



# Working with Culturally and Linguistically and Faith Diverse Children and Young People

**This resource is part of a series of tip sheets designed to support professionals in working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds. These tip sheets aim to assist in building the capacity of workforces to apply an intersectional lens when working with children and young people from diverse backgrounds, and in the assessment and management of family violence and child wellbeing issues.**

**Please ensure you have read *Diversity in Practice Tip Sheet 1: Intersectionality (A Core Concept)* before proceeding with this one.**

**This material has been developed in consultation with young people with lived experience from the Centre for Multicultural Youth.**

Children and young people who come from Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and faith diverse backgrounds may face difficulties or barrier that others do not, and this may impact on the way services respond, and access is granted when working with and to support children and young people.<sup>1</sup> It is important that professionals know how to safely and effectively engage with children about their cultural identity and recognise how their identity shapes their lives, and access to support systems, as this may be different from their presenting caregiver.

Organisations have obligations to protect a child or young person's connection to culture and community as a means of fostering a strong sense of personal identity and belonging.<sup>2</sup> Supporting connection to culture and community may assist in promoting better outcomes for children and young people. Professionals should make considerations around effective engagement and support with children and young people from CALD communities and ensure that they are able to provide appropriate and safe supports and interventions.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Orygen & Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) 2020; Belhadj Kouider, et al. 2015.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

# Accessing Supports and Services

Children and young people from CALD backgrounds and communities experiencing family violence or child wellbeing issues often face barriers when trying to access services and supports. CALD children and young people may have faced challenges such as understanding a new cultural context, learning a new language, changing family dynamics, racism, discrimination, and struggling with personal and cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> These challenges can culminate in children and young people not being able to access the support they need.

For example:<sup>6</sup>

- Language
- Discrimination
- Not being able to physically access support services due to transport issues (lack of public transport and or due to not having a driver's licence or car)
- Lack of support from family and/or community due to cultural shame and stigma (i.e., stigma that reaching out for help is perceived as a weakness).
- Lack of awareness of what family violence is, including a cultural context.
- Lack of awareness of services or supports available to them including child-specific services, how to find out about them, and/or how to access them.
- Lack of independent access to communication devices to contact services.
- Fear around authority and a lack of understanding of policies and processes that can offer protection.
- Negative experiences with services and professionals.

Principle 8 of MARAM states that services and response to diverse communities people should be accessible, culturally responsive, and safe, service user centred and non-discriminatory.

Understanding how children and young people from CALD backgrounds and communities view services, and how this view was formed is important when working alongside them. Understanding a child or young person's perspective (an intersectional analysis) allows the professional to tailor their approach to provide culturally safe and effective support and access appropriate services for them.

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4. 1800Respect 2022a.

5. Orygen & Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) 2020; Belhadj Kouider, et al. 2015.

6. 1800Respect 2022a.

# Building a Culturally Safe Space

Professionals should provide appropriate and culturally safe space that recognises the individual needs of children and young people from CALD backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> To provide appropriate and culturally safe supports, it is crucial that professionals develop cultural understanding and consider the following:<sup>8</sup>

## Cultural Understanding:

- Cultural understanding is a way for professionals to understand how different cultural backgrounds can influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.<sup>9</sup>
- The MARAM Foundation Knowledge Guide outlines the importance of reflective practice and promotes an awareness of unconscious bias when working with clients.
- Cultural awareness and understanding means being aware of biases that a professional may hold when working with CALD children and young people. As such, professionals should be aware of their own biases and assumptions around race and culture, and the impacts that these assumptions could have on the children and young people who they are working with.
- It is recommended that professionals use a human rights-based approach when assessing the safety and managing the needs assessment<sup>10</sup>
- Cultural understanding can assist in bringing holistic and person-centred lens to service responses. This approach recognises that not everyone from a CALD community is going to have the same identity of experiences. It is recommended that professionals refer to *Pillar 1: A shared understanding of family violence*, of the MARAM Framework which lays a strong foundation in the response to family violence by applying an intersectional approach.
- Cultural understanding and intersectional analysis can assist professionals to explore how a child or young person's identity and experiences may impact them, and guide how a professional should engage with and support them more effectively.

