PARENTAL WELLBEING

A Friendly Pocket Guide for Frontline Workers and Supervisors




EVERY PARENT MATTERS
OCT 2026

This Pocket Guide is organised into two parts:

1.

Understanding Parental Wellbeing

2.

Practical Actions for FLWs and Supervisors

"I am committed to supporting parents with empathy, respect, and hope."

Name:

Centre / Cluster:

Designation:

Block:

District:

How to use this Guide in your daily work

This Pocket Guide has been developed to help Frontline Workers and Supervisors translate learning into everyday practice. It provides simple, practical reminders on parental wellbeing, responsive caregiving, and nurturing care that can be used during home visits, counselling sessions, parent meetings, community interactions, and supportive supervision.

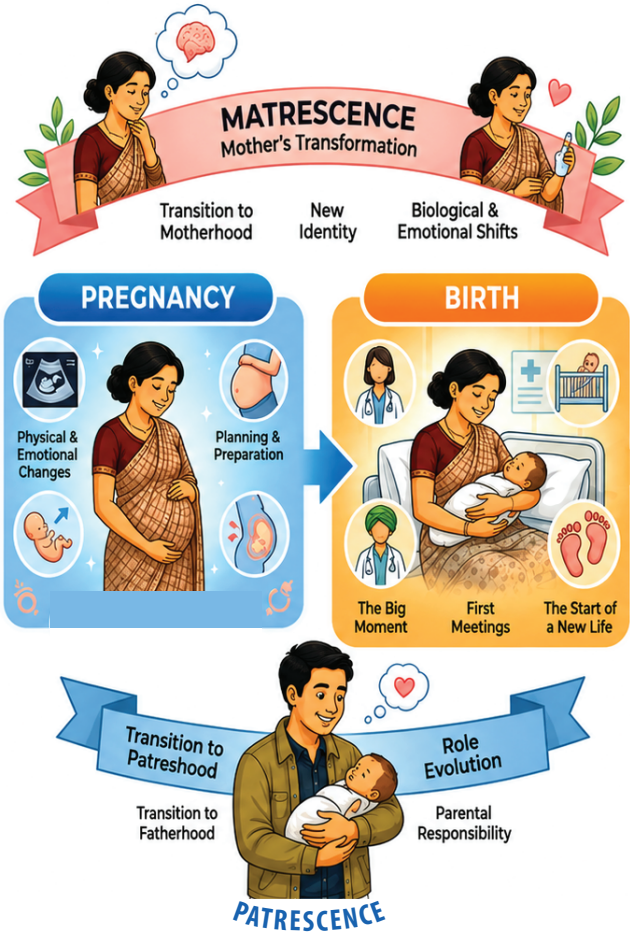
Carry this Pocket Guide during home visits, parent meetings, community interactions, and supportive supervision as a quick field reference.

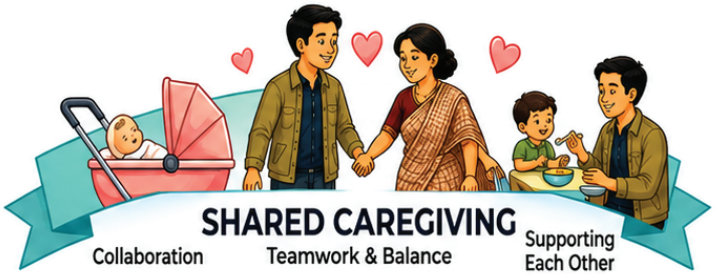
PART I: LET'S UNDERSTAND THE WORLD OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Small, consistent actions can strengthen parental wellbeing and help every child thrive.

