



NSW Department of
Community Services

**Practice guide for
NSW Department of Community Services funded Out-
of-Home Care Services**

**Assessing the needs of
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) children
and families in out-of-home care**

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INTRODUCTION

The people of New South Wales are linguistically, culturally and religiously diverse. At the time of the 2006 Census, 23.8% of the population were born overseas, and 20.1% spoke a language other than English at home. Over 130 religious affiliations were recorded.

This diversity is an asset, which contributes to the linguistic, cultural and religious richness of the State. However, it can pose challenges for direct care workers in accurately assessing and responding to the needs of people from such diverse backgrounds.

The purpose of this practice guide is to provide information, advice and tools to assist workers in DoCS funded OOHC services to accurately assess needs and supports that may be required by CALD children, young people and families.

This document has been adapted from a DoCS practice resource for OOHC Caseworkers on conducting effective assessments with CALD families.

How and when to use the information provided in this document

This document can be used in the following ways:

- General reading by workers and managers to increase their awareness of issues that may need to be explored when conducting assessments with migrant and refugee children and families
- Targeted reading of parts of the document relating to particular issues that workers anticipate may emerge during assessments

- Using the *Checklist* as a *planning* tool to identify key issues that may need to be explored in assessment, and as a *review* mechanism
- Using the *Services and Links* section to identify services for referrals or avenues for obtaining further information and advice
- Using the document as part of learning and development activities.

Document Overview

[Needs and supports for CALD children and families](#) – provides an overview of relevant needs and key assessment areas including a CALD Assessment Checklist.

[Key Practice Advice](#) – provides advice and tips on effective assessments including advice on how to avoid cultural stereotyping and generalisations.

[Services and Links](#) – provides information and links to relevant services for migrant and refugee families including links to search engines for accessing community / cultural profiles.

[Supplement 1: Impact of Settlement Issues](#) – provides an overview of settlement needs and their impacts.

[Supplement 2: Impact of Trauma on Refugee Families](#) – provides an overview of the symptoms and effects of refugee trauma on children, young people and parents/carers, and advice on assessing trauma effects.

[Legislation](#) – provides information on the legislative basis for our work with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

NEEDS AND SUPPORTS: CALD CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

This section provides an overview of the needs of migrant and refugee children and young people and birth parents and families.

The information provided is indicative only and readers should explore and assess the relevance of the needs identified as they apply to each *individual* case. Workers should avoid assuming that people coming from the same cultural background and/or migration or refugee experience will share the same needs.

This section also identifies the supports that may be required by carers (CALD and non-CALD) looking after CALD children/young people. A tool entitled [Tips for carers](#) is provided.

A [CALD Assessment Checklist](#) is provided which can be used as a *planning* tool to identify possible linguistic, cultural, migration, and settlement issues that may need to be explored during assessments, and/or as a *review* tool to check if critical issues have been accurately identified and addressed.

Children and Young People

Being separated from their birth parents and placed in a new care environment can be a difficult transitional process for all children and young people in care. For children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, this experience can be compounded by a range of additional issues.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity refers to people's identification with particular culture(s) and cultural communities covering aspects such as shared beliefs, values, attitudes, behaviours and practices.

Children and young people removed from their birth families and placed in a new care environment can find the development and/or maintenance of their cultural identity a difficult process. The transition from one cultural environment to the next can mean confusion and restricted access to linguistic, cultural and religious knowledge, norms, practices, people and institutions. It often involves the child or young person adjusting to and establishing a relationship with the culture (norms, practices and expectations) of new carers.

Section 9e of the *Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* requires that children and young people temporarily or permanently removed from their family environment be assisted and supported as far as possible to maintain their identity, language, cultural and religious connections.

These connections are important strengthening factors which contribute to the development by children and young people of positive self identity, and increase the range of external supports (people, services and networks) that are available to them.

In assessments with CALD children and young people, workers should consider:

- The existing and potential relationship of the child or young person to the culture, language and religion of their birth parents

- Benefits to the child or young person of establishing and/or maintaining connections to their culture, language and religion
- The views of the child, young person and birth parents
- Consultation with bi-cultural workers from your organisation and/or relevant community representatives (e.g., religious leaders)
- The appropriateness and availability of same culture placements
- The availability of carers (not of the same culture) with the knowledge and skills to support cultural maintenance
- Strategies to support cultural, linguistic, religious maintenance.

See the [Tips for carers](#) document for a list of practical strategies that can be used to support cultural maintenance. The document also provides strategies for workers and carers to assist children and young people deal with prejudice and discrimination in mix-culture placements. Both carers and children in mix-culture placements tend to stand out and the potential will be there for varying levels of discrimination and prejudice towards them.

Assessing placement options for CALD children and young people

Where possible and appropriate, attempts should be made to place CALD children and young people with approved and skilled carers from the same cultural, linguistic, and religious background. The appropriateness of relative or kinship care should be explored, and if this is not practical or in the best interest of the child, placement with carers from the child's cultural community should be explored.

The placement of CALD children and young people with carers of the same cultural, linguistic and/or religious backgrounds can have significant benefits for the children and young people involved. Same culture placements can result in:

- Stronger maintenance of language, and cultural and religious identity
- Stronger maintenance of connection to cultural community and supports
- Same culture carers with a higher level of understanding and empathy for the history, experiences and needs of the child or young person
- Less likelihood of cultural differences and discord within carer families
- Continuity in the day to day life of the child or young person in areas such as language, food, customs and/or religious practices
- Improved placement stability
- Less disruption to the child or young person and/or their identity upon restoration to their birth families.

If placement with a carer of the same cultural, linguistic and religious background is not possible or is not in the best interest of the child, then carers of other cultural backgrounds who have been assessed as culturally competent should be considered. These attributes include an understanding of the influence of culture on carers and children and young people, and an ability to support children and young people with cultural maintenance.

Decisions about what is an optimal placement for any child or young person at a given time will be informed by consideration of a range of factors including:

- Restoration and permanency planning decisions and the child's need for a timely placement decision
- Child strength and needs
- The wishes of the child or young person and their birth families

- The availability of various carer placement options
- Matching of child needs with the skills and attributes of available carers.

The need for and potential benefits of a same culture placement are to be considered alongside these various factors.

Life Story Work

Life story work and Life Story Book is intended to ensure that children or young people have an accurate record of their family background and history. A key part of this background and history is information about the child or young person's cultural and religious heritage. This includes information about their birth parents' culture, ethnicity, religion, language, and life in their country of origin.

The [Tips for CALD Life Story Work](#) can be used by workers and carers to identify pertinent aspect of a child or young person's cultural and religious heritage which need to be explored and included. The document also provides a list of useful sources of information on countries of origins, culture and religion.

Refugee children and young people

It is important to identify if children and young people are living in Australia as refugees as their refugee status will influence of the types of Commonwealth services that they will be eligible to receive (or not receive).

Advice on visa issues and service entitlements can be obtained from refugee casework services such as the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (02 9281 1609) and the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (02 9211 4001). For more contact details see [Services and Links](#).

Workers conducting assessments with children and young people from refugee backgrounds need to be alert to the possibility that they may have been exposed (prior to arrival in Australia) to trauma inducing events and circumstances. These include experiences of war, famine, state persecution, refugee flight, and refugee camp life.

