Introduction

This toolkit is brought to you by Multicultural Youth SA Inc (MYSA), the state advisory, advocacy and service delivery body for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. MYSA's work includes:

- Providing policy and program advice to the state government and the government and community services sectors on CALD youth issues;
- Assisting and supporting service providers to work more effectively with CALD young people through information provision, resource development and training;
- Providing direct services and support to CALD young people to enable them to participate more fully in community life;
- Raising awareness of the needs, issues and concerns of CALD young people;
- Strengthening linkages and partnerships with schools, community organisations and government departments to facilitate a whole-of-community approach to meeting the needs of CALD young people;
- Representing the needs of CALD young people on state and national policy forums.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide service providers with information and practical strategies for making their services more culturally responsive and inclusive. Young people from CALD backgrounds comprise approximately 25 percent of the youth population of South Australia. Of these, an increasing number are from new and emerging communities. Although South Australia is characterised by considerable cultural and linguistic diversity, there is still much work to be done in making our institutions, including the community services network, more responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse population. There continues to be major differences in power, status and life opportunities that hinder the full and equitable participation of culturally diverse groups in the life of the community.

Increasing the access of young people from CALD backgrounds to mainstream services requires a strong commitment on the part of service providers to making the necessary changes and adjustments to fully accommodate CALD youth access. It is hoped that this toolkit will be a starting point for improving and enhancing cross-cultural practice.

This Toolkit contains 5 Modules, a series of Fact Sheets and an Appendix. Module 1 introduces the concept of access and equity, outlines the policy framework for agencies' access and equity obligations and provides practical tips to enable them to make their services more culturally accessible. Module 2 outlines the differences between young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, provides background information on the issues affecting them and details their service delivery issues and needs. Module 3 provides information and strategies to enable service providers to increase their reach with young migrants and refugees. Module 4 focuses on increasing the participation of young migrants and refugees in consultation processes. Module 5 provides practical tips and pointers for working with interpreters. The series of Fact Sheets provides specific information on the following cultural groups: Afghan, Bosnian, Croatian, Iranian, Iraqi, Serbian and Southern Sudanese. The Appendix contains the contact details of key multicultural agencies and schools with a high CALD student population.

Introduction

Disclaimer

The Fact Sheets have been developed in close collaboration with cultural informants from each of the communities represented and are, to the best of MYSA's knowledge, accurate at the time of writing. However, these Fact Sheets should not be taken as authoritative statements. Should you discover any errors in the Fact Sheets, please contact MYSA on: (08) 8212 0085 or email: info@mysa.com.au

Module 1

Achieving access and equity in service provision for young people from culturally diverse backgrounds

What is access and equity in service provision and why is it important?

Access is about ensuring that every young person who is entitled to use your service can do so without difficulty. Equity is about treating them fairly, for example, ensuring that you have policies, procedures and other measures in place that acknowledge and respond to diversity.

The concepts of access and equity are underpinned by the principle that all young people, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, have the right to access community services, resources and support essential to their development and full participation in community life.

While the concept of access and equity has been around for a long time, it has by no means been achieved and there continues to be a number of barriers to services for CALD young people and their communities. For more information, see Module 2.

Policy framework for access and equity obligations

A range of international, national and state declarations, charters and policies have been developed with the aim of increasing access and equity in service provision for people from CALD backgrounds. The Australian Government's position on access and equity is articulated in the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (1998). The Charter has been endorsed by Federal, State and Territory Governments and applies to all government funded services.

The Charter is underpinned by seven major principles:

1. Access. Government services should be available to everyone who is entitled to them and should be free of any form of discrimination, irrespective of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion.
2. Equity. Government services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them.
3. Communication. Government services should use strategies to inform eligible clients of services and their entitlements and how they can obtain them. Providers should also consult with their clients regularly about the adequacy, design and standard of government services.
4. Responsiveness. Government services should be sensitive to the needs and requirements of clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.
5. Effectiveness. Government services should be 'results-oriented', focused on meeting the needs of clients from all backgrounds.
6. Efficiency. Government services should optimise the use of available public resources through a user-responsive approach to service delivery which meets the needs of clients.
7. Accountability. Government services should have a reporting mechanism in place which ensures they are accountable for implementing the Charter objectives for clients.

Access and equity cannot be achieved through the willingness and dedication of lone workers; rather it requires a genuine commitment from all levels of management.

A Good Practice Guide has been developed by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to assist service providers to implement the principles outlined in the Charter. This can be obtained online from the DIAC website.

