Engaging CALD Carers & Communities

Engaging new and emerging communities

This resource is part of a series of resources in the online Diversity in Disability Toolkit.

For further information, see:

diversityindisability.org

What will this resource cover?

This resource will explain the definition of new and emerging communities in Australia. Some strategies to engage with these communities will be explored, ending with a case study and questions that connect with the information. The resource will help to embolden workers with knowledge of some practical ways that could be implemented within your own role and organisation. This guide will focus on engaging with communities, and not necessarily interpersonal strategies when working with a client one on one or with their family, however understanding a person's individual needs does relate to wider community engagement.

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Essential information

New and emerging communities are defined as communities that have increased in number and who have recently arrived in Australia. These communities may have arrived in Australia due to changes in migration and settlement patterns and could be humanitarian entrants, asylum seekers, skilled migrants or part of the family stream of entrants.

When working with people with disability from a new and emerging community, it is important to consider some key points that may influence your communication and engagement with the particular community that you may be engaging with.

It may seem daunting to engage with communities that are difficult to penetrate, or are not as visible in the wider community. New and emerging communities tend not to have the established infrastructure of organisational support that other more established communities (such as post world war two European migrants) have built up over the years. Individuals within communities may also have barriers that make it difficult to access a range of services, including disability services.

Please note that every individual and community is different, and some of these issues may not apply in every situation, however some potential barriers to be aware of are listed below;

- Settlement concerns can add an extra layer of frustration and disadvantage for these communities. Related issues that stem from recent settlement include;

  - Feelings of dislocation and isolation

  - Rearrangement of family structures, where some

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family members are still living in the person's country of origin;

- Housing issues;

- Education concerns;

- Experiences of past trauma and torture;
- Low English proficiency

- Employment concerns, including potential exploitation in the workplace, difficulty obtaining a job due to low English proficiency or visa status

- Health concerns

- Lack of trust of authority or government structures

Essential day-to-day concerns can often take precedence over other considerations such as understanding disability and accessing disability services.

It also worth mentioning that as some of these communities have recently arrived in Australia, people with disability living within these communities may not have been identified as having a disability in their country of origin. Often the schooling system in Australia can identify children with disabilities at a young age and the process of linking them to services can begin from there. This may not have been the case for people within new and emerging communities. Therefore a person may present at your service in adulthood with no prior support or service provision.

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Essential good practice tips

You may recognise that engaging with less visible communities is a challenge within your organisation, yet unsure of the next steps to take.

Some strategies that may start the process of engagement include;

- Build up an understanding of the go to people within the community;

- Communities may not visit specific organisations or structures, but opportunities to engage with more hidden communities could be in;

    - Local shops

    - Cultural events – e.g. Persian New Year festivities

    - Religious structures"

    - Sporting events

This is where it would help to have staff members within your organisation who have existing links in the community, and know the places that people within these communities visit.

In terms of communicating with this cohort, it is important to think about your engagement approach. Any collateral developed should be developed in a bilingual formal, possibly using pictorials or graphics (this would also be relevant for CALD people with disability who need have cognitive impairments). Using community radio to engage with communities is also a productive approach, and using

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story telling or electronic media could also be appropriate. It is also worth researching the background of various communities in order to further understand the history, and cultural / religious celebrations that are important to that community. Country profiles can be found at on the Department of Social Services website, and are a good starting point: https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/community-profiles

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Case Studies

Dahab is a 30 year old male living with severe cognitive and physical disabilities. He has arrived in Australia with his family in the last six months. His parents (both 55), currently care for him, however he does not leave the home during the day, and he has never received any disability support in his country of origin. The family have been living in transitional housing and have been finding it difficult to find a permanent home. They also have a few friends living in the area, yet they have also recently arrived and are struggling to make ends meet financially. Dahab and his family are referred to a disability support service, and are met with case worker Paul in order to complete an initial assessment.

Key Questions

What other elements should Paul be looking out for when making an assessment of the needs and wishes of Dahab and his family?

Should Paul refer Dahab to any additional support services that may complement the support from the disability organisation?

Is it a good idea for Paul to speak with his manager about a wider project on understanding the community that Dahab is a part of, and what are the first steps that Paul should undertake to do this?

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