Let's Talk About the Big Changes When becoming a Mother and Father

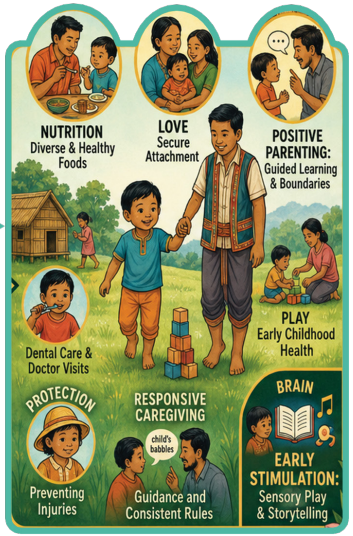
Key Stages and Shared Experiences







0-1 years: Growth & Bonding

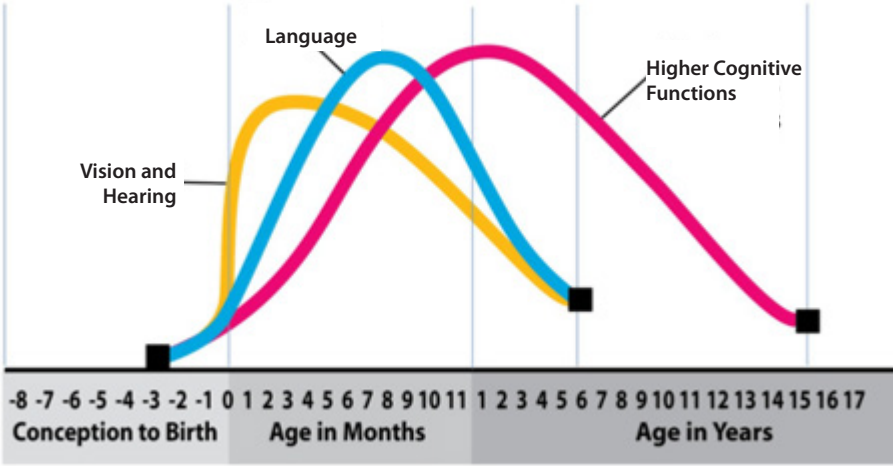


1-2 years: Learning & Discovery



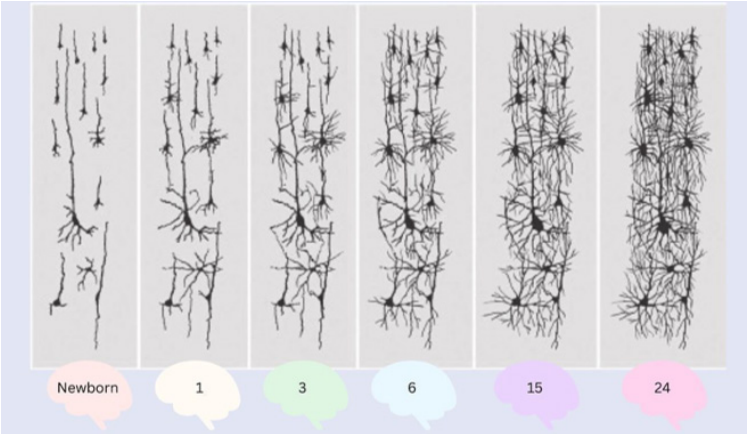
Becoming a parent is a life-changing journey that begins during pregnancy and continues through the early years of a child's life. Mothers, fathers, and other caregivers experience new emotions, responsibilities, and challenges as they learn and grow alongside their child. With love, support, shared caregiving, and access to timely guidance, families become more confident and better prepared to provide responsive care, helping children thrive during the critical first 1,000 days and beyond.

Do you know that a baby's brain grows fastest in the very first months and years of life?

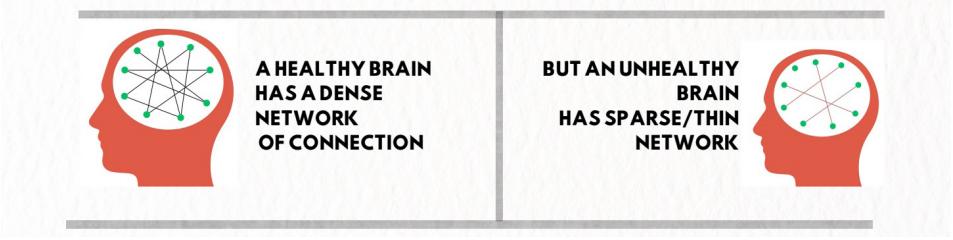


As shown in this journey, senses like vision and hearing develop first, followed quickly by language skills and higher thinking. Every time a parent talks, smiles, or plays with their child, they are building strong connections in the brain.

