

Name:

Service:

Date:



**Professional learning: Helping children who are
experiencing mental health difficulties**

Topic 4: Responding to children experiencing
mental health difficulties

Participant Workbook



Acknowledgement:

KidsMatter Australian Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative has been developed in collaboration with *beyondblue*, the Australian Psychological Society and Early Childhood Australia, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and *beyondblue*.

Disclaimer:

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, Beyond Blue Ltd, The Australian Psychological Society Limited, Early Childhood Australia Inc. and the Commonwealth of Australia do not, to the extent permitted by law, accept any liability for any injury, loss or damage suffered by any person arising from the use of, or reliance upon, the content of this publication.

Important Notice:

KidsMatter Australian Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative and any other KidsMatter mental health initiatives are not to be confused with other businesses, programs or services which may also use the name 'Kidsmatter'.

Copyright

© Commonwealth of Australia 2015

This work is copyright. Provided acknowledgment is made to the sources, early childhood education and care services are permitted to copy material freely for communication with teachers, staff, parents, carers or community members. You may reproduce the whole or part of this work in unaltered form for your own personal use or, if you are part of an organisation, for internal use within your organisation, but only if you or your organisation do not use the reproduction for any commercial purpose and retain this copyright notice and all disclaimer notices as part of that reproduction. Apart from rights to use as permitted by the Copyright Act 1968 or allowed by this copyright notice, all other rights are reserved and you are not allowed to reproduce the whole or any part of this work in any way (electronic or otherwise) without first being given the specific written permission from the Commonwealth to do so. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights are to be sent to the Communications Branch, Department of Health, GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, or via e-mail to copyright@health.gov.au.

While the resources are available freely for these purposes, to realise the full potential of KidsMatter Early Childhood, it is recommended that the resources be used with the appropriate training and support under the KidsMatter Initiative.

Responding to children experiencing mental health difficulties

Having policies and practices in place for responding to children with mental health difficulties means that educators can feel supported and know what to do.

Responding to children who may be experiencing difficulties

Many early childhood services are working with children who have already been identified as having mental health difficulties or who may be showing signs of needing further support.

