THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Stage 1 of this project is about educating service providers about the psychosocial experience of child sexual abuse in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. It highlights two issues in particular as points of difference with the psychosocial experience of child sexual abuse in Anglo communities – cultural differences by virtue of originating from countries high on collectivism (familism), and racism by virtue of being a racial minority in Australia. These two factors lead to immense barriers in disclosing the abuse and seeking professional help. If and when these barriers are crossed, there may be a preference to seek medical help over ‘talk therapists’; seen as more culturally acceptable.

As such, the primary target audiences for this stage of the project were general practitioners (GPs), psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, and psychologists. All these ‘health and well-being’ service providers need to be aware of the psychosocial experience of child sexual abuse in CALD communities, so that they can understand their client better and not falsely assume that the experience is essentially the same for all victims/survivors, and to be able to make appropriate referrals among each other to address the diversity within this client group in ways that best meets the individual’s needs.

As the focus is on ‘culturally appropriate clinical treatment’, service organisations providing counselling or advocacy for the broader issue of domestic and family violence (DFV) – which can encompass sexual assault – were also considered relevant for this project. Organisations that provide professional training on child sexual abuse and researchers and policy developers responsible for disseminating information were also seen as relevant, as a critical component of their work would be to identify ‘what works’ in the clinical setting.

In comparison, service providers whose core business relates to legal aspects of child sexual abuse were not identified as key for the purposes of this project. This included child protection authorities responsible for assessing and substantiating allegations of child sexual abuse as the legal definition of child sexual abuse drives their work, and police, lawyers, and legal advisors for victims/survivors of child sexual abuse and their families seeking criminal redress. While they have not been targeted for Stage 1 to help ensure the education program was delivered to the intended audiences – those that provide mental health services in some way, either formally or otherwise – they were not excluded either and may still benefit from aspects of the program. Thus, this Report can be read widely by any type of service provider and community member, to be adapted to their main line of work.