Assessments with these children and young people should explore if they are experiencing the effects of refugee trauma, and whether specialist refugee health services and supports are required. For information and advice on how to assess refugee clients for the effects of refugee trauma see [Supplement 2: Impact of Trauma on Refugee Families](#).

Refugee trauma can have ongoing effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Children/young people can suffer symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) such as: psychological distress when exposed to symbols associated with the event; avoidance of activities, places and people that can trigger recollection of events; diminished interest or participation in activities, restricted emotions and detachment from others, and hyper-arousal symptoms.

In addition to symptoms associated with PTSD, the child or young person may exhibit other symptoms such as regression, depression, and/or psychosomatic problems.

Birth Parents and Families

Migrant and refugee birth parents and families may experience specific challenges and needs (and require supports) that are associated with their experience of refugee flight or migration, and cultural adjustment and resettlement in Australia.

For migrant and refugee birth parents, migrating to and resettling in a new country can be a highly disruptive and often lengthy transitional process. It often involves losing structures that may have provided significant support for child protection and development, and individual and general family functioning.

In assessments involving CALD birth parents, particularly those informing restoration decisions, it is important that workers consider:

- Are interpreters required to enable full communication by the birth parent(s) with relevant parties involved in the case? Do they require written communications to be translated into their first language?
- For advice on assessing language needs and obtaining language services, refer to [Supplement 3: Addressing Language Barriers](#)
- If migration and settlement challenges and needs are impacting on the ability and capacity of migrant and refugee parents to provide a safe and nurturing care environment (see [Supplement 1: Impact of Settlement Issues](#))
- The extent to which the provision of supports and services to address these needs, might strengthen parenting ability and capacity, and the types of supports available (see [Services and Links](#))
- If there are culturally based differences in how the parent(s) understand and conduct their affairs in areas such as:
 - How family relationships are constructed and conducted
 - Gender and child-parent relationships
 - Intergenerational differences in new cultural contexts
 - Parenting approaches, beliefs and practices
 - What parents/carers view as being in the best interest of the child
 - What is viewed as appropriate child discipline
 - Attitudes on what constitutes abuse and neglect
 - Problem solving and help seeking strategies
- If the birth parents require information and assistance in understanding and negotiating these differences.

Carers

Carers will need to be supported by workers to attend to the specific needs of migrant and refugee children and young people. While this applies to all carers, it is particularly important for carers looking after CALD children and young people from a different cultural background to their own.

Workers can assist carers to attend to the specific needs of CALD children and young people by:

- Discussing carer attitudes towards the child's cultural background and people from the cultural community
- Helping carers to identify positive attitudes and pre-conceptions, stereotyping and/or prejudice
- Working with the carer to identify practical strategies that the carer can implement to support cultural maintenance
- Working with the carer to identify practical strategies that the carer can implement to assist the carer and child/young person to deal with discrimination, prejudice and/or racism
- Providing the carer with information about the culture, religion, language, and community of the child in Australia
- Providing the carer with contact details of relevant cultural, religious and linguistic services and networks in the local area
- Providing the carer with information about the specific needs of refugee children and contact details for specialist services and supports that can provide further information and advice.

The [Tips for Carers](#) tool outlines practical ways in which carers can support CALD children.

DoCS is currently integrating three key carer attributes (relating to caring for CALD children) into carer assessment and training programs. These attributes include: an understanding of the influence on culture on themselves and CALD children and young people, an ability to support children and young people in cultural maintenance, and an ability to deal with prejudice and discrimination in mix-culture placements. For more information see [Carer Attributes](#).

KEY PRACTICE ADVICE

Following are general practice tips that will assist workers to conduct effective assessments with migrant and refugee children, young people and families.

Basic information gathering

- Recognise the limits of your understanding about particular cultural groups and be willing to seek information and advice.
- Prior to interviews, conduct basic background information gathering about issues of concern and common cultural beliefs and practices relating to parenting and child protection within the families' cultural community.
- Gather information about the client families' country of origin, population, ethnic demography, religion, and migration and settlement to Australia.
- Seek information and advice from multicultural colleagues.
- For brief profiles about communities settling in Australia, see the following sites:
 - Department of Immigration and Citizenship website <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>
 - Diversity Health Institute Clearinghouse at <http://www.dhi.gov.au/clearinghouse/> (click on 'community profiles')
 - Diversity In Childcare Inc at <http://www.diversity.net.au/resources/profiles/default.aspx>
 - For information on refugee source countries see: <http://www.amnesty.org.au>, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au> and/or <http://www.unhcr.ch>

- Consider seeking information from ethnic community workers, organisations and services – ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- Seek information from multiple sources where possible as advice about cultural values and practices may be subject to interpretation.
- During assessments, utilise the family as an important source of understanding about how culture influences the family and seek to understand the family's explanatory model for behaviours.

Useful engagement strategies

To achieve helpful outcomes with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds it is important to establish rapport and to successfully engage with them. To this end, the following may assist:

- Ensure any communication barriers are addressed by using a professional interpreter
- Show respect by calling clients by their preferred names, pronouncing them correctly
- Adopt a supportive role where possible and provide assistance in the form of concrete/tangible services and as quickly as possible
- Ask clients/families what has not worked for them before and if appropriate, what their preferences are for any actions.
- Frame questions in a non-judgmental way - do not adopt a punitive approach
- Use verbal encouragement, avoid official and officious sounding language
- Be mindful of the power differential and aware that the caseworker's tone and non-verbal behaviour can indicate his/her perspective or feelings, which if negative or judgemental, may be detrimental to engagement
- Understand and identify what the client considers to be their critical cultural values and their beliefs about child development, child caring norms and parenting strategies

Recognising cultural bias

Be aware of and minimise cultural bias in assessments and subsequent intervention planning.

Individual cultural beliefs play a powerful role in how we respond to the attitudes and behaviours of adults in their treatment of children, particularly when those attitudes and behaviours are different from our own.

It is important for workers to recognise the influence of their own cultural beliefs and practices and how it affects the way in which they analyse and respond to the beliefs and practices of culturally diverse families. Avoid viewing cultural difference as deficits within the family's value system.

Recognising diversity within migrant and refugee families

- Recognise that culture is not homogenous and that there is diversity within identified "cultural groups". People identifying with specific cultural backgrounds will not necessarily share the same values, beliefs, practices and arrangements. There are often variations in how members of family units interpret and respond to culture.

- Recognise that culture is not static and that cultural beliefs, values, and practices can and do shift over time, particularly in the context of migration and subsequent interactions with other cultures.
- Recognise that while culture is an important factor, clients are influenced by an array of interacting variables including their individual characteristics and needs, age, gender, educational level, social-economic status, and life cycle stage. Avoid viewing the family's situation only in cultural terms.