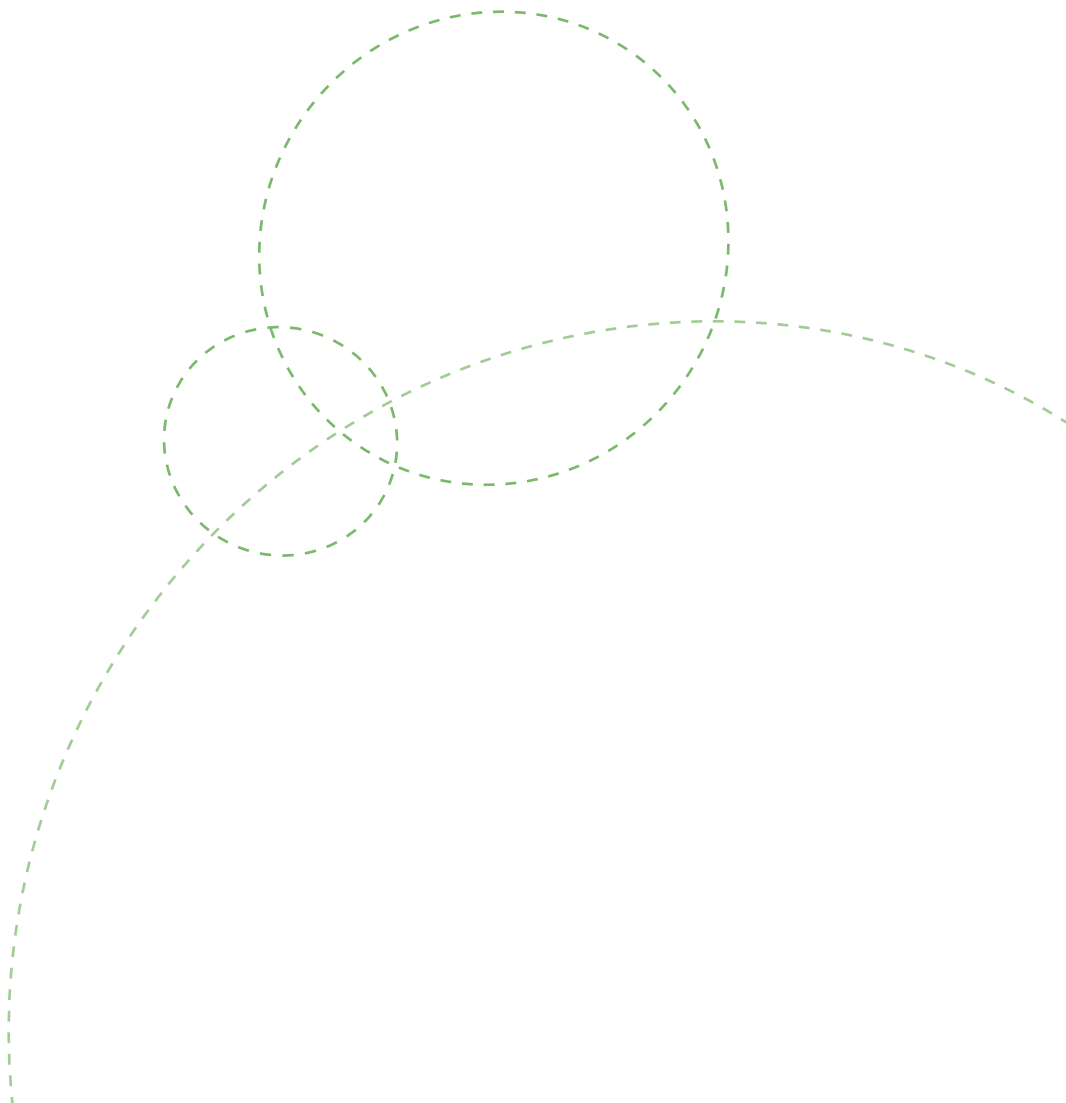
Sharing concerns with families about a child's mental health may involve deciding what to do next. Being aware of community supports for children's mental health can encourage families to access them.

Partnerships between educators, families, and mental health supports mean that they can work together to support the child. Having strategies to support children can build educators' confidence and benefit children's development and mental health and wellbeing.

Early childhood services may seek help for supporting their own work in responding to a child with mental health difficulties. They can make contact with inclusion support officers, mental health consultants or their early intervention services to provide guidance and strategies to support educators in working with children who may be experiencing difficulties.

Children may benefit from a range of supports for mental health that may be available in their community. Some examples of specialist and community mental health supports include:

- General Practitioners can provide referrals to psychologists under Medicare. This enables a certain number of sessions that can be provided at a subsidised rate, or sometimes bulk-billed. General Practitioners can also provide other referrals to paediatricians, psychiatrists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and social workers. Some of these professionals can also conduct assessments for diagnosis, where appropriate.
- Community-based programs may provide sessions run by professionals on strategies for dealing with particular concerns (i.e. challenging behaviours, sleeping difficulties).
- Maternal and child health nurses can provide families with information on child development, and can provide guidance on useful community programs and professional services.
- Professional development and training can provide educators with strategies for working with children who have specific mental health difficulties.

