

<b>POLICY/PROCEDURE NAME &amp; REVIEW PROCESS</b>	<b>EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING POLICY</b> This policy and procedure has been created to provide all stakeholders with clear guidelines and transparency to our practices and procedures. We welcome feedback and input from all stakeholders at any time and this policy is subject to review based on feedback or due date of annual review.
<b>NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD</b>	<b>QUALITY AREA 4- STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS</b> <b>4.2 PROFESSIONALISM MANAGEMENT</b> 4.2.1 Professional collaboration 4.2.2 Professional standards
<b>NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS</b>	170-Policies and procedures to be followed 171-Policies and procedures to be kept available 172- Notification of change to policies or procedures
<b>RELATED POLICIES and RECORDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee probationary review record.</li> <li>Employee induction record.</li> </ul>
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b>	This policy applies to all educators, employees, management, students, volunteers, at our service.
<b>AIM OF POLICY</b>	<p>To ensure that our service has strong guidelines, procedures, and practices in place regarding safe practices for employee mental health and wellbeing. Our aim is to ensure that our practices are safe and supportive for the whole team in order to support their safety, wellbeing, and protection.</p> <p>This policy has been developed in alignment with the National Quality Framework, National Law and Regulations, ACECQA guidance, and best practice resources for promoting educator wellbeing in early childhood education and care services.</p> <p>Our aim is to provide a clear policy, implement the policy, support practices relating to the policy, train employees regarding the policy and maintain and update the compliance of the policy for all our stakeholders.</p>
<b>SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p><b>Implementation</b></p> <p>Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act, how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.</p> <p>In a workplace context, mental health and wellbeing encompass a person's ability to cope with the normal stresses of work, be productive, contribute positively to the team, and feel valued and supported.</p> <p>Wellbeing includes mental, physical, and emotional health, and is influenced by the quality of relationships, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and the level of support provided.</p> <p>Promoting mental health and wellbeing in early childhood settings ensures educators can perform at their best, build meaningful relationships, and provide quality care and education to children.</p> <p>We recognise that we are all responsible for managing our own mental health and wellbeing, as far as reasonably practical and therefore will work together to identify and manage potential risks to mental health in the workplace.</p> <p><b>Supporting mental health at work</b></p> <p>Mental health conditions influence not only how someone feels, but also how they think, behave and interact with others. Mental health conditions can be short term, long term or episodic. You may not always know if someone around you has a mental health condition. We are all responsible for creating a healthy workplace culture for mental health and wellbeing. This includes always treating each other with respect and courtesy.</p> <p>Working in early childhood education and care requires sustained physical, emotional, and cognitive effort. Our approved provider recognises that workplace mental health and employee wellbeing is essential to both individual and the service team success.</p> <p>We are committed to creating a workplace culture where all employees feel mentally healthy, supported, and valued.</p> <p>We will maintain a workplace that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Safe and inclusive</b>, welcoming diversity and respecting all individuals.</li> </ul>

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- **Supportive**, where mental health is acknowledged as a priority.
- **Educated**, where employees have the knowledge and skills to support their own and others' wellbeing.
- **Empowering**, giving employees the confidence to support others and seek help when needed.

**Our goal is:**

- To provide a safe, inclusive, and respectful work environment that enables educators to flourish professionally and personally.
- We support open conversations about mental health and strive to eliminate any stigma associated with seeking help or discussing challenges.

**Our aim is:**

- Promote positive mental and physical health.
- Reduce workplace stress and related absenteeism.
- Foster a supportive, respectful team culture.
- Improve employee satisfaction, retention, and performance.
- Encourage early intervention and proactive wellbeing practices.

**We commit to:**

- Providing access to mental health resources and support.
- Promoting awareness through meetings, posts and ongoing communication.
- Encouraging physical wellbeing through fitness, mindfulness, and social activities.
- Providing meaningful roles with opportunities for development.
- Ensuring each employee has a clear position description and adequate tools to succeed.
- Upholding a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Recognising and celebrating employee contributions.
- Maintaining inclusive and empowering environments for employee, children, and families.
- Providing confidential support options for all employees.
- Fostering respectful and positive relationships through role modelling of management.
- Promoting inclusiveness and diversity in our workforce through our equal employment opportunities and embracing our countries rich diverse culture. The service will be representative of all our stakeholders.
- Educating employees to identify and support mental health issues through documentation and workshops and through encouraging knowledge sharing and access to professional support.

In order to support employees nominated supervisor and all team members will do the following:

**Recognise the Signs**

- Changes in behaviour, withdrawal, fatigue, or absenteeism.

**Check In**

- If you think someone might be struggling, check in with them. It can be as simple as asking them how they're going, or if they are ok.
- Some ideas for checking in could be:
  - To pick an environment where the person will feel comfortable so you can talk without distractions:
  - Go for a walk in a park or along the beach.
  - Catch up for a coffee.
  - Go out for lunch.
- Start the conversation by telling them that you have noticed that they don't seem their usual self. Tell them you are worried about them and ask about what is bothering them.
- Some phrases that might help you get started: You don't seem yourself lately, what's going on? Are you OK?
- Choose a quiet space for honest conversation.

