



Working with Cultural Competence: Carers and the NSW Action Plan

Introduction

Working with NSW increasingly diverse carer population and their equally diverse needs is a challenge for most service providers. Working with principles of cultural competence is an essential component for working with carers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background which are estimated to make up 25% of the carer population in NSW. This workshop seeks to explore how the principles of cultural competence can be applied when working with carers and the *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012*.

Workshop Aim

The aim of the workshop is to demonstrate the concept of cultural competence and introduce strategies for working with carers. Through the workshop participants will:

- be introduced to the concept of cultural competence
- be able to apply their knowledge of cultural competence when working with carers
- become aware of the issues that affect culturally and linguistically diverse carers and strategies for working with carers.

Who are CALD Carers

It is estimated that 25% of all carers in NSW are from CALD backgrounds (SDAC, 2003).

The term culturally and linguistically diverse is commonly used to describe the diversity of language, religion, culture and ethnicity of people living in Australia. The term includes reference to ancestry, country of birth, parents' country of birth, a language other than English being spoken at home, religious affiliation and the length of time of residence in Australia.

Key Issues when working with CALD Carers

CALD carers face the same issues as Anglo- Australian carers; however, they also face additional challenges related to differences in language and culture. There are four key areas identified, in the research about CALD carers (Cardona, Chalmers and Neilson, 2006), as additional challenges that CALD carers confront:

Language and communication: accessing services and information in a predominantly English speaking and Anglo-centric service system, where often there are not enough bi-lingual workers and information is not always available or culturally appropriate.

Identification as a carer: the term carer does not literally translate into all languages and people from CALD backgrounds do not always easily identify with being a carer.

Understanding and using service systems: a lack of understanding of the health, community care, aged care and disability systems and limited information and knowledge about services as well as eligibility and assessment criteria often leads to the under-use of services.

Stress, dissatisfaction and isolation: community support is not always available, CALD carers are under recognised and acknowledged for the work that they do and are often isolated due to factors such as recent migration.

Cultural Competence Defined

Cultural competence is a term that is now used to describe best practice for working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia. The Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA) defines cultural competence as 'working effectively with individuals and their families, while **discovering, recognising, understanding** and **working with** the influence that culture may have on them and on us'.

Culturally Competence and the NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012

Being culturally competence in your approach to carers when implementing the priorities of the Action Plan can take a number of forms. This workshop will explore strategies for applying cultural competence in reference to priority actions 1 and 2 of the Action Plan.

About Carers NSW

Carers NSW is an association for relatives and friends who are caring for people with a disability, mental health problem, chronic condition or who are frail aged. Carers NSW are the peak organisation for carers in New South Wales and the only state wide organisation that has carers as its primary focus. Carers NSW are a non government, non-profit, non-political organisation incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW), governed by a volunteer board of management.

Carers NSW are part of a national Network of Carer Associations and work collaboratively to lead change and action for carers. The core work of the associations is:

- Being the national/state/territory voice for carers
- Research, policy development and advocacy
- Carer services and programs
- Education and training for carers and service providers.

Carers NSW hosts the Strategic Carers Action Network (SCAN) CALD Advisory Group to advocate on behalf of CALD carers and network across programs and services.

About Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA)

The Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA) is the peak organisation for people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) with disability, their families and carers in NSW. MDAA is the only advocacy service in NSW specifically for people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

MDAA works to:

- Promote the rights of people from NESB with disability, their families and carers in NSW and make sure their rights are safe and protected.
- Get fair access to, and good results from, government and non-government services for people from NESB with disability and their families and carers in NSW.
- Improve the quality of life for people from NESB with disability and their families and carers.
- Increase the participation of people from NESB with disability and their families and carers in community activities.

Resources for working with CALD carers:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*, ABS, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). *Census of Population and Housing*.
- Boyde, D. & Sedger, R. (November 2008) *Project Report on the Study into the Needs of Carers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities in the Nepean Area*, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.
- Cardona B, Chalmers S, & Neilson B (2006). *Diverse Strategies for Diverse Carers: The cultural context of family carers in NSW*, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney for the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.
- Department of Ageing Disability Home Care (2005). *Strategy to improve services for people from culturally diverse communities 2005-2008, CALD Strategy, 2005-2008*.
- Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales (1994, 1997). *Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society- Handbook*, Sydney, Ethnic Affairs Commission.
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (September 2007). *CALD Carers and the NSW Carers Action Plan*.
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association. *Factsheet 8, The ABC of 'Access and Equity'*.
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, (June 2005) *Cultural Competence Works! A manual to put into practice!*, Harris Park.
- NSW Health (May 2007). *Carers Action Plan 2007-2012*.
- Office of Multicultural Affairs (1989), Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia...Sharing Our Future* Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1989, ppix, 1.