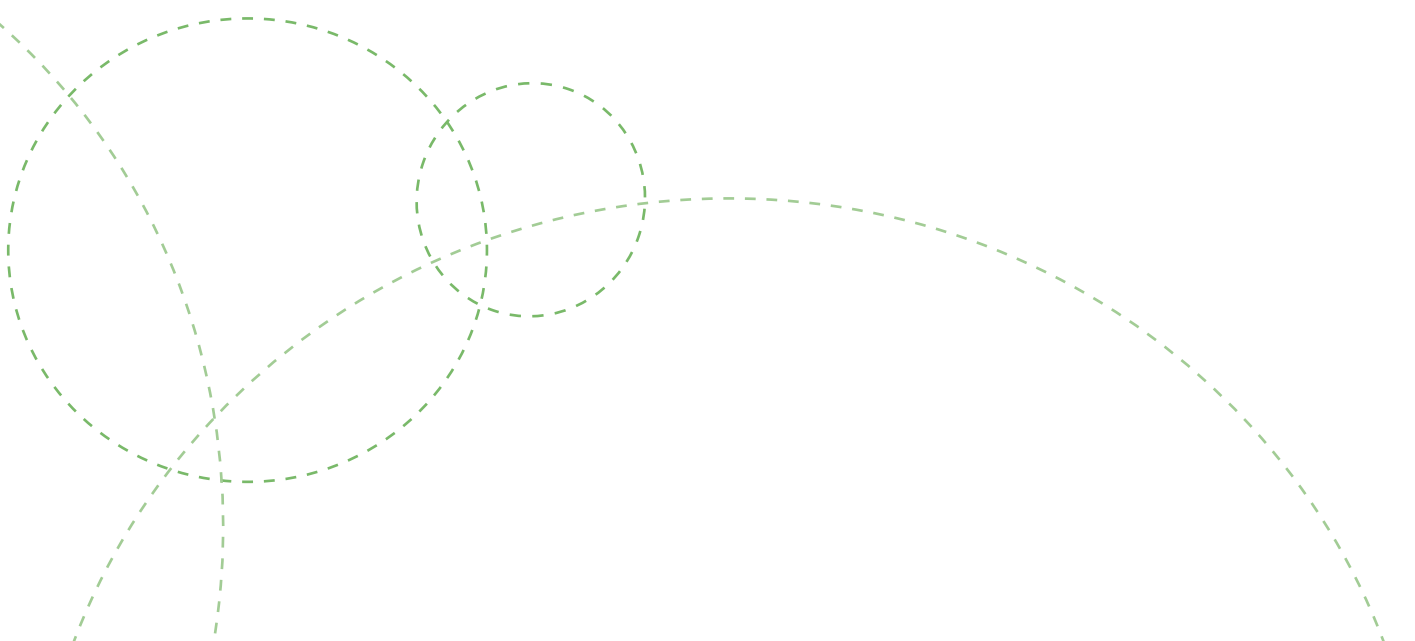




Video 4.1

Responding to children with mental health difficulties

Recognising mental health difficulties and intervening early is important. It can help prevent problems from becoming worse and improve mental health outcomes for children.





Discussion


What can we do to support children with mental health difficulties?

What would you consider to be some of the advantages and disadvantages of a child receiving a mental health diagnosis?

Blank area for writing the answer to the question above.

What processes does your service have in place when a parent advises the service that their child has a mental health diagnosis?

Blank area for writing the answer to the question above.

A large, faint grey speech bubble icon is positioned in the bottom right corner of the form area.

What are some of the ways educators can support children who have mental health difficulties on a day-to-day basis? How is this the same and different to supporting all children at the service?

What resources and community links does your service already have to support children who may be experiencing mental health difficulties?

What does your service need to find out in order to support children with mental health difficulties more effectively?