**Listen**

- Make eye contact, be present, and avoid interruptions.
- Use empathetic language and ask questions such as "What can I do to support you with this?"
- Check in with employees frequently to see how they are going. This shows that you care about them and provides an opportunity to talk.
- Point out any improvements you notice and encourage them to continue to speak with you about anything that may be worrying them.

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### Respond & Support

- Reassure employees, offer help, and suggest professional support if needed.
- Suggest they talk to their doctor or access professional support if needed.
- Supporting someone can be draining on your own mental health and wellbeing. It is important to look after yourself by making sure you get enough sleep and take time out for yourself when you need it.
- If you think the person may need more help than you can give suggest they see their doctor. Remember it is important for you to inform your approved provider/ nominated supervisor regarding the conversation so that the employee is supported on all levels.

All employees of the service must be aware of the following checklist.

### Health and Wellbeing Checklist

- Recognise signs of stress or distress in others.
- Have regular check-ins with colleagues.
- Take required breaks and recharge.
- Avoid and report bullying or negative behaviours.
- Maintain personal boundaries and self-awareness.
- Participate in wellbeing and team-building initiatives.

Each member of the team plays an important role in the implementation of each policies guidelines, and they are outlined as below but not limited to the following:

### The Approved Provider

- Will ensure that they provide wellbeing resources and professional development that is easily accessible for all team members.
- Will ensure mental health is a key part of induction and service operations by ensuring that the nominated supervisor has the tools to support the employees.
- Will monitor, review, and respond to wellbeing-related incidents and trends.
- Will ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Will ensure they take reasonable steps to ensure that the nominated supervisor, educators, employee, and volunteers follow the policy and procedures.
- Will ensure they provide the nominated supervisor, educators, employees and volunteers the documentation to perform their role, follow policy, procedure, and document according to regulatory and service requirements.
- Will ensure that adequate induction process is provided to all employee to ensure they have time to read and understand policies and procedures and seek further information if unsure.
- Will ensure that the nominated supervisor and employee are equipped with ongoing professional development and training they require to comply with this policy.
- Will encourage feedback from stakeholders regarding the policy's effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.
- Will ensure the policy is kept up to date with current legislation, research, and best practice.

