

Safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Victoria is a culturally diverse community made up of many different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, language and religious groups.

In Victoria, mandatory child safe standards have been introduced to help protect children from abuse in organisations. In complying with the standards, organisations must promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Like other aspects of child safety, creating and maintaining an organisation in which the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is kept safe requires effort.

Steps to ensure cultural safety include sharing knowledge, raising awareness, developing understanding that leads to cultural sensitivity and finally, cultural competence. This ongoing and dynamic process leads to sustainable philosophies and values within an organisation that promotes cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and benefits all children, families, staff and managers.

Cultural competency is characterised by a set of behaviours, attitudes and skills, policies and procedures that help staff to work effectively and efficiently in a cross-cultural context at all levels within the organisation.

Multicultural Mental Health Australia

Organisations can demonstrate that they value diversity by accepting, respecting and welcoming the differences between and within cultures. Such an inclusive environment acknowledges differences between cultures, but does not value one over another.

You can promote the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by:

- ensuring your organisation clearly demonstrates a zero tolerance of discrimination
- ensuring your policy and procedures specifically address cultural inclusion, sensitivity and competency
- providing training and development on cultural sensitivity and competency
- being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds
- asking children and families about their culture and cultural support needs
- recognising occasions which are important to different cultures and dietary requirements
- ensuring the physical environment reflects a positive and welcoming approach to diverse cultures, through decoration and artwork
- employing staff that are representative of the diversity of your local community



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- employing staff who display cultural sensitivity and cultural competency
- actively seeking out and talking to families about how they would like to be involved
- asking families about their preferred format for the provision of information, including translation or interpreting into community languages and audio-visual formats
- ensuring complaint and grievance processes are easily understood and provided in culturally relevant and sensitive ways.

Discrimination

Is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic, such as gender, race, culture or religion, age or sexual orientation.

In Victoria, the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* protects people from discrimination and harassment in areas of public life such as workplaces, schools, clubs, shops or places that provide services.

Racial, cultural and religious abuse

Is conduct that demonstrates contempt, ridicule, hatred or negativity towards a child because of their race, culture or religion. It may be overt, such as direct racial vilification or discrimination, or covert, such as demonstrating a lack of cultural respect (attitude and values) and awareness (knowledge and understanding) or failing to provide positive images about another culture.

Useful resources

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission <<http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/>>

Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/about-us/office-of-multicultural-affairs-and-citizenship>>

Centre for Multicultural Youth <<http://www.cmy.net.au/>>

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia <<http://fecca.org.au/>>

The Australian Institute of Family Studies <<https://aifs.gov.au/>>

Early Childhood Australia, *Understanding cultural competence*, available at: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EYLFPLP_E-Newsletter_No7.pdf>

Multicultural Mental Health Australia, *National Cultural Competency Tool for mental health services*, available at <<http://servicedelivery.dss.gov.au/2012/03/05/national-cultural-competency-tool-ncct-for-mental-health-services/>>