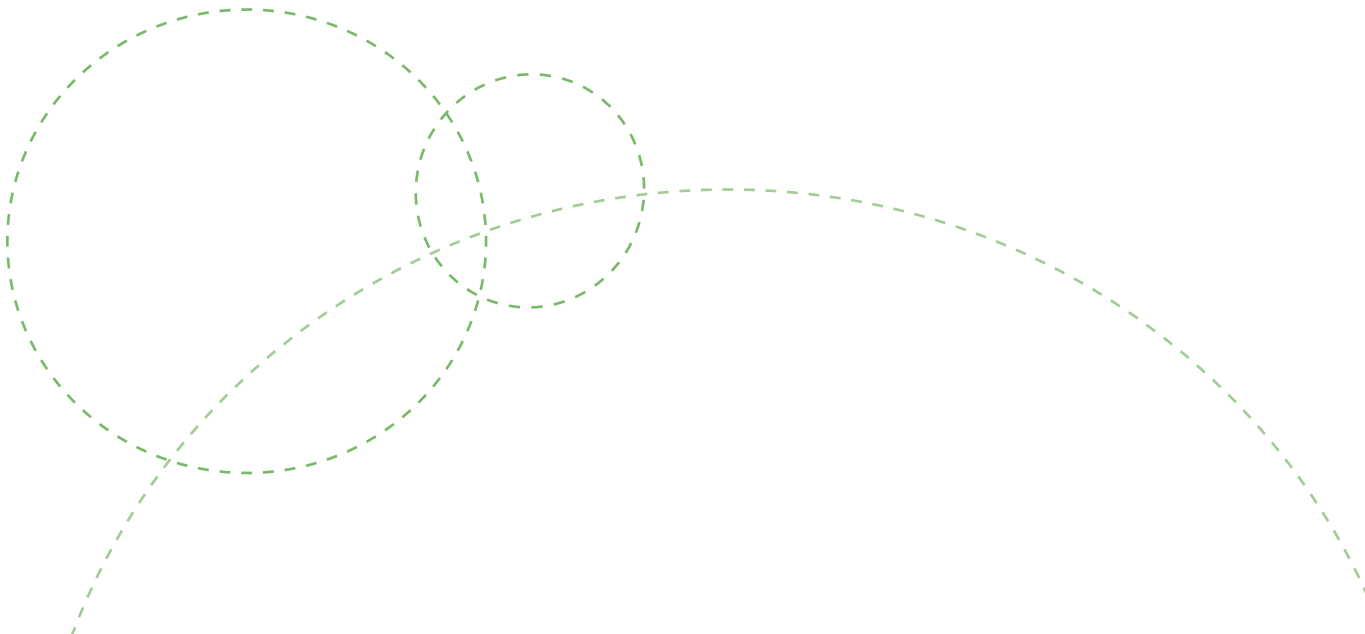




Video 4.2

Working together to support children with mental health difficulties

Being aware of mental health services in the local area and how to access them can help both educators and families to support children with mental health difficulties. Within collaborative relationships, individuals can share information about how to best support a child who is experiencing difficulties





Activity

Our service's procedures

Who should educators speak to when they have a concern?

When should they approach their colleague? How should the concern be communicated?

Who else needs to be involved in the discussion?





How are conversations documented and confidentially stored?

Blank area for response to the question: How are conversations documented and confidentially stored?

Are there policies and procedures in place for addressing the way our service supports children's mental health and wellbeing?

Blank area for response to the question: Are there policies and procedures in place for addressing the way our service supports children's mental health and wellbeing?

How are individual educators supported?

Blank area for response to the question: How are individual educators supported?





Activity

Moving forward

This activity has been designed for you to take away and do before you move on to the next topic. It will help integrate what you have learned during this session.

What is one thing I could do to support children and families who may be experiencing mental health difficulties?

Over the next week?

Over the next 12 months?

What is one thing we could do as a service to support children and families who may be experiencing mental health difficulties?

Over the next week?

Over the next 12 months?





Reflective questions

Brainstorm a list, or map out where your service can source help for different kinds of concerns.

Blank space for brainstorming a list or map of where to source help for different kinds of concerns.

Brainstorm which agencies your service has had contact with in the past. What prompted this contact?

Blank space for brainstorming agencies contacted in the past and what prompted the contact.

How do we find out about other referral agencies in our area, who follows up on this and how do we develop links/relationships with them?

Do we need to have a policy or set of procedures about mental health and wellbeing? Could it include our definition of mental health and how we address promotion, prevention and early intervention?

Wrapping up

Congratulations on completing Topic 4 of KidsMatter Component 4 Professional learning *Responding to children experiencing mental health difficulties*. For further information and resources about KidsMatter Early Childhood, please visit: www.kidsmatter.edu.au/ec.



Australian Government
Department of Health

