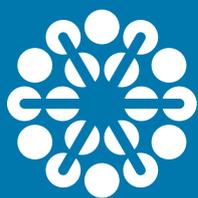


RESEARCH TO ACTION

>> Bridging the
gap between
what we know
and what we do



Centre for
Applied Disability
Research

An Initiative of National Disability Services

NDS National
Disability
Services

Culturally Proficient Service Delivery

Good Practice for Frontline Staff



THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED DISABILITY RESEARCH

The Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) is an initiative of National Disability Services (NDS). CADR aims to improve the wellbeing of people living with disability by gathering insights, building understanding, and sharing knowledge. CADR's applied research agenda is helping to build the evidence base and support stakeholders to better understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances and at what cost.

RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDES

Bridging the gap between what we know and what we do. Our objective is to build a comprehensive online collection of disability research and translational resources for the Australian context. Our Research to Action Guides are based on the best available local and international evidence and put together by subject matter experts to support research end users to engage with the evidence. We gather and analyse evidence about what works, and package that information into efficient and practical resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Guide was authored by Maria Katrivesis, Consultant and Trainer and Hamish Robertson, Consultant and Researcher.

This resource was developed with support of Australian governments through the Research and Data Working Group. NDS Gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Government in establishing the NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Katrivesis, M. & Robertson, H. (2018) 'Culturally Proficient Service Delivery: Good Practice for Frontline Staff', Research to Action Guide. NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH TO ACTION GUIDE:

This Good Practice Guide is for those who work alongside people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds with disability. It has been written to help frontline staff to develop culturally responsive, respectful and reflective practices in their work.

This Guide forms part of a suite of resources produced for CADR on this topic. It is based on the findings from the Research to Action Culturally Proficient Service Delivery Rapid Review. You may also wish to read the accompanying cultural proficiency guide for practice leaders which includes information about good practice resources to support culturally proficient service delivery. The entire Research to Action Guide suite is available at the CADR Clearing House, www.cadr.org.au.

FEEDBACK

Do you have feedback, or a suggestion for a Research to Action Guide? We welcome your thoughts and ideas. Please [contact info@cadr.org.au](mailto:info@cadr.org.au).

CULTURALLY PROFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY: GOOD PRACTICE FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

WHAT IS CULTURAL PROFICIENCY?

Cultural proficiency is about working respectfully with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

It describes different things that organisations and their staff do to make sure the culture and language(s) of the people they support are included and respected in their supports. This includes working with people’s families, carers and broader communities.

For frontline workers we call this ‘**culturally responsive practice**’. This is similar to ‘**person centred practice**’ but with a focus on people’s culture, background, faith and language.

The table below shows some parallels between ‘person centred’ and ‘culturally responsive’ practices.

| Person-centred Practice | Culturally Responsive Practice |
|--|--|
| Understand yourself | Work to understand yourself in the context of your culture, experiences and beliefs |
| Understand your personal lens | Understand that different, culturally diverse lenses exist and yours is a part of any encounter |
| Understand your personal values, beliefs and their impact | Understand your personal values and beliefs in the context of culture and cultural encounters Understand impact of culture on the ‘making of’ personal values and beliefs for yourself and others |
| Explore the impact of conscious and unconscious prejudice | Accept the existence of conscious and unconscious prejudice and be willing to continually challenge yourself and others |



YOUR CULTURAL LENS

Australia is a multicultural country. This means we all have lots of interactions with different cultures every day.

We experience these interactions through our own cultural lens. This is the way we see and understand things from different cultures. Our cultural lens is influenced by who we are, where we are from, where we have lived, and our own culture.

BE RESPONSIVE

Culturally responsive practice focuses on being 'responsive'. This means:

- being curious and considering people's needs from their cultural perspective
- critically reflecting on our own cultural assumptions, values and beliefs
- considering how these impact on how we work with people from CALD backgrounds with disability
- being open to working in different ways and developing new skills
- respecting our own cultural frameworks as well as those of the people we work with

KEY SKILLS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE



1 CRITICALLY REFLECT ON YOUR WORK PRACTICE

Reflecting on our experiences to improve practice is a key skill for building culturally responsive person centred practice. It means looking at how and why we think and behave in any given situation and being aware of our actions and their consequences.

Reflective practice encourages us to develop self-awareness and think about how our cultural lens – our frameworks, values and beliefs – impact on our interactions with others.

It can help us be more aware of our work performance, which can lead to opportunities for professional growth and development. It also forces us to question what we know and how we have come to know it.

Use different activities to support a reflective practice approach. These include:

- self-assessment
- peer-assessment
- problem-based learning
- personal development planning
- group work

See useful resources for more information on reflective practice.

2 DEVELOP CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS

Be aware of the impact that your own culture has on your work practice. Do you have unconscious bias about certain cultures (this is where you have stereotypical views about people and traditions from different cultures, even if you don't realise it)

- Think about how your own culture, beliefs and values impact on how you work with people from CALD backgrounds.
- How do unconscious biases and stereotypes inform your work practices? What strategies can you put in place to recognise and minimise their impact?
- Question and test your assumptions about the people you support from CALD backgrounds.

3 PRACTICE EMPATHY

Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another person.

Some people have more natural empathy than others. However empathy can be strengthened by practising and applying the following four qualities to our work:

- Taking another person's perspective
- Not being judgemental
- Recognising other people's emotions
- Talking about and acknowledging those emotions

4 FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is an important way to build rapport and nurturing positive relationships with the people from different cultures.

Understanding how to communicate with people whose first language (or language of choice) does not match our own is a vital component of culturally responsive practice. Ideas include:

- active listening so that we can better grasp what is being said, and be able to convey that we see things from their point of view
- understanding how culture informs our communication style
- adapting our communication style so that it aligns with and takes cues from the person
- avoiding assumptions or judgements about people based on their communication style
- being sensitive and responsive to cultural norms in relation to verbal and non-verbal communication
- having training in using interpreters effectively

5 NURTURE COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Collaboration is an essential part of individual and organisational cultural proficiency. Organisations that promote collaboration and work collaboratively with each other:

- improve services for culturally diverse populations
- contribute to a work environment that supports diversity, and
- improves workforce productivity and satisfaction

Community engagement is an important part of collaboration. It draws on all the culturally responsive person centred practice skills and requires us to:

- gain trust and build relationships with people with disability from CALD backgrounds and their communities
- respect each person from with disability CALD background as the expert in their own lives
- work alongside people from with disability CALD backgrounds and their communities to create better outcomes
- actively support and enable people with disability from CALD backgrounds to make choices
- establish formal and informal collaborative networks
- value and facilitate the exchange of information with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and across CALD communities

USEFUL RESOURCES

Person-centred Practice Across Cultures is a set of practical resources about cultural proficiency. The 14 workbooks cover different topics including active listening, empathy and working with interpreters. They each focus on the skills, tools and practices needed to build cultural proficiency. They are available for free on the NDS website and can be found at:

<https://www.nds.org.au/resources/person-centred-practice-eacross-cultures-resources>

