

STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Best Practice – Quality Area 4

PURPOSE

With most Australians spending one third of their lives at work, health bodies such as the World Health Organisation have recognised the workplace as a priority setting to promote mental health and wellbeing.

“Workplace wellbeing is not just feeling happy at work – it is about having a sense of purpose, feeling competent, having the ability to accomplish tasks, having choice and decision making power within the workplace, and being in a strong and supportive team,” Catherine Jones PhD, School of Education at Macquarie Education.

If educators are to have the confidence and knowledge to promote positive mental health with children and others they need to understand and know how to look after their own mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, we recognise that it is essential to support educators and employees with the right tools and resources to make good choices to improve their own health and wellbeing. Employees and educators who remain healthy increase productivity, enhance the workplace culture and embody the healthy behaviours and messages that are important to convey to children on a daily basis.

Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare recognise that educator/employee wellbeing is a shared responsibility, and we are committed to promoting a positive work environment where the health, safety and wellbeing of all our employees is acknowledged and supported.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

This service is committed to:

- taking a pro-active approach; providing staff with a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which to work
- recognising that the health and wellbeing of all staff is important, and that it not only benefits the individual, but also the children, families and the wider community
- providing a supportive workplace culture where healthy lifestyle choices are valued and encouraged
- providing a healthy physical and social environment
- promoting awareness of key health issues for staff that supports mental health and wellbeing, sun protection etc.
- providing a smoke free environment
- developing organisational/service initiatives to address any specific or relevant issues related to staff
- encourage staff to engage in health and wellbeing initiatives within the service
- engaging health professionals, services and organisations who can support and promote the health and wellbeing of all our staff. For example; Access EAP services
- embedding a whole team approach to a culture of positive wellbeing.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, and others attending programs and activities of the Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare, including during offsite excursions.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

A focus on the health and wellbeing of staff can help to improve physical and mental health, concentration and productivity and reduce absenteeism and staff turnover. Research has shown that healthy, engaged employees are nearly three times more productive than employees with poor health.

It is recognised that every member of the service impacts the health of others and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes health and wellbeing. All staff, visiting students and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy.

A Staff Liaison Officer is available and can be contacted to address any concerns or facilitate any changes required.

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- ensuring all staff are accepted and valued as individuals and professionals
- ensuring effective health and wellbeing communication protocols are in place
- enabling and cultivating a workplace culture that promotes connectedness, is inclusive and provides diverse support networks.
- ensuring that the staff /volunteers/ visiting students are aware of the policy and have the opportunity to provide feedback.
- monitoring the implementation of this policy
- ensuring the policy is available to all staff
- provide staff with fresh fruit
- providing chemical free cleaning products that do not compromise effective hygiene practices (ie use chemical free hand soap)

Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, all other educators/staff, volunteers and students are responsible for:

- reading, fully understanding, and actioning the staff health and wellbeing policy in their work roles
- supporting the policy to ensure the workplace culture is supportive and positive for staff health and wellbeing.
- being responsive and respectful towards each other
- complying with the policy at all times whilst completing work related duties
- informing management if they believe the policy is not being followed.
- wearing protective footwear at all times. Footwear must be safe and comfortable without attachments that may cause injury to educators, staff or children. No spiked heels, thongs, open toed or strapless shoes are to be worn.
- wearing sunscreen, sun safe hat and clothing that protects the shoulders whilst outdoors from 1st September to 30th April and when the UV levels are over 3.

WELLBEING LEAVE

Permanent full-time employees will be entitled to five (5) days wellbeing leave in each calendar year. This will be pro-rata for part-time employees with one day wellbeing leave granted for each day worked per week (eg employees working 3 days per week are entitled to 3 wellbeing days per year). Employees must request wellbeing leave via the Service Director/Coordinator and provide at least 2 business days' notice ahead of leave being taken.

Wellbeing leave cannot be taken consecutively and cannot be accumulated, and any leave not taken will expire at the end of the calendar year.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

All employees are entitled to access the employee assistance program. Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare partners with [AccessEAP](#) to provide free and confidential counselling and support. Employees are entitled to three free EAP sessions; additional free sessions may be granted if necessary.

Access EAP can be contacted confidentially (in Australia call 1800 818 728) or with the support of the service. More information on how to access EAP can be found in Attachment 1.

4. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- The Asthma Foundation of Victoria,
- www.sunsmart.com.au
- ELAA *Early Childhood Management Manual*.
- Healthy Together Achievement Program for workplaces
- Heart Foundation: Workplace Wellness
- Healthy Workers Initiative
- OHS Act 2004
- AccessEAP: <https://www.accesseap.com.au>

Resources

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/wellbeing/>

Information and resources on how to achieve and maintain a state of wellbeing.

