



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Best Practice – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

The Approved Provider Shine Bright EYM, educators, and staff of Shine Bright EYM services acknowledge the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing and a safe environment 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 and safety initiatives
- engage in partnerships with community networks.

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

POLICY STATEMENT

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.¹ 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.^{ii iii}

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

The focus of a child safe organisation is not simply to create an environment free from risk or danger. Rather it is about building an environment which is both child-safe and child-friendly, where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential.^v

Providing safe environments is important in preventing injuries. Children are explorers and always want to explore the environment they are in, which also increases the risk of injuries, particularly if children are trying out new skills. The challenge is to minimise the potential for injury so children can explore and be challenged to take some risks in a safe environment.^{vi}

WHOLE SERVICE ENGAGEMENT

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

¹ Be You, 2020 <https://beyou.edu.au/>

² DET, Mental health – for early childhood professionals (last updated 1 October 2018) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/health/Pages/environments.aspx>

³ Victorian Government, Promoting Healthy Minds for Living and Learning: An initiative of the Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019.

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 focuses 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

SOURCES AND RELATED LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#)
- PART 4.2—CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY 97 Division 1—Health, safety and wellbeing of children—Regulations 77, 78, 79, 80
- PART 4.7—LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT Division 2—Policies and procedures—Regulation 168 (2) (a) (i)
- [ACECQA National Quality Standard 2018 – Quality Area 2](#)
- [Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. Commonwealth of Australia, 2009](#)
- [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework For all Children from Birth to Eight Years. Department of Education and Training, 2016](#)

Related Policies

- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Curriculum Development
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Child Safe Environment (formally Child Protection)
- Staff Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Code of Conduct

PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Leadership and Commitment

- 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, with opportunities to provide feedback and input.

Healthy physical environment

- Buildings, grounds, furniture, play equipment and resources are safe and accessible for every child.
- Quiet and reflective spaces are provided for children, educators and families.

Healthy social environment

- Buildings, grounds, furniture, play equipment and resources are safe and accessible for every child.
- Quiet and reflective spaces are provided for children, educators and families.

Healthy culture

- Diversity and cultural practices are considered when implementing this policy and mental health and wellbeing practices.
- A safe, inclusive, welcoming environment is created for all community members. There is a culture of respect, fairness and equity.
- Strategies are used to promote positive and responsible behaviour, and to prevent and respond to hurtful and unsafe behaviour.
- Warm, responsive and trusting relationships are actively developed and maintained between children, families and educators.
- Educators and staff model respectful interactions with each other, children and families. A positive approach to mental health and wellbeing is also role modelled

Child teaching and Learning

- Children are supported to develop social and emotional skills and learn about and care for their own mental health.
- Educators and staff are supported to access professional development and resources about mental health and wellbeing education and to understand when and how to refer children to additional support.

Supported staff

- 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 staff orientation/induction.
- Leadership practices and on-the-ground support, enable a work environment that minimises stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for staff.
- Strategies are implemented to promote positive conflict resolution and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination and harassment.

Families and community partnerships

- Mental health and wellbeing information is provided to families and the wider community, such as information about local support services and resources about social and emotional learning.
- Partnerships are established with relevant organisations and health professionals to support mental health and wellbeing practices where appropriate.
- There are clear referral options and pathways for children, staff and families to access support services for mental health and wellbeing.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Shine Bright EYM 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 and ensure satisfactory resolutions have been achieved
- 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.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 : [Children and Family Services Resources – Bendigo](#)
- Attachment 2 : [Children and Family Services Resources – Campaspe](#)
- Attachment 3 : [Children and Family Services Resources – Swan Hill](#)

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Shine Bright EYM on October 2021

REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2024