The First 1,000 Days: A Time of Rapid Brain Development



The first 1,000 days, from pregnancy through a child's second birthday, are a critical period for brain development. During this time, the brain rapidly forms connections through everyday experiences such as talking, playing, touching, responding and providing a safe and loving environment. Supportive and responsive caregiving helps build strong neural connections that support a child's learning, emotional wellbeing and development throughout life.



Let's Look at Overall Child Development

How Do Little Children Grow All-Round?

From birth to 3 years, a child grows in many ways at once.
Every domain is connected and depends on love, nutrition, and daily play.

Body and Movement

Rolling, crawling, walking, and using fingers to grab or stack.

How to support: Give safe space for tummy time and floor play, along with nutritious food.

Thinking and Curiosity

Exploring how toys work, recognizing objects, and solving simple puzzles.

How to support: Answer their curious questions with patience and encourage free play.



Words and Sounds

Cooing, babbling, naming objects, and speaking first words.

How to support: Talk, sing lullabies, tell stories, and name things in your mother tongue.

Love and Trust

Feeling safe, expressing feelings, and forming secure bonds..

How to support: Comfort them when they cry and respond with warmth and affection.



Daily Independence

Learning to hold a cup, use a spoon, wash hands, and help clean up.

How to support: Gently encourage them to try tasks on their own to build confidence.

Baby starts the conversation, Parents keep it going

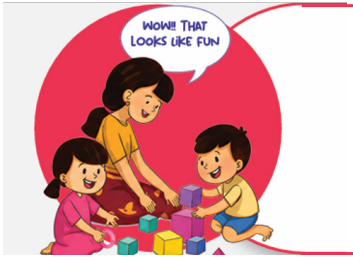
Serve and Return: The back-and-forth between parents and child

When child reaches out and parents respond, parents are building their brain. It helps them learn, feel secure and grow in confidence.



NOTICE WHAT THEY NOTICE

Pay attention to what the child is focused on. Is the child looking or pointing at something? Making a sound or facial expression? Moving those little arms and legs?
That's a serve.



LET'S PLAY TOGETHER

Return the serve by supporting and encouraging. You can make a sound or facial expression - like saying, "I see!" or smiling and nodding to let a child know you're noticing the same thing.



NAME IT

When you talk, sing, and answer their sounds during daily chores, your child learns new words and builds great speaking skills.



TAKE TURNS

Every time you return a serve, give the child a chance to respond. Waiting for the child's response is crucial. After they respond, you can respond again. In this way, you can take turns back and forth.



FOLLOW THEIR LEAD TO WHAT IS NEXT

Children signal when they're done or ready to move on to a new activity. They might let go of a toy, pick up a new one, or turn to look at something else. When you share a child's focus, you'll notice when they're ready to end the activity and begin something new.

Real Talk: Do you know that Parenting can be joyful yet overwhelming



Why parenting is important?

Parenting is meaningful... but also demanding

Parents today juggle multiple roles: caregiving, livelihood, household responsibilities.

Daily pressures can lead to stress, fatigue and emotional overload.

Many parents lack consistent support systems.

Social expectations often add pressure rather than support.

Why parental wellbeing is the foundation of parenting?

The reality we must acknowledge..

Parenting is not always joyful;

It can be challenging and overwhelming.

Parents may feel:

- Exhausted but expected to cope.
- Responsible but unsupported.
- Connected to children but emotionally drained.


Becoming a parent isn't simply acquiring a new role.
It is a developmental transition.
CHEF
PROFESSIONAL
STUDENT
TRAVELLER
ROLES WE TAKE ON
PARENT
A role can be added... and taken off.
New experiences
New emotions
New ways of thinking
A changing sense of self
A new you
You don't just take on a role, you grow into it.

What does “Parental Wellbeing” really mean for a family?

Parental wellbeing is not simply the absence of stress or problems, but a dynamic state influenced by multiple interconnected factors that affect a parent's ability to provide nurturing, responsive, and confident care for young children.

Parental wellbeing does not mean that parents are always happy or free from challenges. Parenthood naturally brings joys, responsibilities, worries, and periods of stress. Parental wellbeing means that even during difficult times, parents and caregivers are able to manage their emotions, access support when needed, maintain positive relationships, stay connected with their child, and continue their caregiving role with confidence and resilience.