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7. 1800 Respect 2022b.

8. 1800Respect 2022a.

9. FCAV 2020.

10. Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership N.D.

## Avoiding Assumptions:

- Professionals should avoid making assumptions about children and young people's cultural identity, their connection to family and/or community, and cultural experiences.<sup>11</sup>
- Professionals should consider and learn about a family's cultural beliefs and practices to understand the family's developmental expectations.<sup>12</sup>
- Ask the child or young person about their experience of ethnicity, language, and/or family to ensure that accurate information is recorded and prevent assumptions being made. Also consider written communication, including options on forms to allow clients whose names don't follow the standard first name/surname format to be altered to suit their needs.
- Professionals should ask questions about the child or young person's family allows the professional to understand the extent to which the client wants their family to be involved.
- It is important for professionals to recognise and understand that 'community' is a broad term that can account for many identities and intersections, and to ensure that assumptions don't get in the way of meeting the needs of the community.

## Considering Language:

- Professionals should not assume that English is the preferred way to communicate or children and young people.
- Professionals should check that understanding is clear by asking questions.
- Consider and recognise that an interpreter might come from the same community as the client you are working with. Make sure the child is comfortable with the service and if not suggest other options
- Make sure different formats are available for accessing information – translations, interpreting and audio-visual formats.



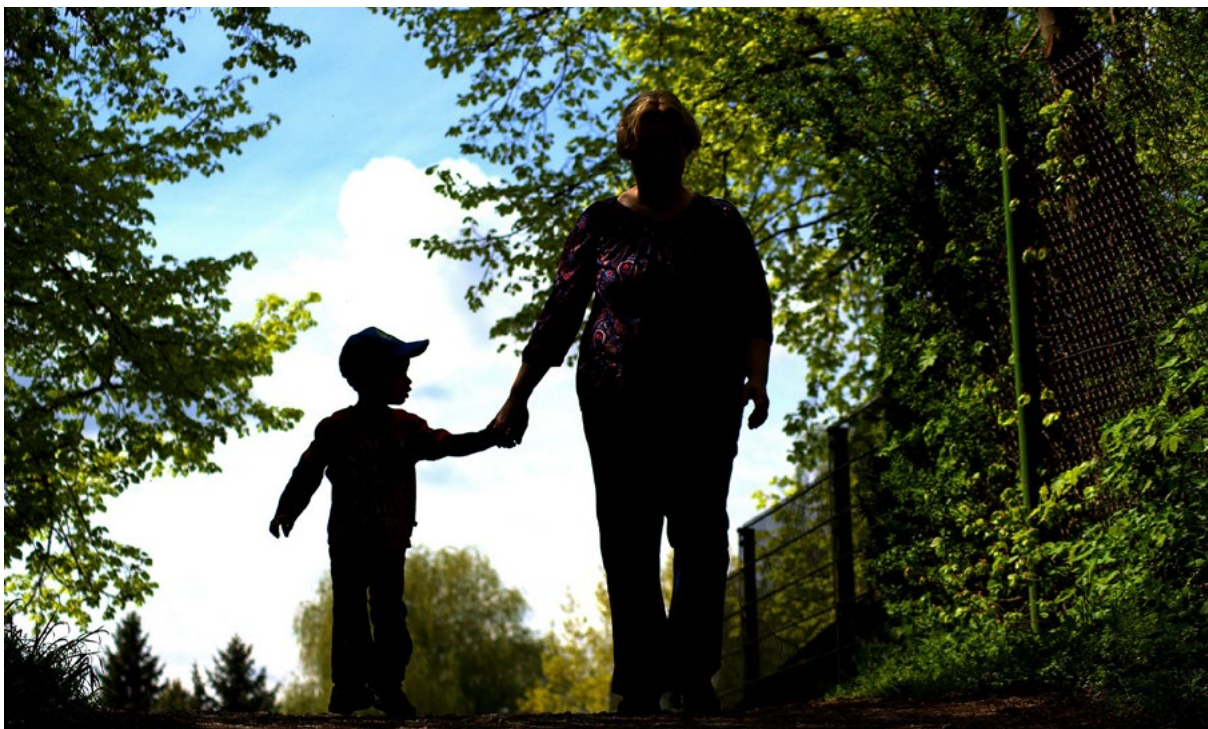
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11. Australian Institute of Family Studies 2015.

12. Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership N.D.

## Trauma-Informed Practice:

- Trauma is complex and your approach to engaging with children and young people who have experienced trauma should vary accordingly to accommodate their individual needs and trauma history.
- It is important to use a trauma informed approach that is age and developmental stage appropriate and culturally safe.
- Professionals and organisations should consider who would work best with a young person based on their individual presenting needs, and historical experiences of violence and trauma. For example, young people shared that if a young person had traumatic experiences with an older white person, assigning an older professional to work with them might be uncomfortable and/or triggering.
- It is important that organisations and professionals consider how different communities interact with one another and how this might be triggering for a young person interacting with different case workers. Professionals should consider histories of conflict when assigning case workers where there may be conflict between certain communities.
- Consideration should also be given to a child or young person's gender identity and opportunities should be given to them to be able to safely express preferences around which professionals they would like to work with.
- Children and young people should also be given the opportunity to provide their views regarding the location of where they meet with workers, as well as identifying spaces and planning that will make them feel safe, comfortable and involved.
- Trigger warnings are an important tool to let the child or young person know what will be discussed before speaking about a topic. Professionals should pause to check in with children and young people if they feel okay to proceed with the conversation and explore options of what can be done if they don't.





## Children and Young People as Clients in Their Own Right

- Children and young people require a unique response and need to be recognised as clients in their own right. This is Principle 8 of the MARAM framework emphasising its importance.
- Professionals working with children and young people from CALD backgrounds should recognise that they may have different cultural identities and/or experiences from their parents and are clients in their own right.<sup>13</sup>
- Professionals should recognise that children and young people may express their culture differently to their family and/or community.<sup>14</sup> It is important for the professional to be responsive to children and young people's unique individual needs. Young people shared that when working with someone new, preconceived notions about their culture or identity should be removed from the situation.
- Young people shared the importance of letting the child or young person lead the conversation as opposed to directing them to the way professionals want the conversation to go. If they're not aware of the options, let them know what options are available to them.
- Encourage children and young people to make their voices heard – this could look like saying “thank you for giving their opinion”. This could help reinforce that people are actively listening to what they're saying and makes it easier to engage and create a level of trust. In these instances, professionals should use Structured Professional Judgement, and consider the importance of listening to the expertise of victim survivor has on their safety.



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13. Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership N.D.

14. Australian Institute of Family Studies 2015.

# Practice Considerations

Consider the cultural context of the child or young person and their family and how this might impact on the presentation, support needs or experience of family violence and trauma and use an intersectional lens to inform assessment and engagement.