SERVICES AND LINKS

KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

NSW Department of Community Services

Multicultural Services Unit – contact for information and advice on DoCS policy, programs and services relating to migrant and refugee families
4-6 Cavill Avenue, Ashfield, NSW, 1800, Phone: 9716 2330, Fax: 9716 2906

Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW

P.O. Box A2618

Sydney South, NSW, 1235

Phone:(02) 8255 6767, Fax:(02) 8255 6868

Website: www.crc.nsw.gov.au

To access CRC **interpreting and translating** services call: 1300 651 500

Commonwealth Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS)

Website: <http://www.immi.gov.au/tis> Ph: 131 450

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

Website: www.immi.gov.au

For brief profiles of communities settling in Australia See:

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>

REFUGEE SERVICES

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTS)

Carramar Office

152-168 The Horsley Dr, Carramar NSW 2163

Phone: (02) 9794 1900, Fax: (02) 9794 1910

Website: www.startts.org

Auburn Office

1st Floor, 44-50 Auburn Rd, Auburn, NSW, 2144

Phone: (02) 9646 6666, Fax: (02) 9646 6610

Website: www.startts.org

NSW Refugee Health Service

Suite 5, Level 2

157-161 George Street, Liverpool, NSW, 2170

Phone: (02) 8778 0770, Fax: (02) 877 0790

Email: refugeehealth@swsahs.nsw.gov.au

Website: <http://www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/areaser/refugeehs/main.asp>

Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Website: www.tmhc.nsw.gov.au

Immigration Advice & Rights Centre

Level 4, 414 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Advice Line: (02) 9281 8355
Admin Line: (02) 9281 1609
Fax: (02) 9281 1638
Email: immigration_nsw@fcl.fl.asn.au
Website: www.iarc.asn.au

Refugee Advice and Casework Service

Level 8, Suite 8C 46-56, Kippax Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
Telephone Advice: (02) 9211 4001 between 10am -12:30pm on Tues & Thurs
General number: (02) 9211 4001
Email: admin@racs.org.au
Website: www.racs.org.au

MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRES

Auburn Migrant Resource Centre

17 Macquarie Road, Auburn NSW 2144
Phone: (02) 9649 6955, Fax: (02) 9649 4688;
Email: reception@amrc.org.au
Web: www.amrc.org.au

Baulkham Hills/Holroyd/Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre

15 Hunter Street, Parramatta NSW 2150
Phone: (02) 9687 9901, Fax: (02) 9687 9990;
Email: enquiries@bhpmrc.org.au
Web: www.bhpmrc.org.au

Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre

Level 2, 125 Main Street, Blacktown NSW 2148
Phone: (02) 9621 6633, Fax (02) 9831 5625;
Email: bmrc@blacktownmrc.org.au
Web: www.blacktownmrc.org.au

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (Cabramatta Community Centre)

Community Centre, Cnr Railway Parade and McBurney Road, Cabramatta NSW 2166
Phone: (02) 9727 0477, Fax: (02) 9728 6080;
Email: info@fmrc.net
Web: www.fmrc.net

Canterbury/Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre

Level 2, 59 Evaline St Campsie NSW 2194
Phone: (02) 9789 3744, Fax: (02) 9718 0236;
Email: cbmrcnsw@cbmrc.org.au Web: www.cbmrc.org.au

Illawarra Multicultural Services

27 Atchison St Wollongong NSW 2500
Phone: (02) 4229 6855, Fax: (02) 4226 3634;
Email: info@ims.org.au
Web: www.ims.org.au

Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre

Level 4, 171 Bigge Street, Liverpool NSW 2170
Phone: (02) 9601 3788; Fax: (02) 9601 1398;

Email: info@lmrc.org.au
Web: www.lmrc.org.au

Macarthur Diversity Services Inc.

Level 2, Centre Court, 101 Queen Street, Campbelltown NSW 2560
Phone: (02) 4627 1188, Fax: (02) 4628 6068;
Email: info@mdsi.org.au
Web: www.mdsi.org.au

Migrant Network Services (Northern Sydney)

Level 3, 20 George Street, Hornsby NSW 2077
Phone: (02) 9987 2333, Fax: (02) 99871619
Email: info@mnsnorth.org
Web: www.mnsnorth.org

Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and the Hunter Region

8 Chaucer Street, Hamilton NSW 2303
Phone: (02) 4969 3399 or 1800 813 205 (freecall), Fax: (02) 4961 4997;
Email: mrcnh@mrcnh.org
Web: www.mrcnh.org

St George Migrant Resource Centre

552 Princes Highway, Rockdale NSW 2216
Phone: (02) 9597 5455, Fax: (02) 9567 3326
Email: sgmrc@sgmrc.org.au
Web: www.sgmrc.org.au

Sydney Multicultural Community Services

3 General Bridges Crescent, Daceyville, NSW 2032
Phone: (02) 9663 3922, Fax: (02) 9662 7627
Email: info@sydneymcs.org.au
Web: www.sydneymcs.org.au

COMMONWEALTH FUNDED SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement Grants Program (SGP)

Commonwealth funded services across NSW provide referral, information and casework services to newly arrived (under 5 years) migrant and refugees with permanent residency. For contact details of settlement services provided across NSW under the SGP see the Department of Immigration and Citizenship site: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/settlement-grants/funded-orgs-current.htm>.

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)

These are Commonwealth funded service consortiums which provide settlement support to newly-arrived humanitarian entrants and refugees. Services are accessed via two IHSS Lead Agencies – Australian College of Languages (ACL) and Anglicare

To contact IHSS services in Sydney and regional areas, contact:

- ACL Sydney: 3 Mary Street, Auburn, NSW, 2144, Ph: 02 9749 3329, Fax: 02 9794 3353

- ACL Newcastle: TPI House, Cner King and Auckland Street, Newcastle, NSW, 2300, Ph: 02 4929 5218, Fax: 02 4929 5064
- ACL Wollongong: 3 Auburn St, Wollongong, NSW, 2500, Ph: 02 4228 0063, Fax: 02 4225 1530

For IHSS services in rural areas, contact: Anglicare, Ph: 02 9728 0200

For information on client eligibility for services under the IHSS see:

http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/find-help/refugee_humanitarian/ihss.htm

ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCILS

Ethnic Communities Council of NSW

221 Cope Street, Waterloo, NSW, 2017

Phone: (02) 9319 0288, Fax: (02) 9319 4229

Email: admin@eccnsw.org.au

Website: www.eccnsw.org.au

See: <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/?page=publications&id=37> for Multicultural Interagency Directory which provides information and contact details of community inter-agencies and network meetings in NSW

Contact the ECC to obtain the **Communities Reference Book** which provides listings and contact details for ethnic community organisations and services in NSW. Copies can also be obtained from the Multicultural Services Unit of DoCS on 9716 2330.

Ethnic Communities' Council of Newcastle & Hunter Region

PO Box 2365, Danger, NSW, 2309

Ph: (02) 4929 5880, Fax: (02) 4929 5064

Email: eccnhr@optusnet.com.au

Website: <http://members.optusnet.com.au/-eccnhr>

Ethnic Communities' Council of Illawarra

P.O. Box 238, Wollongong East, NSW 2520

Ph: (02) 4229 7566, Fax: (02) 4226 3146

Email: admin@iecc.ngo.org.au

Website: www.iecc.org.au

Ethnic Communities' Council of Wagga Wagga

PO Box 222, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2650

Ph: (02) 6921 6666, Fax: (02) 6921 6666

Email: eccwagga@bigpond.net.au

Transcultural Community Council

PO Box 1724, Lightning Ridge, NSW, 2834

Phone: (02) 682 9214, Fax: (02) 6829 0902

COMMUNITY PROFILES

For search engines that enable you to find and access geographical, social, migration, religious, linguistic and cultural information about particular communities see:

Department of Immigration Citizenship at:

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>

Diversity Health Institute Clearinghouse at: <http://www.dhi.gov.au/clearinghouse/>
(click on '*community profiles*')

Diversity In Childcare Inc at:

<http://www.diversity.net.au/resources/profiles/default.aspx>

RECOMMENDED READING

For a list of recommended reading on culturally competent casework practice with migrant and refugee families, refer to the following section of this document.