A simple way to understand

Parental wellbeing is not about always feeling happy

It is about being supported, capable, connected, and able to cope with challenges, even when life is difficult

Parental wellbeing refers to a parent's ability to:

- Manage stress and emotions in daily life
- Feel supported by family, community, and services
- Stay connected and responsive to their child
- Maintain a sense of confidence and capability as a caregiver
- Adapt and cope during difficult situations or changes

Dimensions of Parental Wellbeing





Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing refers to a parent's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions in healthy ways. It includes feeling calm, hopeful, confident, valued, and able to cope with stress and everyday challenges.



Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing relates to the quality of relationships and support systems available to parents. It reflects whether parents feel connected, supported, respected, and included within their families and communities.



Cognitive Wellbeing

Cognitive wellbeing refers to a parent's knowledge, understanding, confidence, and decision-making abilities related to parenting and child development.



Economical Wellbeing

Economic wellbeing relates to the resources and nancial stability available to meet family and caregiving needs.



Functional Wellbeing

Functional wellbeing refers to a parent's ability to manage daily responsibilities and caregiving tasks effectively.



Digital Wellbeing

Digital wellbeing refers to the healthy and balanced use of digital technologies and media by parents and families.

Caring for parents is one of the best ways to support children's healthy growth and development

Parental Wellbeing

Emotional Wellbeing
Physical Wellbeing
Mental Wellbeing
Social Wellbeing
Economical Wellbeing
Digital Wellbeing

Responsive Caregiving

Learn
Listen
Respond
Encourage
Play

Healthy Child Development

Strong Brain
Good Health
Emotional Security
Early Learning

School Readiness

Curious
Confident
Ready to Learn

Thriving Communities

Stronger Families
Supportive Communities
Better Future for all



When caregivers are supported..



They can care with love..



Children grow healthy and happy..



They are ready for school..



And communities thrive together..

Strong, supported caregivers are the roots of every child's future

How Parental Wellbeing affects Children

A parents wellbeing shapes how they care, respond, and connect with their child.

When Parental Wellbeing is Strong

Positive Child Outcomes

Better emotional security and bonding
Improved learning and development
Healthy social behaviour and confidence
Responsive and healthy behaviour in children



When Parental Wellbeing is Challenged

Risks for Children

Reduced patience and responsiveness
Limited interaction and stimulation
Higher chances of: Anxiety and behavioural issues;
Poor nutrition; health and learning outcomes



Do you know what are the Common Signs of Parental Burnout ?

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability
- Frequent worry
- Sleep problems
- Fatigue
- Withdrawing from others
- Difficulty concentrating
- Losing interest in daily activities



Feelings of discouragement, sadness



Headaches, neck tension, gastrointestinal problems



Difficulty making decisions; irritability and aggression



Insularity and withdrawal



Significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping



Feelings of being overwhelmed by events, powerlessness


A New Beginning...
From the birth of a child to the birth of a parent — a life-changing journey.
Different transitions. A shared journey.
1
BABY IS BORN
A new life enters the world.
2
PARENT IS BORN
A mother, a father – a new identity is born.
3
PARENT IS CHANGING
Physical, emotional, social and identity changes.
4
BRAIN IS ADAPTING
Real, measurable changes happen in the brain.
5
PARENT HAS TO LEARN
New skills, new understanding, new ways of responding.
LEARN
ADAPT
GROW
6
ADAPTATION REQUIRES RESOURCES
Parents have a limited body budget of energy, time and emotional resources.
7
CONDITIONS MATTER
Supportive or stressful environments make a big difference.
8
MENTAL HEALTH CAN BE AFFECTED
Some parents experience baby blues, anxiety, depression or burnout.
9
PARENT–CHILD RELATIONSHIP
A responsive and nurturing relationship helps the child thrive.
10
THEREFORE → PARENTAL WELLBEING IS AN ECD ISSUE
When parents are well, children, families and communities thrive.
Healthy beginnings brighter futures.

Why your wellbeing matters for your child ?



When stressed, we may shout, scold or pull away- even when we don't mean to.



Children sense it, they may become fearful, clingy, or act out.



