

## New report to guide wellbeing in the early years

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A unique report on children's mental health and wellbeing competencies for the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce has recently been released.

The landmark report was developed through a partnership between the Hunter Institute of Mental Health and the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, with funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

"We know that early childhood educators play a significant role in the development of children's mental health and wellbeing" said Jaelea Skehan, Acting Director of the Hunter Institute of Mental Health.

"We need to move away from the traditional view of children's services and recognise them as places where our young children learn, develop and grow. This includes the development of their social and emotional skills" continued Ms Skehan.

The report contains a newly developed **Mental Health Consensus Statement for the ECEC workforce**, which includes definitions of early childhood mental health and mental illness.

It also presents **five Domains of Early Childhood Practice** which are believed to support positive social and emotional development in childhood and lay the foundations for good mental health later in life.

The report provides a **comprehensive analysis of the extent to which mental health and wellbeing competencies are addressed in early childhood vocational education and tertiary qualifications, as well as other professional development.**

It also identifies a series of complementary and mutually reinforcing **strategies intended to enhance ECEC Workforce capacity in regard to children's mental health and wellbeing.**

The first of these strategies is already being implemented and will result in a **Mental Health and Wellbeing Resource for the ECEC sector, to be published and nationally distributed in November 2013.**

"We know that a healthy start to life is important for health and wellbeing in later life. With access to appropriate resources and training, early childhood educators will be better placed to support the mental health of children and families in their service".

The final report and further information are available at: [www.himh.org.au](http://www.himh.org.au) and [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au).

## **Report: Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing: Exploring Competencies for the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce**

Key elements of the report include:

- The identification of key ECEC workforce knowledge and skills which support children's positive development, mental health and wellbeing;
- Analysis of the current coverage of these skills and topics in early childhood qualifications and training in the Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education sectors;
- Identification of training needs, gaps, opportunities and best options to enhance the inclusion of relevant competencies and professional practices in early childhood training and education;
- Recommendations about national competencies and professional teaching practices and how these might be incorporated into ECEC workforce training.

### **About the Hunter Institute of Mental Health**

The Hunter Institute of Mental Health is a not for profit business unit of the Hunter New England Area Health Service. The Institute provides a range of best practice programs that focus on mental health promotion, prevention of mental illness and early intervention. The Institute implements a number of national programs related to supporting the mental health of children and young people. More information is available at: [www.himh.org.au](http://www.himh.org.au)

### **About the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council**

The CS&HISC is the recognised advisory body on skills and workforce development across Australia for the two important industries of community services and health. Through ongoing research, consultation and industry engagement CS&HISC is able to identify the changes required within vocational and work-based training, and develop the national qualifications to support ongoing skill development. More information is available at: <https://www.cshisc.com.au>

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