REFERENCES

- Connolly, M., Crichton-Hill, Y., & Ward, T., (2006), *Culture and Child Protection*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London
- Cohen, E., *Framework for Culturally Competent Decision Making in Child Welfare*, (2003) Child Welfare Journal of Policy, Practice and Program – Perspectives on Cultural Competence
- Department of Family and Community Services (2004), *Parenting Information Project Final Report*
- Fontes, L., (2005), *Working with Diverse Families, Child Abuse and Culture*, Guilford Press, London
- Kolar, V., & Soriano, G., (2000), *Parenting in Australian families: a comparative study of Anglo Australian, Torres Strait Islander and Vietnamese communities*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne
- Mederos, F., & Woldegiorgis, I., (2003), *Beyond cultural competence: What child protection managers need to know and do*, Child Welfare Journal of Policy, Practice and Program – Perspectives on Cultural Competence
- Mcphatter, A.R., & Ganaway, T.L., (2003), *Beyond the rhetoric; Strategies for implementing culturally effective practice with children, families and communities*, Child Welfare Journal of Policy, Practice and Program – Perspectives on Cultural Competence
- Multicultural Mental Health Australia (2002), *Cultural Awareness Tool: understanding cultural diversity in mental health*
- National Association of Social Workers, Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice
- Queensland Health, *Providing Care to Patients from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds: Guidelines to Practice*
- Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), *Research Paper – Article 1: Towards a systematic approach for the treatment rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors in exile*
- STARTTS, *Research Paper – Article 2: Therapy with Refugee Children*
- STARTTS, NSW Refugee Health Service, *Working with Refugees – A Guide For Social Workers*
- Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture Inc (1998), *Rebuilding Shattered Lives*
- Victorian Settlement Planning Committee (2005), *Good Practice Principles Guide for Working with Refugee Young People*
- Vonk, E., (2001) *Cultural Competence for Trans-racial Adoptive Parents*

OUT-OF-HOME CARE CALD ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used as a *planning* tool to identify for possible linguistic, cultural, migration, and settlement issues that may need to be explored during assessments, and/or as a *review* tool to check if critical issues have been accurately identified and addressed.

Language Needs

- Have we checked if child/young person or family members require a professional interpreter?
- Have we checked if child/young person or family members require written correspondence or information in their first language?
- Have we accurately identified the relevant language and dialect?
- Have we arranged for an interpreter and/or written translations?

Cultural, Linguistic, and Religious Maintenance

- Have we accurately identified the relationship of the child or young person to their cultural, religious or linguistic background? (including extent of contact with their cultural community)
- Have the wishes of the child or young person to maintain ties with their cultural, linguistic and/or religious identity been identified? Has this been adequately explored to ensure informed decision making by the young person?
- Have we assessed the extent to which maintenance of the above ties is in the best interest of the child or young people?
- Where cultural, linguistic and/or religious maintenance is a care plan objective, have strategies been identified to support it?
- Have we / will we include detailed information about the child's cultural and religious heritage in their Life Story Work?

Placement Considerations

- Have we explored the appropriateness and availability of a same-culture placement?
- Is relative or kinship care appropriate in this case? Where this is not an option, is placement with an authorised carer from the child's cultural community appropriate?
- Where the child or young person is placed with carers not of the same cultural background, have we assessed the suitability of the carer in terms of their ability to provide care for CALD children?
 - Have we assessed the carer's attitudes (and support needs) to caring for children of CALD backgrounds and towards to importance of cultural maintenance?
 - Have we assessed the carer's knowledge of and willingness to implement a range of practical strategies to support cultural maintenance?
 - Have we assessed the carer's awareness and ability to appropriately respond to potential prejudice and discrimination from others towards CALD children and their carers?
 - Have we worked with the carer to identify practical strategies that can be put in place to assist the child or young person maintain significant ties and/or address issues of cultural safety(as per above)?
- Have we consulted bi-cultural workers from our organisation about the issues of cultural maintenance and best placement options for the child or young person?

- Have we sought general advice and information from relevant ethnic organisations?

Other CALD Child / Young Person Related Needs

- Have we identified needs arising from the child or young person experience of migration and settlement? E.g. language difficulties, social, education and/or cultural dislocation/adjustment, intergenerational issues
- Have we ascertained if there are direct and ongoing effects of refugee and trauma experiences on the health and development of refugee children and young people?
- For refugee children and young people with trauma symptoms, have we explored referrals to appropriate therapeutic services such as STARTTS, to specialist health services such as the NSW Refugee Health Service?

Birth Parent / Family Related Needs

- Have we identified any culturally based differences in the family's understanding and approach to issues such as: gender, age, child-parent relationships, appropriate child discipline, and attitudes on what constitutes abuse and neglect?
- Have we checked cultural meanings ascribed by parents/carers, children and family members with multiple secondary sources?
- Have we sought to identify and build on aspects of traditional parenting practices that will contribute to the care and protection of children? Have we worked to identify skills, abilities, and strengths that they have gained as a result of their unique pre-migration and migration experience?
- Have we identified migration and settlement pressures that are having adverse effects on family and parental functioning?
- For refugee families, have we ascertained if parents are experiencing refugee trauma?

Informal and formal supports

- Have we explored supports that can strengthen connectedness with cultural, linguistic and religious identity for children and young people?
- Have we explored culturally and linguistically appropriate supports that can strengthen parenting capacity, family relationships, and social connectedness?
- Have we assisted the family to meet basic settlement needs through referrals to Migrant Resource Centres, ethno organisations, and Commonwealth funded settlement services?
- For adults with trauma symptoms, have we explored referrals to appropriate therapeutic services such as STARTTS, to health services such as the NSW Refugee Health Service?

Tips for Carers of CALD Children and Young People

This document provides tips for carers looking after children and young people from CALD backgrounds. It provides tips for self-reflection on the influence of the culture of carers and children, ways carers can support CALD children maintain links with their culture, religion and language, and ways carers can help CALD children deal with racism, prejudice and discrimination in mix culture placements.

This information has been adapted from work by Elizabeth Vonk in *Cultural Competence for Trans-racial Adoptive Parents* (2001).