Cultural diversity

Young people from CALD backgrounds currently comprise approximately 25 percent of the youth population of South Australia. Providing culturally responsive services to ensure their full and equitable participation in community life should therefore be a priority for all service providers. Some mainstream agencies, however, see it as the responsibility of multicultural agencies to meet the service needs of CALD young people. Important as they are, multicultural agencies are just one part of the community services network and can only service a small portion of the CALD youth population. Mainstream agencies have a key role to play in providing essential support. The different experience, knowledge, skills and networks that both multicultural and generalist services can offer are needed to reduce barriers and ensure equitable access to services.

How to make your service more culturally responsive and accessible

Working effectively with CALD young people requires a commitment to implementing access and equity principles in practice. Simply put, this means ensuring that CALD young people not only know about your service and what it can offer them but that they are also able to successfully communicate and interact with it. This involves:

- Engaging in planned, regular outreach to familiarise CALD young people and their communities with your service in recognition that most are not familiar with the community services network or its relevance to their lives. For more information, see Module 3.
- Orienting new and recent arrivals to your service to ensure they understand how it operates and what their rights and entitlements are.
- Providing a welcoming, inclusive and youth-friendly environment. For more information, see Module 3.
- Addressing language and cultural barriers by recruiting staff and volunteers from CALD backgrounds, using interpreters when needed and providing written information in young people's first languages.
- Regularly reviewing your agency's policies, procedures and practices to ensure they are culturally inclusive and responsive.
- Participating in regular cross-cultural training to improve your knowledge of other cultures and gain a greater understanding of your own culture and how it impacts on your practice.
- Consulting with CALD young people and their communities regularly to improve understanding of migrant and refugee youth issues.
- Facilitating the full and active participation of CALD young people and their communities in needs assessments and service planning and development.
- Sharing decision-making with CALD young people and their communities to increase their participation, empowerment and self-determination.

- Establishing and maintaining effective links and partnerships with multicultural and other agencies involved in service provision to CALD young people.
- Working to reduce racism and other forms of discrimination that prevent CALD young people from accessing community services, resources and support.
- Recognising and responding to the different needs within and between cultural groups based on age, gender, religion, education, social and economic status and other factors including whether they arrived in Australia as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, the extent to which they have acculturated to mainstream Australian culture and where they are situated in the resettlement process.

Where can I find more information?

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Module 2

Issues affecting young people from culturally diverse backgrounds

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds comprise approximately 25 percent of the youth population of South Australia. For the purposes of this resource, the term cultural and linguistic diversity refers to young people living in Australia whose cultural background is not Anglo-Celtic/Saxon and/or whose first language is not English.

The issues and needs of CALD young people are likely to differ according to whether they arrived in Australia as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers.

Migrants

A migrant is a person who leaves his or her country voluntarily to seek residence in another country, generally for economic, health, climatic, religious or other lifestyle reasons. One of the key differences between migrants and refugees is the issue of choice; migrants can choose whether to leave their country of origin but refugees cannot.[1] However, like refugees, many migrants still experience loss and grief and language and cultural barriers upon arriving in Australia.

Refugees

A refugee is a person who is forced to leave her or his country due to a fear of persecution because of her or his race, gender, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.[2] While many refugees would prefer to return home, they cannot until the circumstances that forced them to leave have changed.

> [Refugees] must deal with significant personal losses, often including the violent death of family and friends. They frequently bear the scars of traumatic experiences; many are the survivors of torture. Refugees are also more likely than other immigrants to arrive without their immediate families, having been forced to separate in flight from persecution. Torn from their social network, uprooted from their cultural familiarity, possibly survivors of torture and trauma, and often fearing for the safety of those left behind, their mental health may be precarious. Because of these situations, refugees often suffer depression, sleeping disorders, nightmares, fatigue, inability to concentrate …
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> … their thoughts on arrival may be focused more on what they left behind than on their future here. Furthermore, the external challenges, such as the refugee process for those who make a refugee claim on arrival, often leave them in a state of stress, impermanence and uncertainty until they have been able to regularize their immigration status. This insecurity further slows the integration process …[3]

Unaccompanied minors are a sub-group within the refugee population who have arrived in Australia without their parents. Some come with extended family members or siblings but others come alone. These young people may have lost their parents through death, disappearance or separation as a result of social and political upheaval and insecurity in their country of origin.

Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders, mostly men from Iraq, Iran, Kurdistan and Afghanistan, are another sub-group within the refugee population who face additional problems. The TPV was introduced in 1999 to deter "unauthorised" arrivals from entering Australia.[4] It has effectively created two classes of refugees and treats them accordingly. "Authorised" arrivals receive permanent protection and a comprehensive range of specialist services while "unauthorised" arrivals are left in limbo with no guarantee of gaining permanent residence and with limited Federal Government support. Unlike other refugees, TPV

holders cannot apply to have immediate family members join them in Australia or visit them without jeopardising their visas. For most TPV holders, these family reunion and travel restrictions mean many years of family separation, with all the anguish, anxiety and guilt this entails.

Asylum seekers

An asylum seeker is a person who has applied for refugee status in the country to which he or she has fled and is waiting for a decision on that claim. Many asylum seekers have been subject to Australia's mandatory detention policy which has seen families forcibly detained in prison-like conditions for years while waiting for a decision on their refugee claims. The Federal Government has recently decided to soften the mandatory detention policy so that children will no longer be detained in detention centres but it remains to be seen how these changes will affect asylum seekers.

A range of organisations and individuals, including health professionals, have raised concerns about the effects of Australia's mandatory detention policy on asylum seekers. Steel reports on a study conducted with children and families in one of Australia's detention centres:

> The children particularly reported being distressed by witnessing frequent acts of self-harm … detainees who had slashed their wrists, jumped from buildings, resulting in broken legs, and detainees attempting to strangle or hang themselves with electric cords … children witnessed their parents suicide attempts, or saw their parents hit with batons by officers … Other problems reported as particularly distressing by all children include boredom, isolation and poor quality food … poor access to medical, dental and counseling … [For almost 50 percent of children] being called by number and not by name …[5]

With respect to mental health problems, Steel's study found:

> [A]ll children were diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder and most … were diagnosed with multiple disorders … Two children were diagnosed with all five of the psychiatric disorders assessed. All but one child received a diagnosis of major depressive disorder and half were diagnosed with PTSD. The symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder experienced by children were almost exclusively related to their experiences of trauma in detention … More than half of the children regularly expressed suicidal ideation, many thought they would be better if they were dead … A quarter … had self harmed [slashing their wrists, banging their heads]…[6]

The following issues should be considered when developing services and programs for CALD young people.

Torture and trauma

Many young refugees have witnessed and/or experienced traumatic events including rape and sexual assault, amputation, murders or mutilation, family disappearances, being a child soldier, starvation, massacres and imprisonment. The effects of these experiences can vary depending on the young person and can lead to a range of social, behavioural and mental health issues.

Mainstream and other service providers may consider themselves untrained to deal with issues of torture and trauma. However, this does not mean that a program cannot be successfully implemented. Knowledge about these issues is essential background information to ensure programs are delivered sensitively.

When working with young refugees, it is important to avoid probing or asking flippant questions about their refugee experiences. If a young person opens up to you, listen with warmth, respect and empathy. You may consider it necessary to refer the young person elsewhere for appropriate support but do not push the issue. If the young person would like help, offer the necessary support to achieve a successful referral.

Language and communication

Many young refugees have had very little or no formal education and some have experienced disruption to their education prior to arriving in Australia. Some may be illiterate in their first language.

For many CALD young people, English is their second or third language. Learning a new language can be a long and difficult process so it is important to be sensitive and patient when working with CALD young people.

Facilitating effective cross-cultural communication and understanding can be a significant challenge as many Western words, expressions, concepts, jokes and humour may have no equivalent in other cultures and languages. Even young people who speak English very well and are reasonably familiar with Western culture may not understand many of the terms and concepts routinely used.

There are also cultural differences with respect to non-verbal communication. For example, newly arrived young people from some parts of Africa may avoid all eye contact with adults and those in authority as a sign of respect. This is often mistaken for disinterest, boredom, or disrespect.

The extent to which CALD young people adhere to their own cultural norms depends on their level of acculturation to mainstream Australian culture. Using the example of eye contact, a young African who is familiar with Western norms will often make eye contact whereas a more recent arrival may not.

Resettlement issues

Adjusting to life in a new country can be very difficult for any migrant, but it can be particularly difficult for refugees who have been subject to forced migration. Refugee young people in the initial stages of resettlement have to contend with many difficult issues including learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture and its systems, making new friends and, for many, helping parents cope with the resettlement process. This is on top of multiple losses including home, country, culture, family and friends.

Family issues

Young people from new and emerging CALD communities often have family responsibilities which can affect many aspects of their lives including education, work and social networks. These responsibilities may include undertaking significant household duties, caring for siblings and other family members and providing support to parents struggling with pre and/or post migration experiences of loss and trauma.