- Professionals should recognise that while the wellbeing and safety of the child and/or young person can often be linked to that of the adult victim-survivor, the child and/or young person may also have differing safety and wellbeing needs.
- Creating a safe space for people to express themselves as they are, starts with getting simple things right (pronunciation of names, preferred pronouns, etc.). Young people from the Centre for Multicultural Youth shared that it is about how the organisation operates and its actions that assists in creating better engagement with children and young people.
- Professionals should be clear about their role and the scope of what they are there to do. This could include providing information about what the young person is able to ask from them and use the space for. It is important to be clear and set boundaries for each interaction with a child or young person. This could help children and young people understand the context of the space without fear of saying the wrong thing.
- Professionals should consider if a child or young person has experienced racism and how this could affect their support needs. Additionally, if the child or family might have had contact with the statutory system in a way that was a negative experience for them. Considering these experiences can help shape the service that is provided.
- Be aware of the unique challenges that children and young people from CALD backgrounds may have faced.<sup>15</sup> This includes recognising that everyone has a preconceived, culturally informed bias and acknowledging this bias before trying to build understanding with others.
- Organisations and professionals should reflect on how they are training staff, what their values are. Young people from the Centre for Multicultural Youth shared that only after organisation have reflected upon how they work, can they start to reach out to collaborate and make meaningful connections with different communities. For example, this could include undertaking culturally reflective practice and supervision within organisations to understand the impact of culture when working with victim survivors.
- Remember children, young people and their families from CALD and faith diverse communities can experience systemic barriers to seeking support, may have experienced racism, discrimination and other unsafe service responses creating a lack trust in formal services and systems.

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15. Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership N.D.

# Secondary Consultations & Referrals

Professionals should contact specialist service providers to gain advice and seek secondary consultation and work collaboratively where appropriate. The following are some of the services can assist in this:

- [AMES](#) provides humanitarian settlement, education, training and employment services to refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants in Australia.
- [Centre for Multicultural Youth](#) provides specialist knowledge and support to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- [Settlement Services International \(SSI\)](#) offer a range of services for parents, children and young people who have experienced vulnerability, including refugees, people seeking asylum and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](#) provides support to people seeking asylum.
- [Foundation House](#) is a specialist refugee trauma agency delivering services to survivors of torture and other traumatic events. The organisation also provides professional learning, resources for families, secondary consultations and communities of practice.
- [VICSEG](#) provide a range of services and supports for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants including childcare, playgroups, family mentoring and parenting programs.
- [Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health](#) work closely with professionals from health, community and local government services to improve their responsiveness to people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.
- Familiarise yourself with the range of local, state, and national support services for CALD and faith-diverse communities available.





# Further Information

## TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

- **Child and Young Person:** For the purpose of this tip sheet, the term “child and young person” encompasses age groups 0-18 including newborn, infant, toddler, children, and young people. Newborn refers to time of birth through to 3 months. Infants are typically from 3 months to 18 months, toddlers from 18 months to 3 years of age, child 3 to 11 years, and young people from 12 to 18. The term child may be used to describe all ages and stages.<sup>16</sup>
- **Culturally and Linguistically and Diverse (CALD):** “A broad and inclusive descriptor for communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religion characteristics.”<sup>17</sup>

## RESOURCES

- [MARAM Practice Guides and Resources \(VicGov\)](#)
- [Overcoming Barriers \(CALD Resource\) \(NIFVS\)](#)
- [Inclusive Organisations \(CMY\)](#)
- [Resources to help you better work \(InTouch\)](#)
- [Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds \(Commission for Children and Young People\)](#)
- [Interpreting and Translation Services & Resources \(Victorian Department of Education\)](#)
- [Culture Matters Video \(Jewish Care\)](#)

## REFERENCES

1800Respect 2022a, *Supporting people from CALD, migrant and refugee experiences of violence*, <https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/cald>

1800Respect 2022b, *Talking about the system with people from CALD, migrant and refugee backgrounds*, [https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/cald/explaining\\_the\\_system](https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/cald/explaining_the_system)

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Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) N.D., *ECCV Glossary of Terms*, viewed 24 April 2023, <https://eccv.org.au/glossary-of-terms/>

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Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership N.D., *Overcoming Barriers (CALD resource)*, <https://www.nifvs.org.au/resources/nifvs-family-violence-resources/overcoming-barriers-cald/>

Orygen & Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) 2020, *Responding Together: Multicultural young people and their mental health*, <https://www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Multicultural-young-people-and-their-mental-health-policy-report.pdf>

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16. State of Victoria 2021b.

17. ECCV N.D.