Practical ways to support cultural maintenance

- We establish regular contact with people of other cultural backgrounds in our lives e.g., through friendships, attendance in community groups/activities
- We learn about the child/young person's cultural, linguistic, religious background and cultural community in Australia and support the child/young person to do likewise
- We include information about the child/young person's family history, and cultural and religious heritage in Life Story Work
- We provide opportunities for the child/young person to develop positive friendships with children and adults from their cultural background
- We reside in areas with a culturally diverse population
- We place the child/young person in schools with culturally diverse student / teacher populations
- We purchase books, toys and other entertainment material that reflect the language and/or culture of the child/young person
- We include traditions and celebrations from the child/young person's culture or religion in our lives
- We provide opportunities for the child/young person to learn and/or maintain their birth language
- We seek services and supports in the community that will help the child/young person with cultural, linguistic, religious maintenance
- We involve religious leaders in the life of the child, where appropriate
- We recognise and support the role of birth parents/families in cultural, linguistic and religious maintenance, where this is part of the approved care plan

Helping CALD children respond to racism, prejudice and discrimination

- We educate the child/young person about the realities of racism and discrimination
- We understand the impact that discrimination and racism can have on children/young people from CALD backgrounds
- We help the child/young person deal with racism through open discussion in our home about the issue
- We are aware of the attitudes of friends, family members and other significant people in our lives about the child/young person's cultural, linguistic, religious differences
- We are aware of and teach the child/young person strategies for dealing with racism
- We help the child/young person develop pride in their appearance and culture
- We help the child/young person understand that being discriminated against does not reflect personal shortcomings
- We validate their feelings including hurt and anger about being the subject of discrimination or racism
- We obtain support (as needed) from peers, services and networks in dealing with discrimination and racism.

Cultural Awareness

- We understand how our cultural background influences our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours
- We understand our feelings, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards people from the child/young person's cultural or religious background
- We are aware of stereotypes and preconceptions that we have about people from the child/young person's cultural/religious background and address these biases
- We respect the cultural, linguistic and religious heritage of the child/young person
- We understand the unique needs of the child/young person in relation to his/her cultural, linguistic and/or religious heritage
- We recognise that the child/young person may be experiencing cultural confusion, conflict and/or change, and may require ongoing support
- We understand that the child/young person may be exposed to discrimination, prejudice or racism by virtue of being placed in a non-CALD family

Tips for CALD Life Story Work

Life story work and Life Story Book is intended to ensure that children and young people have an accurate record of their family background and history. A key part of this background and history is information about the child or young person's cultural and religious heritage. This includes information about their birth parents' culture, ethnicity, religion, language, and life in their country of origin. It should also include information about the child's relationship to their cultural and religious heritage.

This tool can be used by workers and carers to identify pertinent aspects of a child or young person's cultural and religious heritage that need to be explored and included in Life Story Work. The document also provides a list of useful sources of information on countries of origins, culture and religion.

What to find out about the birth parents:

- What country/city did the birth parents/family come from?
- What is the country/city like?
- What is the ethnicity of birth parents?
- Where were they born?
- What did they do?
- When did they come to Australia?
- Why did they come to Australia?
- How did they come to Australia?
- What is their religion?
- What are their key religious beliefs/practices?
- What language(s) do they speak?
- What are some holidays and special events associated with their culture and/or religion?
- What are some national foods and dress associated with their culture and/or religion?

What to find out about the child's relationship to and experience of their cultural and religious heritage:

- How did the child participate in the culture and religion of their birth families?
- What was their experience of it? e.g., did they participate in cultural and religious events and how? Do they have any memories of this?
- What language(s) did the child speak when they were living with their birth parents?
- For children and young people who were born overseas:
 - What country was the child born in?
 - When did they come to Australia?
 - What do they remember about life before coming to Australia?
 - What they liked, what they didn't like?
 - What are some unique aspects of their experience – What foods did they like? What games did they play? What were their friends like? Who were the important people in their lives?
 - What was it like for them when you got here?

Where to obtain this type of information:

- Birth parents and/or relatives

- The child or young person
- Authorised carers
- Teachers
- Religious leaders and institutions
- Ethnic and cultural organisations and services
- Bi-cultural workers
- Libraries and the internet
- Search engines on country / culture / community specific information.

For search engines that enable you to find and access geographical, social, migration, religious, linguistic and cultural information about particular communities see:

Department of Immigration Citizenship at:

<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>

Diversity Health Institute Clearinghouse at: <http://www.dhi.gov.au/clearinghouse/>

(click on '*community profiles*')

Diversity In Childcare Inc at:

<http://www.diversity.net.au/resources/profiles/default.aspx>

SUPPLEMENT 1: IMPACT OF SETTLEMENT ISSUES

OVERVIEW

This supplement has been developed to alert workers to possible settlement issues that may have a bearing on child welfare and development, and family and parental functioning.

Settlement refers to the process of orientation, developing social and economic connections, and meeting basic needs in a new country. It is a difficult transitional process that can place significant stress and pressure on individuals and family units.

A key challenge for many migrants and refugee families in the settlement process is addressing basic needs while adapting to different cultural, legal, educational, financial, housing, health, religious, social, and consumer systems.

The key settlement issues that can impact on families include:

- Uncertainty about immigration status
- Access to appropriate and affordable housing
- Health concerns and access to health services
- Employment and income issues
- Education
- Racism and discrimination
- Information and orientation
- Changes in family roles, dynamics and relationships
- Isolation and limited cultural support systems

Immigration Status

Immigration status determines whether a family has secure status (permanent residence) in this country and subsequent rights to a range of entitlements. The range of settlement services provided by government is determined by the visa category through which an individual obtains entry to Australia.

It is important to ascertain the immigration status of newly arrived migrants and refugee families in order to understand the range and limitations of the entitlements, and social and other services that families can draw upon.

In broad terms, people reside in Australia under the following status:

- Australian citizenship – full rights and entitlements
- Permanent residence – applies to skilled migrants, refugees, sponsored migrants and humanitarian entrants not yet granted citizenship. Permanent residents are entitled to stay permanently in Australia, income support, the right to seek employment, public housing, education, training, health and other services
- Temporary protection visas (TPV) or Temporary Humanitarian Visas (THV) – are granted to people who have arrived in Australia in an unauthorised manner, claimed asylum, and are recognised as refugees or humanitarian entrants. They are granted temporary protection for three to five years, after

which they can apply for other visas including permanent residency status. People on TPVs/THVs can work and access Medicare but are not entitled to the full range of social security benefits or most Commonwealth funded settlement services.

- Asylum seekers – residing in the community or in immigration detention, are people applying for protection from Australia as refugees but have not yet been assessed. Asylum seekers have limited rights and access to services.

For detailed information on the rights and entitlements of people with different types of immigration status, see the Department of Immigration and Citizenship site: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/index.htm>

For people without secure residency in Australia (such as asylum seekers and TPV holders), uncertainty about their residency and fear of having to return to their country of origin can have significant psychological and practical impacts on their wellbeing.

Uncertainty about residency can also impact on the likelihood of disclosure as those living on TPVs/THVs and others awaiting citizenship may be reluctant to draw attention to their situation for fear of jeopardising their chances of remaining in Australia.

Health issues

In assessments with newly arrived migrant and refugee families, it is important to check if there are physical and mental health issues that are impacting on child development and wellbeing, and family and parental functioning.

A key settlement issue for newly arrived migrants and refugees is access to health services. Many of these families will not be familiar with the health care system in Australia, what services are available and how to access them. English language barriers and a lack of financial resources can pose additional barriers.

