circumstances, mental health, living situation, relationship, etc.
- ▶ Help families recognise their strengths and how to use them during the help-seeking process.
- ▶ Conduct information sessions for families on children's mental health and individual services that are accessible in the community.

Some of the services families and staff can access for support are listed below:

- ▶ GP
- ▶ community health services
- ▶ early childhood service
- ▶ maternal and child health nurse
- ▶ counsellor
- ▶ psychologist
- ▶ child and adolescent mental health service
- ▶ playgroups
- ▶ parent support groups.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au). The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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