

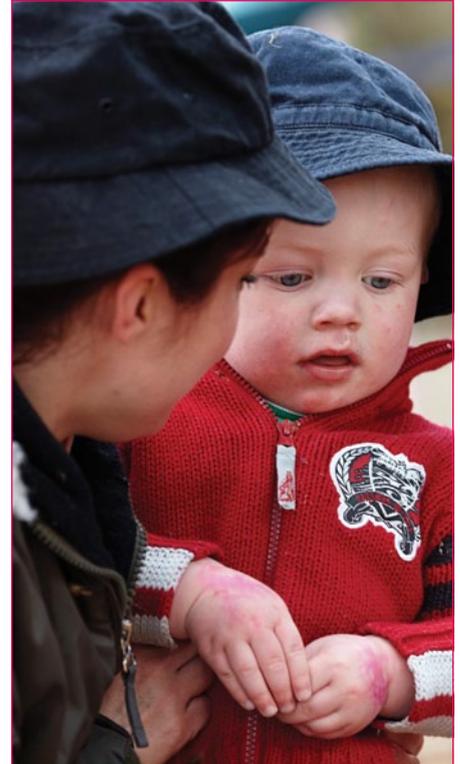
Children with additional needs benefit from support with their learning, development and wellbeing.

Suggestions for families

- ▶ There are times when you might need to advocate for your child by letting others know about your child's need(s) and promoting positive change to work towards having these met.
- ▶ Share your experiences with educators and health professionals to support your child's development, mental health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Encourage opportunities to enhance your child's social and emotional skills.
- ▶ Talk about and express emotions with your child.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for children to develop friendships and support these as needed.
- ▶ Support and acknowledge siblings as they may sometimes feel left out (e.g., organise special one-to-one time to do something they enjoy).
- ▶ Access support or information that will help you look after yourself and make decisions for your child (e.g., the Better Health Channel).
- ▶ Remember that self-care is important. For more information on looking after yourself refer to *Component 3: Working with parents and carers: 'Positive mental health for parents and carers'*.

Suggestions for educators

- ▶ Become informed about the needs of the children at your service by seeking out and sharing information.
- ▶ Work with families and health professionals to implement strategies that support children's development and wellbeing.
- ▶ Build on children's and families' strengths.
- ▶ Promote accepting and caring attitudes in your ECEC service, including relationships among children.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for families to socialise with others at the ECEC service and build connections (e.g., hold a morning tea for parents and carers, or a lunch so families can get to know each other, invite parents and carers into your service to help support children's learning).
- ▶ Recognise that the needs of all children and families will be different and will also change over time.
- ▶ Provide regular feedback to families regarding their child's achievements, in addition to highlighting goals and areas of support.



Suggestions for creating a supportive environment

To create a supportive and inclusive environment for children with additional needs it can be helpful to consider factors that can influence an environment, including:

- ▶ attitudes and beliefs about additional needs
- ▶ fears about being able to support and include children with additional needs
- ▶ information from health professionals and support organisations so you are able to be informed and plan for children with additional needs
- ▶ children's feelings of isolation and vulnerability
- ▶ physical barriers (i.e. size and structure of a service)
- ▶ amount and impact of sensory stimuli (e.g., noise levels and lighting that can influence children)
- ▶ support from peers to build an inclusive environment (i.e. colleagues or other family members)
- ▶ opportunities to create a positive learning environment
- ▶ beliefs that all children have strengths and capacities
- ▶ providing reinforcement to children through things that personally motivate them, such as following their interests (e.g., making time to read a favourite story book together) and positive statements (e.g., 'Tommy looked like he was really happy when you gave him a turn with the train.').



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



beyondblue



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children



APS Australian Psychological Society

The KidsMatter Early Childhood information sheets are resources that have been developed in collaboration and with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the Commonwealth does not accept liability for any injury or loss or damage arising from the use of, or reliance upon, the content of this publication.