There may be specific health issues impacting on newly arrived refugee families (and migrant families arriving from refugee-like backgrounds), including:

Physical health – Children and adults arriving from refugee camps, war torn and/or famine affected regions are at risk from infectious diseases due to mass population movements, the destruction of health services, water systems and sanitation, malnutrition, and overcrowding in refugee camps.

Refugees and asylum seekers may have lived with serious physical health problems for many years. These include:

- Infectious and parasitic diseases
- Lack of immunisation of children
- Malnutrition
- War-related injuries e.g., beatings, landmines, shrapnel
- Gynaecological infections amongst women
- Poor dental health
- Iron and/or vitamin deficiencies leading to bone deforming rickets
- Delays in physical growth and development amongst children

Mental health – The experiences of adults and children under persecutory regimes and/or refugee flight can have lasting mental health impacts.

- Refugee children/young people may have had traumatic experiences that can impact on their physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. They may show a range of behaviours including behavioural problems, withdrawal from parents and other children, lack of confidence and trust, anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleeping and eating disorders, bed wetting, sleep walking, speech problems and psychosomatic symptoms.
- The effects on parents and other adult family members can include depression, a range of symptoms associated with PTSD, psychosomatic symptoms, and complicated grief.

The above physical and health mental issues can severely undermine parental functioning and the ability of parents/carers to meet the emotional and physical needs of children and young people. For more information on the effects of refugee related trauma on parents and children see [Supplement 2](#)

Housing

Research has shown that many new arrivals experience serious problems in acquiring suitable accommodation for their families and reside in substandard and/or overcrowded housing. The reasons for this include:

- Extended waiting times for public housing
- Limited supply in private rental markets
- Housing design based on small nuclear families
- Lack of sufficient income to meet bond and rental costs
- Difficulties in obtaining references due to recent arrival
- Discrimination and reluctance to lease to migrant families, particularly those with large numbers of children

Employment and Income

On arrival, some migrants and many refugee families are initially dependant on government benefits for income. For specifics regarding entitlements refer to DIMA website <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/index.htm>.

Many refugees dealing with survivor guilt have family members still living in refugee camps or in war zones and feel obligated to send money home. Similar imperatives exist for migrants who have families in poor circumstances overseas. This can add enormous stress to families whose income is extremely low.

Newly arrived refugees and migrants are more likely to be unemployed for the following reasons:

- Unfamiliarity with employment related culture such as interview processes, nature and conditions of work and associated laws, and work culture generally
- Lack of English language ability - families with little or no English are more likely to be unemployed and live below the poverty line
- Incapacity due to refugee trauma related psychological and physical illnesses

- Difficulties obtaining work in their professions or trades because of lack of recognition of their overseas qualifications and lack of local experience, contacts and networks
- Discrimination in seeking employment due to skin colour and/or accent
- Limited documentation to confirm their skills or experience.

Education

Many newly arrived migrant and refugee children and young people have difficulties participating in and adjusting to their new school environment due to factors such as:

- Some refugees may have experienced trauma and/or witnessed torture and other atrocities perpetrated by the state or militia in schools resulting in their mistrust of schools and other institutions of the state
- Lack of English language ability, cultural differences, disorientation, frequent relocations, difficulties understanding teacher instruction, gaps in basic skills, different school culture and processes of learning, different disciplinary practice and different educational levels
- This may result in some immigrant and refugee children and young people entering classes below the levels they achieved in their countries of origin and/or poor school performance
- Many refugee children/young people have already experienced disrupted education pre-migration because of war and civil strife and they often have minimal or no educational opportunities in exile in refugee camps
- Many refugee children and young people find the regular routine of school (especially sitting for long periods of time) initially very difficult because of trauma, PTSD and/or anxiety symptoms and their lack of experience with school life.

Community and Ethno-Specific Supports and Services

In assessments with migrant and refugee families, it is important to ascertain the value and need for access by the family to ethno-specific services and support.

Studies have shown that where there are strong community supports families are likely to fare better in longer-term settlement, and that such support plays an important role in relieving stress and improving the psychological and emotional well-being of parents and children.

Ethno-specific or combined migrant and refugee community organisations and networks provide a range of social, cultural, religious and welfare-related support which can assist families including providing relief from loneliness and isolation.

In line with the positive influence of social support, the maintenance of close ethnic community ties has also been shown to be a protective factor to mental health in children and adolescents, alongside cultural and religious traditions, which assist to restore continuity in the past and present.

Racism and Discrimination

Migrants and refugees can and do experience discrimination and racism in their general interactions in the community and in areas such as access to employment and housing. These experiences can have significant effects on their wellbeing and ability to adjust and settle successfully in Australia.

Information and Orientation

Lack of access to information and knowledge about many areas related to the basic and essential requirements of daily living in Australia pervade and exacerbate difficulties migrants and refugees may have in relation to settling in Australia. For newly arrived refugees and migrants it can cause enormous difficulties and hinder the settlement process.

Many newly arrived families will have limited understanding of their rights and responsibilities as parents/carers under NSW child protection laws and the role of DoCS in child protection matters.

Other key areas in which newly arrived migrants and refugee families may lack information and awareness include:

- Social services that are available and how to access them
- Housing, tenancy, consumer protection, employment, training and education systems, and their rights and responsibilities in relation to these areas
- The legal system in NSW as it applies to areas such as civil, criminal and family law.

In assessments and subsequent case planning, it is important for workers to be alert to the fact that migrant and refugee families may not be familiar with in these key areas. Workers can assist families to increase their understanding in relevant areas (e.g., social service provision) and/or refer families to other service providers for information and orientation.

For example, information programs such as the Families in Cultural Transition program (STARTTS) may be an important referral point for workers wanting to assist their clients understand and navigate the many systems involved in settling in NSW.

Changes in family roles, dynamics and relationships

Families undergoing settlement often experience significant and rapid changes in family roles, relationships and dynamics. The effects of these changes and conflicts are diverse and range from successful renegotiation of new roles and relationships to the undermining of key roles and the development of dysfunctional family dynamics.

In the context of assessment, it is important to consider if these settlement related changes are occurring within families and to ascertain their effects on parental and family functioning.

Examples of changes that can take place during settlement include:

- Changes in the role of fathers or male carers as heads of families and bread winners as a result of unemployment. This change can result in an undermining of traditional male parental authority within the family.
- Changes in gender relationships between parents / carers as a result of changes in employment and income status (e.g. entry of female family members into the paid workforce).
- Prevalence of single female headed families within some refugee communities resulting from the death or disappearance of male family members in war or through persecution.

- Changes in parent-child relationships as a result of faster acculturation and English language acquisition by young people, sometimes resulting in inverted power relationships.
- A key example is where children are called upon to interpret for their parents and act as a link between parents and the outside world. In addition to undermining parental authority, this can place children under significant levels of stress and have adverse impacts on the child.
- The absence of extended family and community support and involvement in child rearing that may have existed in the country of origin. Families that have been accustomed to relying on these extended supports may find it difficult to cope in the settlement period.

Settlement Services

There are a range of services and organisations that can assist migrant and refugee families with settlement issues and needs. These include:

Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) – services provided by MRCs vary. However, the range of services can include: multilingual information, orientation, advice and referral services for newly arrived migrants and refugees, information and advice to workers and professionals on the needs of migrants and refugees, information on service networks and organisations for particular communities, and ethno-specific, gender and age specific support groups.

