

The CHILD framework was developed by the Response Ability team to summarise how early childhood educators and teachers can promote the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. It is based on international research and expert opinion, drawing on resilience studies, social and emotional learning, health promotion principles and mental health research. Using this framework as a guide to professional practice, teachers can contribute to a range of better outcomes for children and young people, including improved behaviour, academic achievement and health outcomes.

CHILD

- C** *Creating safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development*
- H** *Helping children and young people to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour*
- I** *Identifying babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support*
- L** *Linking families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing*
- D** *Developing broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing*

C Creating safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development

Educators, teachers and schools can foster supportive environments by: modelling caring relationships and good communication with everyone; setting clear guidelines for behaviour; using child-centred teaching approaches that cater for different temperaments and learning styles; acknowledging each person's strengths and interests; and providing constructive but caring guidance when needed.

H Helping children and young people to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour

Children develop a range of important skills through relationships, play and learning tasks. Educators and teachers can support the development of social and emotional skills by: applying positive behaviour management strategies; using varied instructional techniques; providing opportunities for co-operative play and learning; exploring emotions and social issues through games, stories or other tools; involving children in making decisions and solving problems.

I Identifying babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support

Children or families may need extra support when social or emotional difficulties arise. Educators and teachers are skilled in observing children and are often able to pick up early signs of difficulties. Examples could include: not achieving developmental milestones; marked shyness or anxiety in children; challenging behaviour; family difficulties and violence or abuse. Early identification of such problems can improve personal and educational outcomes for children.



L Linking families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing

Families often seek advice from educators and teachers about children's development, behaviour, learning and wellbeing. Sometimes referral to another agency or professional is warranted, to assess the situation or help a family obtain treatment and support. Educators and teachers need a working knowledge of local services so they can form effective partnerships with parents, to promote good learning and developmental outcomes for children.

D Developing broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing

Educators and teachers also contribute to broader wellbeing strategies through: developing partnerships with the community; increasing parent participation in children's learning and education; developing policies or procedures; and advocating for the needs of children in the community. To manage these complex roles, teachers also need to engage in reflective practice, have access to professional development and look after their own wellbeing.

You can find a more detailed exploration of the CHILD framework in the Response Ability publications:

- *Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Teacher's Guide*
- *Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Guide for Children's Services Educators*

These may be available through your lecturer or tutor, or you can access it online at www.responseability.org under the Education Students section.

Sources and Links

Durlak, J. & Wells, A. (1997). Primary prevention mental health problems for children and young people: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25 (2), 115-152.

Kay-Lambkin, F., Kemp, E., Stafford, K. & Hazell, T. (2007). Mental health promotion and early intervention in early childhood and primary school settings: A review. *Journal of Student Wellbeing*, 1, 31-56. Retrieved July 3, 2014 from: www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/JSW

Wells, J., Barlow, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2003). A systematic review of universal approaches to mental health promotion in schools. *Health Education*, 103 (4), 197-220.