Caring for you is caring for your child- small steps help both of you.

Stress and Parenting

WHEN TO SEEK HELP - RED FLAGS

- Sadness or crying that lasts many days.
- Signs of domestic violence at home.
- Not responding to or neglecting the child.
- Alcohol or substance abuse in the family.
- Frequent anger, shouting, or hitting.
- Talking about hopelessness or giving up.



If you see any of these signs — talk to your ANM or ASHA, or visit your nearest PHC

For urgent support at any hour, call Tele-MANAS on 14416. Free and confidential.

WHERE TO SEEK HELP



Talk to a frontline worker

ASHA, Anganwadi Worker, ANM, or CGHA — they listen without judgment.



Lean on family & community

Share the load between you, and with parents, neighbours, SHG or faith group.

Call the ECD helpline

ECD Call Centre, Shillong — 14410, free guidance and referrals.



Call Tele-MANAS, any time

14416 — free, confidential, 24 hours, in your own language. For parents and for frontline workers.

Talk to ECD Fellow also

Do you know about the different emotional changes after childbirth?

Let's understand the most common emotional change after childbirth: **Baby Blues**

Baby Blues are common mood changes that usually happen in **the first few days after birth** and generally improve within **2 weeks.**

This is very common; Around 8 - 9 out of 10 mothers may experience it.

Do you know the common signs?

- Mood changes or feeling emotional
- Crying or feeling tearful
- Irritability or anxiety
- Feeling tired or overwhelmed

What can help ?

Rest, emotional support, sharing responsibilities and talking to someone trusted can help. Usually, the mother starts feeling better with time and support.

Now, understand when worry becomes too much: **Postpartum Anxiety (PPA)**

Postpartum Anxiety is more than normal worry. The mother may experience constant or excessive worry or fear during pregnancy or after childbirth.

This is less common: Around 3- 4 out of 10 mothers may experience significant anxiety symptoms.

Here, the common signs are-

- Constant worry or fear
- Feeling restless or on edge
- Difficulty relaxing
- Trouble sleeping, even when the baby is sleeping

What can help ?

Listen without judgement, provide support and encourage the mother to talk to an ANM or Medical Officer if the symptoms continue or affect daily life.

After a baby is born, a mother may experience different emotional and mental health changes. Some are common and temporary, while others need professional support.

When feeling low continues for many days:

Postpartum Depression (PPD)

Postpartum Depression is more than usual tiredness or mood changes after childbirth. It can affect how a mother **feels, thinks and manages everyday activities.**

Yes, this is less common: Around **1- 2 out of 10 mothers** may experience postpartum depression.

The common signs are-

- Feeling sad, hopeless or empty most of the time
- Losing interest in things she usually enjoys
- Feeling very tired or unable to cope
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty bonding with or caring for the baby

What can help ?

The mother should not be blamed or left to manage alone. Listen, support and connect her with an ANM or Medical Officer for further assessment and support.

When a mother needs urgent help:

Postpartum Psychosis (PPP)

Postpartum Psychosis is **a rare but serious medical emergency** that can develop suddenly, usually in the first few days or weeks after childbirth.

This is very rare: Around 1- 2 out of 1000 mothers may experience it.

The warning signs-

- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Strong beliefs that do not match reality
- Severe confusion or unusual behaviour
- Very rapid or extreme changes in mood

What should we do?

- This is an emergency.
- Do not leave the mother alone.
- Keep the mother and baby safe.
- Immediately contact the Medical Officer/ANM and arrange urgent medical or psychiatric care.

Who is in the Support Circle around the Child and Family



- Mother
- Father
- Grandparents
- Siblings
- Neighbours and Friends
- Anganwadi Worker
- ASHA
- ANM
- SHG
- Community

Taking care of yourself: Simple ways Parents can protect their own Mental Health *(Tips for Parents)*

Taking Care of Your Own Mental Health



Do something to unwind every day, if possible, separate from your child



Dedicate time during the day for reflection and meditation in a quiet space Exercise as a family (e.g., yoga, hiking)



Get in a routine of eating healthy



Make an effort to get an adequate amount of sleep



Connect with ECD Call Centre/ ASHA-ANM/ Parents group members

Stress Relief Tips for Parents

Simple Daily Practices that fit into life with a young child- From pregnancy onwards

When you take care of yourself; you take better care of your child.