### The Nominated Supervisor

- Will ensure they conduct regular risk assessments to identify and manage workplace stressors.
- Will ensure all new employees receive thorough **employee induction record** and provide new employee with feedback policies and position descriptions.
- Will ensure they lead by example and foster a supportive team culture by providing employee with feedback, support, and recognition regular check ins for new employee as per **employee probationary review record**.
- Will ensure breaks are taken and workloads are fair and ensure they recognise signs of stress and how best to support employees at this time.
- Will report wellbeing concerns to management, maintaining confidentiality.
- Will promote the use of wellbeing tools and checklists within the service.
- Will adhere to and implement the obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.
- Will ensure they take reasonable steps to ensure that the educators, employee, and volunteers follow the policy and procedures.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will ensure they provide the educators, employee and volunteers the documentation to perform their role, follow policy and procedure and ensure they are checking the documentation according to regulatory and service requirements.</li> <li>Will ensure that a rigorous recruitment process is completed, and a thorough induction process is provided to all employee to ensure they have time to read and understand policies and procedures and seek further information if unsure.</li> <li>Will ensure that the employee is supported with ongoing professional development and training they require to comply with this policy.</li> <li>Will encourage feedback from stakeholders and employee regarding the policy's effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.</li> <li>Will ensure the policy is kept up to date with current legislation, research, and best practice.</li> <li>Will conduct regular employee meetings to address policy compliance with legislation, policy implementation, changes to policy and or collect feedback for annual review of policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Educators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will ensure they understand and follow this policy and seek help when experiencing stress or mental health challenges.</li> <li>Will report risks or incidents that impact their own or others' wellbeing.</li> <li>Will contribute to a calm, respectful, and inclusive environment.</li> <li>Will engage in self-care practices and wellbeing activities through the practice of supporting and checking in on each other.</li> <li>Will recognise when other team members are experiencing stressful situations and either assist them or alert the nominated supervisor.</li> <li>Will adhere to and implement the obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.</li> <li>Will ensure they take reasonable steps to follow the service policy and procedures and seek advice or further support if unsure.</li> <li>Will ensure they complete and document any related records regarding the implementation of this policy and practice requirements of the service.</li> <li>Will attend any ongoing professional development, employee meetings and training they require to comply with this policy and practice requirements of the service.</li> <li>Will provide feedback to the nominated supervisor or approved provider regarding the policy's effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns.</li> <li>Will provide feedback regarding policy review when required.</li> </ul>
<b>REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION</b>	The following procedures outline and support all stakeholders to understand and implement the regulatory guidelines of this policy.
<b>In regard to regulation 170- Policies and procedures to be followed.</b>	<p><b>Approved Provider will</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all employee and volunteers are made aware of Regulatory policies and procedures by ensuring that this forms a part of the induction process.</li> <li>Ensure probationary reviews will be conducted once new employees are appointed at the 3-month and 6-month mark to ensure that they are following policy and procedure and to review and revise regulatory policies.</li> <li>Ensure employee meetings will be conducted on a regular basis to allow for review of policy and procedure and further training and revision of procedural practices in relation to policy and procedure.</li> <li>Ensure annual review and revision of policies and procedures will be conducted, and all educators will be given the opportunity for input.</li> </ul>
<b>In regard to Regulation 171- Policies and procedures to be kept available.</b>	<p><b>Approved Provider will</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that policies and procedures are available to all employees and the location and availability will form a part of the induction process.</li> <li>Ensure policies will be available on request for all employees to have access when required.</li> <li>Ensure policies will be available when required for employees to download copies and/or print out if required in order to complete assignments or to form part of their research and/ or update their knowledge.</li> <li>Ensure policies will be available for all stakeholders when requested and when updating.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>In regard to Regulation 172- Notification of change to policies or procedures</b></p>	<p><b>Approved Provider will</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure employee meetings will be conducted on a regular basis to allow for review of policy and procedure, provide further training and allow for input if required in relation to policy and procedure.</li> <li>Ensure stakeholders will be invited to provide feedback for policies and procedures at any time, not just on annual review but will also be invited to add feedback at review time or after an event that may require change to policy or procedure.</li> <li>Ensure policies and procedures will be emailed or put on display in the foyer for stakeholders to have the ability to provide feedback.</li> <li>Ensure feedback will be considered from stakeholders and educators and may result in a change in policy.</li> <li>Ensure policy and procedure may be changed at any time if there has been an incident in the service that has required a change to be implemented for the safety and health of children and or educators.</li> <li>Ensure in the event of a change to a policy after feedback or a situation that occurs, we will provide 14 days' notice to all stakeholders before the change takes effect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</b></p>	<p>We are dedicated to the ongoing improvement of our practices and procedures through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting regular reviews and updates of this policy with all stakeholders.</li> <li>Actively seeking feedback from children, families, and employees.</li> <li>Providing targeted skill development and training for employees when areas for improvement are identified or when gaps in policy and procedure implementation are observed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KEY TERMS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Confidentiality</b>- The principle of keeping personal information private. Mental health concerns shared by employees must be handled with sensitivity and in line with privacy regulations.</li> <li><b>Mental Health</b>- A person's cognitive, emotional and psychological wellbeing. It affects how individuals think, feel, behave and interact with others. Good mental health enables people to cope with stress, work productively, and contribute to their community.</li> <li><b>Psychosocial Hazards</b>- Aspects of work that may cause stress or negatively affect mental health, such as high workloads, poor communication, bullying, or lack of support.</li> <li><b>Stakeholder</b> - a person or group of people who have an interest in a business, a person such as an employee or customer. They have a sense of responsibility toward it and an interest in its success.</li> <li><b>Wellbeing</b>- A holistic state encompassing mental, physical, emotional and social health. In a workplace context, it refers to how individuals feel at work, their satisfaction, resilience, and ability to manage workload and relationships.</li> <li><b>Workplace Culture</b>- The shared values, beliefs, and behaviours within a workplace. A positive culture supports trust, respect, inclusion and psychological safety.</li> </ul>
<p><b>WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING SOURCES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australian Children's Education &amp; Care Quality Authority. ACECQA</li> <li>ACECQA. (2020). <i>Guide to the National Quality Framework</i>. <a href="https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about">https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about</a></li> <li>ACECQA. (2023). <i>Information Sheet: Wellbeing of Educators</i>. <a href="https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/supporting-materials/infosheet/educator-wellbeing">https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/supporting-materials/infosheet/educator-wellbeing</a></li> <li>National Quality Standard. <a href="https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard">https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard</a></li> <li>Early Childhood Australia. (2023). <i>The Wellbeing of Early Childhood Educators</i>. <a href="https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au">https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au</a></li> <li>Safe Work Australia. (2022). <i>Managing psychosocial hazards at work</i>. <a href="https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au">https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au</a></li> <li>Be You (Beyond Blue). (2024). <i>Be You for Early Learning Services</i>. <a href="https://beyou.edu.au/early-learning">https://beyou.edu.au/early-learning</a></li> <li>Department of Education. (2023). <i>Early Childhood Workforce Strategy</i>. <a href="https://www.education.gov.au">https://www.education.gov.au</a></li> <li>Fair Work Ombudsman. (2023). <i>Mental health in the workplace</i>. <a href="https://www.fairwork.gov.au">https://www.fairwork.gov.au</a></li> <li>Education and Care Services National Regulations.</li> <li>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.</li> <li>Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.</li> </ul>

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- Guide to the National Quality Framework.
- National Quality Standard.

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