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/wellbeing/workplace-wellbeing/>

Information on what a healthy work/life balance looks like and how to establish this.

<https://embracementalhealth.org.au/community>

Mental health information to support multicultural communities including multilingual information and personal stories.

<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/tips-for-a-healthy-headspace/>

This link provides tips and advice on strategies you can implement to maintain good mental health.

<https://headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/support-for/rural-and-remote-people>

Head to Health is a national government directory of digital mental health resources and supports. This page provides information and resources specific to people living in rural and remote areas

<https://www.headsup.org.au/your-mental-health>

Practical information and resources to help you understand mental health and support you to manage stress in the workplace.

<https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au>

The Australian Indigenous Health Info Net has information and resources specific to Indigenous Australian social and emotional wellbeing.

<https://www.wellbeingaustralia.com.au/>

A not-for-profit network of people and organisations committed to developing individual and community wellbeing, especially in education.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/personal-best/pillar/wellbeing>

Suggested activities, guidance and inspiration to help you find the balance in all areas of your life while navigating the ups and downs.

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/digital-tools-apps/>

Collection of quizzes for self-assessment and apps to help with mild to moderate conditions.

<https://www.mycompass.org.au>

The My Compass program supports you to track your wellbeing over time.

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app>

Smiling Mind is a free app designed by psychologists to support you in adopting a mindfulness practice. There are programs for stress, sleep, attention and concentration, and wellbeing among other topics.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums>

An online community open to anyone residing in Australia with forums on topics related to mental health and wellbeing.

<https://thiswayup.org.au>

Developed with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, these online courses have been clinically proven to lessen anxiety and depression

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support>

Access a range of free supports seven days a week. All calls and chats are one-on-one with a trained mental health professional, and completely confidential

<https://mensline.org.au>

MensLine is an online counselling and telephone service for all men in Australia looking for support with their wellbeing

<https://qlife.org.au>

QLife is a telephone and web chat service for members of the LGBTI community across Australia, available from 3pm – midnight every day.

https://www.ruok.org.au/every-day-resources?_rdr

Downloadable free resources to help you meaningfully connect with people around you and support anyone struggling with life.

Beyond Blue- online and phone mental health support. 1300 22 4636 <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

BeYOU- provides educators with knowledge, resources and strategies for helping children and young people

achieve their best possible mental health <https://beyou.edu.au/>

Ted Talks- explore the latest thinking on how to build a better learning community for educators, families and children. <https://www.ted.com/talks>

Related Service Policies

Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Sun Protection Policy

Staff Clothing Policy

Staff Grievance Policy

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

EVALUATION

In order to access whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- gather feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to identifying and responding to the health and wellbeing of all staff.
- 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.
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to the policy or its procedures (this is a requirement under Regulation 172 of the National Regulations for policies mandated by law and would be considered Best Practice for all service policies and procedures).

ATTACHMENT 1:

What happens in counselling?
Our professional counsellor will work with you to assist in managing or resolving any concerns that negatively impact your life. EAP counselling is designed to be short term, solution focused counselling. If you require further and/or specialised support, referral to other services will be provided. The aim is to discuss your concerns and work out some strategies or options to improve your coping skills.

Getting the help you need is simple
If you are needing guidance, give AccessEAP a call to find out how we can help. We're available by telephone 24/7 to provide immediate help for urgent matters.

CALL US
In Australia call **1800 818 728**
In all other countries, please refer to the 'contact us' page on our website.

For more information
w accessgap.com.au
e info@accessgap.com.au
To access the password protected Client Areas of our website for the first time, register yourself with your company email address.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

YOUR WELLBEING STARTS HERE

WHEN TO CONTACT US
Many life challenges and changes are best resolved with assistance from an experienced counsellor. You may want to consider seeing an AccessEAP counsellor for the following:

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES

- Needing support to help achieve your goals
- Missing deadlines
- Involved in conflicts frequently
- Needing new strategies on professional or personal goals

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

- Distracted by issues at work or at home
- Not feeling your usual self
- Feeling overwhelmed

Some reasons people contact AccessEAP are;

- Improving relationships/communication with others
- Facing crisis and trauma
- Grief and loss support
- Strategies for handling conflict with colleagues or managers
- Facing alcohol, drug or gambling addictions
- Handling anxiety and stress effectively
- Feeling depressed or down
- Improving work performance
- Assistance with financial and legal distress

AUTHORISATION

The policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of The Emma McLean Kindergarten and Daycare in May 2023

REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Approved Provider, Supervisors, Employees, and any committee members.

Last reviewed: May 2023

Date for next review: May 2027