Try one or two these today



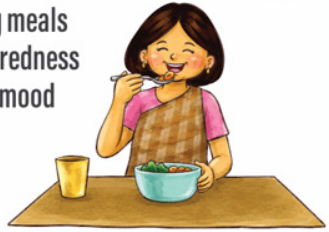
4 DIVIDE THE WORK AT HOME

Cooking, cleaning, water, night feeds — split them between you. No one should carry it alone.



5 EAT ON TIME, DRINK WATER

Skipping meals makes tiredness and low mood worse.



6 STEP OUTSIDE FOR FRESH AIR

A short walk lifts your mood and your energy.



7 GO WHERE YOU FIND PEACE

A place of worship, prayer, or wherever you go to feel steady.



8 PLAY TEN MINUTES WITH YOUR CHILD

Laugh, sing, talk. It does both of you good.





PART II: WHAT CAN WE DO AS FRONTLINE WORKER AND SUPERVISOR ?

Small, consistent actions can strengthen parental wellbeing and help every child thrive.

My Daily Action Plan

Small steps I can take to help families

Small, consistent actions can strengthen parental wellbeing and help every child thrive.

Every interaction with a parent is an opportunity to make a positive difference. During home visits, centre-based activities, community meetings, and supportive supervision:

- **Observe** parents and children with empathy.
- **Listen** without judgement and appreciate parents' strengths.
- **Encourage** self-care, shared caregiving, and father involvement.
- **Coach** families on responsive caregiving, play, and communication.
- **Connect** parents with available family, community, and service support.
- **Refer** parents for additional support whenever concerns or risks are identified.





What are the five ways we can support Parents during every visit?

Identify Early Signs of Stress

Observe & Recognise

- Parents appearing overwhelmed, anxious, or withdrawn
- Harsh or disengaged caregiving behaviours
- Signs of fatigue, frustration, or isolation

Connect to Services & Support Systems

- Link parents to: ECD Call Centre; Health-Nutrition and ECD services; community groups and schemes
- Refer cases needing additional support

Listen with Empathy

Create a safe space

- Give parents time to express without fear or judgment
- Practice active listening (eye contact, nodding, patience)
- Validate feelings: "It's okay to feel this way"

Provide Simple, Practical Support

- Suggest small stress-management practices (rest, sharing work, taking short breaks)
- Guide on positive caregiving practices
- Encourage family support and shared responsibility

Integrate into Daily Work

- During home visits - ask about wellbeing
- During AWC/VHND sessions - discuss parenting stress
- Use group meetings for peer sharing

THREE Step Counselling Technique *(Use in every visit)*



LISTEN

"iathuh ia ngi kaei kaba phi sngew shem jingeh"

(Tell me, what challenges you are facing)



ACKNOWLEDGE

"Kane ka dei ka kam kaba khia bad ban sngew kumne kaba shait long barabor"

(This situation is so difficult; But these feelings are normal)



SUGGEST

(Only 1 or 2 simple actions)

"Haba I khun jong phi I thiah, phi lah ban pynjah ialde 5min eiei"

(You should go and take rest, when baby sleeps)

"Phi dei ban kren/ iathuh ia ki jingeh jong phi ha ki briew kiba phi shanniah, kane kan iarap ia phi."

(Talk to your trusted person. It helps)

What are the five small tips we can share with parents today

(Share only 1–2 per visit)

- Take short rest when child sleeps
- Talk to someone you trust
- Share work with family members
- Spend 10 minutes playing/talking with child
- Eat on time & try to sleep properly



When should we refer?
Warning Signs that need immediate help

If you observe any of these, refer to ANM/PHC:

- Parent always sad or crying (many days)
- Not responding to child / neglecting care
- Frequent anger, shouting, or hitting
- Signs of domestic violence
- Alcohol/substance abuse in family
- Talking about hopelessness