Many MRCs also provide Commonwealth funded Settlement Grants Program (see over-page) projects and employ multicultural and multilingual staff under these projects.

To locate and obtain the contact details of an MRC nearest to you, see: [Services and Links](#)

Settlement Grants Program (SGP) - The Commonwealth funds organisations (many of which are Migrant Resource Centres and ethno-specific organisations) to provide referral, information and casework services to newly arrived (under 5 years) migrant and refugees with permanent residency. For contact details of settlement services provided across NSW under the SGP see the Department of Immigration and Citizenship site: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/settlement-grants/funded-orgs-current.htm>.

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) - The Commonwealth funded IHSS provides settlement support to newly arrived humanitarian entrants and refugees. IHSS services are generally provided for a six-month period following arrival. Service components provided under the IHSS can include:

- Case coordination
- Information and referrals
- On arrival reception and assistance
- Accommodation services
- Short-term torture and trauma counselling services.

Client eligibility for the service components is determined in part by their visa category. For information on client eligibility for services under the IHSS see: http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/find-help/refugee_humanitarian/ihss.htm

For contact details of IHSS providers see: [Services and Links](#)

SUPPLEMENT 2: THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON REFUGEE FAMILIES

OVERVIEW

Refugees settling in Australia have often experienced trauma at many levels and in many circumstances such as exposure to persecutory regimes, state sanctioned terror, war, famine, and/or conditions in refugee camps. This violence and chaos is commonly accompanied by multiple losses.

These pre-settlement experiences often include:

- Deprivation of human rights
- Exposure to physical, psychological and sexual abuse and violence
- Constant threat of violence
- Loss or separation of family members
- Personal degradation and loss of identity
- Inability to meet basic needs

Parents/carers from refugee backgrounds who have experienced these circumstances may be suffering from trauma which can in turn affect:

- Their psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing
- Their ability to function effectively as parents/carers
- Their ability to provide care and protection for their children
- Contribute to harm causing behaviour.

Refugee related trauma can also have direct effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological health and wellbeing of refugee children and young people.

See [Torture & trauma](#) for a useful framework developed by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc (VFST) for understanding the causes, effects and recovery goals associated with of refugee trauma. The framework is reproduced from the VFST publication *Rebuilding Shattered Lives (1998)*.

This supplement relates to families from refugee backgrounds and will not be applicable to most *migrant* families.

This information draws heavily from the following publications from the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

- Research Paper – Article 1: Towards a systematic approach for the treatment rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors in exile
- Research Paper – Article 2: Therapy with Refugee Children
- Working with Refugees – A Guide For Social Workers (co-produced with NSW Refugee Health Service)

RECOGNISING THE EFFECTS OF REFUGEE EXPERIENCES AND TRAUMA

When conducting assessments with refugee families, be alert to the possibility that family members may be living with the ongoing effects of their refugee experiences and associated trauma.

Parents/carers and other adult family members

- Parents/carers and other adult family members from refugee backgrounds may exhibit physical and psychological effects and symptoms that are similar to those of children.

Parental and family functioning

- The individual and collective effects of refugee experiences and associated trauma can have profound impacts on parental and general family functioning.
- Parents/carers and other key adult family members dealing with psychological and physical trauma symptoms may find it difficult to meet the emotional and physical needs of children and young people.
- Parenting practices may be negatively impacted e.g., over-protectiveness due to constant states of fear, anxiety and alarm on the part of parents/carers.
- The trauma symptoms experienced by parents/carers may contribute to harmful behaviour towards children and young people.
- Family roles may be negatively impacted by broken family structures resulting from death, disappearance and/or separation.
- Family members may be experiencing the effects of survivor guilt and shame about the degradation they have experienced.
- Entrenched distrust arising from experiences of persecution may inhibit honest engagement with workers. This loss of trust may result in families providing inaccurate information and responses to workers. The provision of inaccurate information may also be attributable to the impact of PTSD on the client's ability to recall and sequence events.
- The loss of previously relied upon support and opportunities for collective parenting may affect parental functioning.
- Parents frequently feel disempowered on entry in to the Australian 'system'. Having lost occupations, livelihoods and social contacts, and endured trauma, their identity is often challenged.
- Children often learn English quicker than their parents as they are immersed in it in the school system. This can result in altered dynamics in power/authority that have a negative impact on parent's capacity to provide structure and maintain an organised and functional home. In this context, some parents will attempt to re-establish their authority by becoming authoritarian, using harsh disciplinary strategies, while others withdraw and fail to meet their children's needs for attachment and engagement.
- Refugee parents/carers will often have skills, abilities, and strengths that they have gained as a result of their unique experiences and the challenge in

keeping children safe in extreme situations. It is important to work to identify and build on these.

Ascertaining if trauma effects are present

The following information will assist workers to appropriately explore if refugee families are experiencing the effects of trauma.

Do:

- Gather information about the family's country of origin and the war and refugee experiences of people arriving from the country. Some useful sites to obtain this information include:
 - <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/summary.htm>
 - <http://www.amnesty.org.au>
 - <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>
 - <http://www.unhcr.ch>
- Ensure that the allocation of workers and the selection of interpreters takes into account of cultural and ethno-religious conflicts and that appropriate personnel are utilised.
- Remember that torture and trauma experiences and their effects are sensitive matters to survivors which need to be approached with sensitivity and tact. Many survivors find it difficult and painful to discuss.
- Only explore or continue to explore the issue with families if it is relevant to the assessment. There is risk of re-traumatisation.
- Explore the impact of trauma only after sufficient trust and rapport have been established.
- Explore the family's experiences in their country of origin and whether it involved living in war-like environments and/or under persecutory regimes.
- A useful way to sensitively gauge if the family has experienced persecutory or other refugee like experiences is to ask 'I understand that some people from your country of origin experienced a lot of hardship there and in getting to Australia. Was your family affected in this way?'
- Ascertain if the family has arrived in Australia as refugees and explore how they came to Australia.
- Check if refugee experiences and trauma have had or are having an effect on:
 - The wellbeing of parents/carers and children
 - Child – parent and other key relationships
 - Parenting beliefs and practices
 - The ability of parents/carers to protect and meet the needs of children
- Family members discussing the issue may experience distress, anxiety and panic. If this occurs:

- Acknowledge the response
 - Provide support
 - Emphasise the safety of the environment
 - Discuss the option of obtaining support from organisations equipped to deal with the issues (such as STARTTS)
 - Cease the session if required.
- Acknowledge the achievements of parents/carers in supporting and protecting their children through extreme experiences and explore how they achieved it, and build on these strengths.
 - Actively seek to gradually build and maintain trust with the family by:
 - Being clear and transparent about your role and its boundaries
 - Being clear and transparent about the rights/responsibilities of the family
 - Emphasising confidentiality and the limits of the confidentiality
 - Being consistent and predictable
 - Delivering and following through on undertakings
 - Providing practical and tangible assistance
 - Providing extra time for interactions with the family.
 - Promote active client participation and control in casework processes where possible
 - Explore referrals to clinical services for torture and trauma survivors (e.g., STARTTS), specialist refugee health services (e.g., NSW Refugee Health Service), and to refugee support groups and programs.
 - Establish community supports for the family that will build a sense of connectedness.
 - Explore options for services and supports that will assist family members to build self-identity such as access to employment and training and links to social, cultural and religious networks.

