

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

QUALITY AREA 2 | ELAA version 1.0



PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for Denzil Don Kindergarten to:

- ensure the service environment is safe, inclusive and empowers children, families, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, volunteers and visitors
- embed social and emotional learning in the educational program
- ensure families, children, early childhood teachers, educators and staff are key partners in mental health initiatives
- engage in partnerships with community networks.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Denzil Don Kindergarten is committed to:

- supporting children to become strong in their social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing
- strengthening early childhood teachers and educators understanding of the importance of wellbeing and ensuring they are sensitive to the impact of abuse and trauma on children
- providing an educational program where children are supported to explore, learn and engage with health and wellbeing
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes positive social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Denzil Don Kindergarten, including during offsite excursions and activities.

| RESPONSIBILITIES | Approved provider and persons with management or control | Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge | Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff | Parents/guardians | Contractors, volunteers and students |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted | | | | | |
| Ensuring the nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, families and children are active participants in | R | | | | |

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| the development and implementation of the whole service <i>Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy</i> | | | | | |
| Ensuring the service provides a safe, inclusive and empowering environment that celebrates diversity through positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour when working with children and families (<i>refer to Code of Conduct Policy and Interactions with Children Policy</i>) | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Actively supporting and facilitating participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children, young people, and their families at Denzil Don Kindergarten | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Encouraging children to actively consider risk within the service and involving them in the development of guidelines to keep the service environment healthy and safe for all | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Embedding social and emotional learning in the service program and practice, and teaching children to care for their mental health and wellbeing | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program (<i>refer to Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play policy</i>) | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring quiet and reflective spaces are provided for children, educators and families. | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring diversity, cultural practices and mental health and wellbeing practices are considered when implementing the learning program at the service | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Implementing appropriate programs and practices to support vulnerable children and families, including working cooperatively with relevant services and/or professionals, where required (<i>refer to Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing</i>) | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring a safe, inclusive, welcoming environment is fostered for all community members and that there is a culture of respect, fairness and equity | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Encouraging collaborative, family-centred practice (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) that facilitates positive mental health and wellbeing and active participation of children and families at the service | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring cultural values and expectations about health and wellbeing are respected | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring children's diverse circumstances are understood, and that those that are vulnerable are responded to and provided with support | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Understanding each child's mental health developmental journey is unique | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Making adjustments to provide equal protection for all children (<i>refer to Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy</i>) | R | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Embedding strategies to promote positive and responsible behaviour, and prevent and respond to hurtful and unsafe behaviour (<i>refer to Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy</i>) | R | √ | √ | | √ |
| Educators and staff model respectful interactions with each other, children and families. A positive approach to mental | | √ | √ | √ | √ |

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| health and wellbeing is also role modelled (<i>refer to Interaction with Children policy</i>) | | | | | |
| Children are supported to develop social and emotional skills and learn about and care for their mental health (<i>refer to Curriculum Development policy</i>) | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Educators and staff are supported to access ongoing professional development and resources about mental health and wellbeing education and to understand when and how to refer children to additional support (<i>refer to Sources</i>) | √ | √ | | | |
| Educators and staff are supported to learn about and care for their mental health and wellbeing (<i>refer to Occupational Health and Safety policy</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| Ensuring mental health and wellbeing information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff induction. | √ | √ | | | |
| Ensuring leadership practices and on-the-ground support, create a work environment that minimises stress and promotes mental health and wellbeing for educators and staff. | √ | √ | | | |
| Implementing strategies to promote positive conflict resolution and to prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination, and harassment (<i>refer to Compliments and Complaints policy</i>) | R | √ | | | |
| Providing mental health and wellbeing information to families and the wider community | √ | √ | | | |
| Establishing partnerships with relevant organisations and health professionals to support mental health and wellbeing practices where appropriate. | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Ensuring there are clear referral options and pathways for children, staff, educators and families to access support services for mental health and wellbeing (<i>refer to Sources</i>). | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Ensuring the nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers, educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements, with opportunities to provide feedback and input | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Many young Australians have mental health issues that can have lifetime impacts. In Australia, one in seven 4 to 17-year-olds experience a mental health condition every year¹.

Mental health and wellbeing for young children refer to their emotions, what they experience, how they learn to manage and express their emotions, the relationships they form, and their ability to engage in close and positive relationships. 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.

Early intervention can improve children's mental health, and in turn, their life outcomes. Good mental health in early childhood also provides a solid foundation for managing the transition from childhood to adolescence

¹ The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2015)

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

The Early Years Learning Framework (The Framework) was developed to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years. Outcome 3 of the Framework talks about children having a strong sense of wellbeing. It guides early childhood practitioners to facilitate a learning environment that supports both physical and psychological development

Requirement of Child Safe Standard 8 asks staff and volunteers to be trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy. This Standard links to Standards 1 and 5, with all three Standards placing obligations on organisations to provide training and information for staff and volunteers on building safe environments for children and young people.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- National Quality Standard: Quality Area 2
- The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS



The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file on the kindergarten website.

Family-centred practice:

- uses families' understanding of their children to support shared decision-making about each child's learning and development
- creates a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment, where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development
- actively engages families and children in planning children's learning and development
- provides feedback to families on each child's learning and provides information about how families can further advance children's learning and development at home and in the community.

Mental health and wellbeing: for 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 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

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- Be You, Beyond Blue: www.beyondblue.org.au

- BlackDog Institute: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
- Child First and family services: www.services.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-and-children
- Commission for Children and Young People, Child Safe standards: www.cryp.vic.gov.au
- Cancer Council Victoria, Achievement Program: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au/education/early-childhood-services
- Department of Education and Training and Early Childhood Australia: [Wellbeing webinars](#)
- Early Childhood Australia, Code of Ethics: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics
- Headspace: www.headspace.org.au
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org.au
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority: [The Wellbeing Practice Guide](#)

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Code of Conduct
- Curriculum Development
- Interaction with Children
- Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Privacy and Confidentiality

EVALUATION



To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to child safety concerns
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- 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
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*).



ATTACHMENTS

- Nil



AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Denzil Don Kindergarten on 03/08/2022.

REVIEW DATE: 03 / AUGUST / 2024