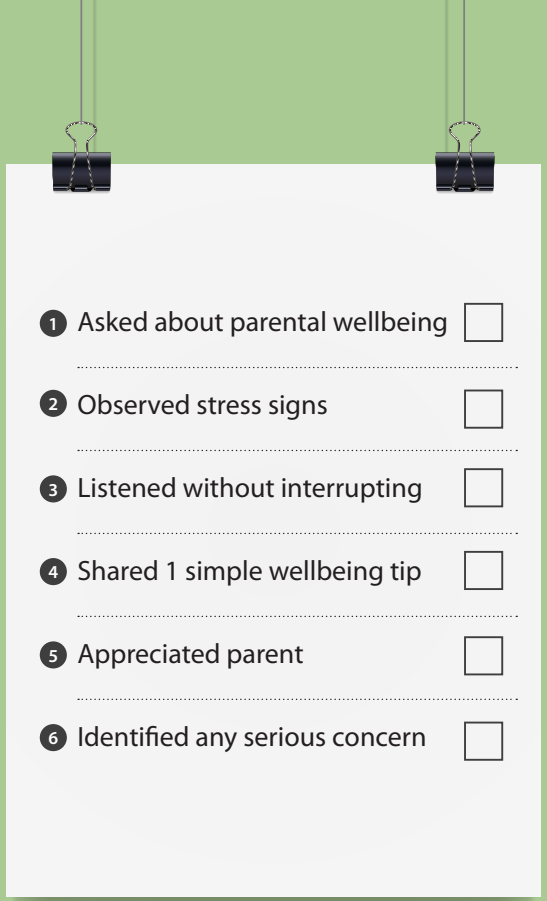
Action:

- Inform ANM / supervisor
- Encourage parent to visit PHC
- Call on Tele-MANAS or ECD Call Centre, Shillong:

14416 or 14410

QUICK CHECKLIST FOR YOU

During each visit, you ensure



YOUR ROLE AS ANGANWADI WORKER/ ASHA/ SUPERVISOR

You are not a doctor or counsellor, but you can:



Small support from you = Big impact on child development

TOP 10 MESSAGES YOU SHOULD REMEMBER

1. Parents need care too.
2. Fathers matter.
3. Listen before advising.
4. Appreciate strengths.
5. Small interactions build brains.
6. Stress is common.
7. Ask; Don't assume.
8. Every family is different.
9. Support before judgment.
10. Caring forparents helps children thrive.



THE PAALAN PROMISE

(PLEDGE)

As a Frontline Worker/Supervisor, I promise that I will:

- Listen with empathy.
- Respect and value every parent.
- Recognise and build on family strengths.
- Encourage fathers and shared caregiving.
- Support parents with kindness and confidence.
- Connect families with the help they need.
- Help every parent thrive, so every child can flourish.



Together, we care for parents to nurture every child's future.

MY NOTES

MY NOTES

MY NOTES

MY NOTES



Paalan 2.0, State Partner | Meghalya Early Childhood Development Mission (MECDM)

Established by Government of Meghalaya as an integrated mission with Health, Education, Social Welfare and Community and Rural Development Departments working in tandem with each other, Meghalaya Early Childhood Development Mission (MECDM) has been set up to tackle low-performing indicators related to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and also to address inter-generational poverty of disadvantaged groups in India by blending the science of early childhood with the concept of women's Self-Help Groups. An all-inclusive program, MECDM has been established to provide right care and support for advancing first 1000 days in child life.

Supporting Partner | Van Leer Foundation (VLF)

Van Leer Foundation (VLF) believes that giving all young children a good start in life is both the right thing to do and the best way to build healthy, prosperous and creative societies.

A private foundation focused on developing and sharing knowledge about what works in early childhood development. Over the last 50 years, VLF have invested more than half a billion dollars and worked in all regions of the world. VLF partnerships have informed public policies in more than 25 countries, led to innovations in service delivery and training that have been widely adopted by governments and non-profit organizations and generated breakthrough ideas that have changed the way stakeholders from parents to policymakers think about the earliest years of a child's life.

Technical Partner | ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, South Asia

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a network of more than 1,750 local & regional governments, supported by a team of global experts, driving sustainable urban development worldwide. Active in 100+ countries, ICLEI impact over 25% of the global urban population. ICLEI South Asia - the South Asian arm of ICLEI, aims to build and serve a regional network of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in regional and global sustainability through local initiatives.