Avoid:

- Interrogatory style questioning during interviews.
- Interview rooms with closed-in spaces and barred windows as these surroundings may trigger flashbacks and adverse reactions.
- Asking refugees to repeat traumatic stories. Make thorough case notes and (with client consent) provide client information as part of referrals.

SUPPLEMENT 3: ADDRESSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

OVERVIEW

CALD families from non-English speaking background countries may experience difficulties communicating in English (verbal and written).

English language difficulties may be of particular concern for recently arrived families. However, as full language acquisition can take a number of years, even families that have been in Australia for significant periods of time may still have difficulty communicating in English.

English language comprehension operates at different levels. This means that family members who can comprehend and speak English at a social level may have difficulties communicating in English at emotive and/or technical levels that are typically involved in assessments and other interactions with workers.

Being aware of language barriers will enable workers to determine:

- When professional interpreters are needed to aide communication
- When written information need to be translated and provided in the client's first language
- The relevance of language barriers on the presenting issue.

Determining if an interpreter is required

- Check information from referral forms, client files and/or other assessment reports on the family's language background.
- For family members who have little or no English comprehension, you will be able to readily establish they require an interpreter.
- For others with varying levels of English comprehension, you will be required to make a judgement about whether their English level will be sufficient for them to effectively communicate with you.
- To be sure, if the family member is from a non-English speaking background, ask if they require a professional interpreter.
- Also be aware that for people whose first language is not English, their ability to communicate in English may diminish in stressful situations.
- Two useful strategies to gauge the level of English comprehension are:
 - Asking the person open ended questions which begin with "which", "what" or "how", and evaluating their responses to see if they have understood the question and can respond effectively in English
 - Asking the person to outline their understanding of something you have explained to them.
- Some family members may refuse the services of an interpreter even though they may in fact need it to communicate effectively. This may be due to

embarrassment, discomfort about having a third party present, and/or fear of community disclosure.

- In the above scenario:
 - Explain to the family member that you want them to be able to fully take part in the interview and that you do not want language barriers to hinder their capacity to do so.
 - Explain that an interpreter would be present to assist both you and the family member.
 - Explain that interpreters are bound by confidentiality rules.
 - Explain that you can endeavour to obtain an interpreter who is of the appropriate gender and/or ethno-religious background (if this is a concern for the client).

Determining if translated information is required

Written communications addressed to family members who cannot read in English need to be translated by a professional accredited translator into the person's first language. To ascertain if translated information is required:

- Check information referral forms, client files and/or other assessment reports on the client's language(s) background.
- As a general rule, people who have difficulty communicating verbally in English will require written information to be provided in their first language.
- Respectfully ask the person if they require information and correspondence to be provided in their first language.
- Arrange for the translation to be undertaken.

Ascertaining the impact of language barriers

When conducting assessment with families with English language difficulties, check if language barriers are affecting parental and family functioning. Explore:

- The effect of language barriers on parents/carers' ability to access basic services on behalf of themselves and their children
- The ability of parents/carers to access and understand information relating to parental responsibility and child protection
- The ability of parents/carers and other family members to effectively take part in parenting and other family support programs
- When thinking about referrals to services to meet the family's needs, explore the availability of linguistically accessible services including mainstream services with bilingual staff and ethno-specific services and support groups.

Language services

Interpreters and translators

It is important to use accredited interpreters and translators as it promotes:

- Effective communication between family members and the caseworker
- Full participation by family members in child protection processes
- Accurate assessment
- Appropriate case intervention and management
- Full understanding by parties of their rights and responsibilities

Children or relatives should not be used to interpret or translate as this can:

- Create role related stress and/or exposure to sensitive information
- Alter family power dynamics and undermine parental authority
- Create conflict of interest for family stakeholders
- Result in inaccurate communications due to insufficient skills
- Result in negative legal ramifications due to the use of unqualified individuals.

Interpreting Scheme for DoCS Funded Services

Agencies funded by DoCS are eligible for fee-free interpreting services from the Commonwealth Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS). DoCS pays TIS directly for services used by NGOs. Agencies that want to access the scheme need to complete and return an Exemption From Charges for Interpreting Services [application form](#)

For more information, see the DoCS Fact Sheet [Interpreting scheme for DoCS funded services](#)

Key Carer Attributes for Caring for CALD Children and Young People

The following attributes are adapted from the work of Elizabeth Vonk in the United States on defining the attitudes, knowledge and skills required by non-CALD adoptive parents looking after CALD children/young people (*Cultural Competence for Trans-racial Adoptive Parents*, 2001). The expectation is that improvements in carers' abilities in these key areas will contribute towards better outcomes for CALD children/young people in their care.

Cultural Awareness – This refers to the ability of carers to examine and understand the role that race, ethnicity, and culture plays in shaping their attitudes, beliefs and practices. This includes an understanding of their attitudes, beliefs and interactions with members of culturally diverse communities – particularly in relation to the cultural background of the child/young person.

A second aspect of this competency is the ability of the carer to examine and understand the role that race, language, ethnicity, cultural and religion have in shaping the identity, lives and experiences of CALD children/young people in their care.

Responding Positively to Prejudice and Discrimination – This refers to the ability of carers to understand and respond to experiences of discrimination, prejudice and/or racism that may confront them and/or children/young people in their care. It involves being able to understand the impact of prejudice/racism on the child/young person and to assist themselves and the child/young person develop positive strategies for coping with this issue.

This issue can be challenging for non-CALD carers who have had limited personal experience of being the target of discrimination, prejudice or racism. It is important child/young people's experiences in this regard are not minimised or negated.

Multicultural Strategies – Refers to the ability of carers to identify and implement appropriate strategies to create avenues for CALD children/young people to maintain or further develop cultural, linguistic or religious ties. It also refers to the carers' knowledge of CALD related services, supports and networks relevant to the needs of the child/young person.

Causes of the Trauma Reaction, its Core Components and Recovery Goals

Acts perpetrated by the persecutory regime	Social and psychological experiences which lead to the trauma reaction	Core components of trauma reaction	Recovery goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence, killings, assaults, disappearances • Lack of shelter, food and health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic fear and alarm • Inescapability • Unpredictability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Feelings of helplessness • Perceived loss of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore safety • Enhance control • Reduce disabling effects of fear and anxiety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death, separation • Isolation, dislocation • Prohibition of traditional practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptions of connections to families, friends, community, religious and cultural systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships changed • Capacity for intimacy altered • Grief and depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore attachments and connections to others who can offer emotional support and care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deprivation of human rights • Killing on mass scale • Exposure to boundless human brutality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of central values of human existences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of trust • Meaning and identity destroyed • View of future altered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore meaning and purpose to life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasion of personal boundaries • No right to privacy • Impossible choices • Insults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humiliation and degradation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilt • Shame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore dignity and value which includes reducing excessive shame and guilt

Source: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc (1998) *Rebuilding Shattered Lives*, Melbourne