As young people generally adapt to mainstream Australian culture and pick up the language faster than their parents, they may also be expected to help them with the settlement process, including orienting them to mainstream systems and norms, escorting them to medical and other appointments and providing translating and interpreting assistance. This support may be provided for a number of years.

Family responsibilities can prevent or limit a young person's ability to participate in community programs and other activities which could assist them to form peer and community support networks. They can also result in family conflict, with young people resenting the impact the added responsibility has on their education, work and social life, and parents feeling disempowered by what they perceive as a reversal in roles.

For young refugees, there may be additional issues associated with the loss of or separation from family members, particularly for unaccompanied minors and TPV holders who experience long periods of separation from family.

Newly arrived families often have different cultural values and practices with respect to childrearing. For example, the physical discipline of children is culturally accepted and expected in some cultures and many parents find it difficult to accept mainstream Australia's different position on this. This can cause suspicion and distrust of welfare and other agencies that are considered a threat to the family.

Another issue is culturally prescribed gender roles, with young women expected to submit to the authority and wishes of their fathers, brothers and other male family members. This often involves significant restrictions on their freedom in areas such as employment, education, leisure, clothing and friendships.

Identity

According to Western thinking, maintaining a strong sense of self and identity, including cultural identity, is critical to a young person's development. For many CALD young people, however, there can be conflict around cultural identity because they must reconcile two or more very different cultures. Some try to resolve this difficulty by identifying with mainstream Australian culture, which can result in family conflict. Others respond by identifying with their culture of origin, which can expose them to racism and discrimination, especially if they belong to a visible minority.

For those unable to find a sense of belonging or "fit" to any culture, there may be considerable stress and alienation. Young people who are able to find a balance between their own cultural background and the culture of their new country are better equipped to handle difficulties and challenges and make use of available opportunities. However, there are very few support services available for CALD young people struggling with cultural identity issues.

The forming and shaping of cultural identity is linked to general adolescent development. All young people face pressures and challenges associated with adolescence but CALD young people have the added pressure of adjusting to a new country, culture and language, finding new friends and, for many, dealing with loss, trauma and discrimination.

Barriers to services

Most young people from CALD backgrounds do not access youth and community services due to a number of barriers including:

- Limited or no understanding of community services, particularly services that do not exist in their countries of origin e.g., counselling and youth services.
- Difficulty communicating with services due to limited English language proficiency.
- Parents and carers not allowing their children to use services because they assume they are only for troubled young people. Parents may also have concerns that service providers will introduce their children to ideas that conflict with their cultural values and practices.
- Fears about breaches of confidentiality resulting in young people not seeking help.
- Transport problems as a result of not owning a car and not having the finances or understanding to access the public transport system.
- Distrust of government service providers due to past experiences with oppressive government regimes.
- Gaps in services, particularly in relation to employment, education, housing, mental health and life skills.
- Lack of cooperation and communication between service providers working with CALD young people.
- Lack of culturally responsive services.

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[1] Refugee Council of Australia, *Frequently Asked Questions* [Online, accessed June 2005] URL:http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/html/facts_and_stats/facts.html#faq3

[2] Ibid., URL:http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/html/facts_and_stats/facts.html#faq2

Canadian Council for Refugees, *Best Settlement Practices: Settlement Services for Refugees and Immigrants in Canada*, 1998 [Online, accessed May 2003] URL:http://www.web.net/~ccr/bpfina1.htm

[3] Canadian Council for Refugees, *Best Settlement Practices: Settlement Services for Refugees and Immigrants in Canada*, 1998 [Online, accessed May 2003] URL:http://www.web.net/~ccr/bpfina1.htm

[4] Refugee Council of Australia, op.cit., http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/docs/html_docs/Q&A%20on%20TPVs.htm

[5] Z Steel, *The Politics of Exclusion and Denial: The Mental Health Costs of Australia's Refugee Policy*, 38th Congress, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Hobart, 2003, pgs. 5-6.

[6] Ibid., pgs. 9-11.

Module 3

Attracting young people from culturally diverse backgrounds to services

Service providers can increase their reach with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people by providing youth-specific, culturally responsive and inclusive services. This may require organisational change, adjustment or improvement in a number of areas:

Do your homework

It is very important to learn as much as possible about your target group before trying to attract them to your service. An awareness of their cultural background and current issues will enable you to provide appropriate support. For general background information on young refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, see Module 2. For specific information on young people from new and emerging communities, see Module 6.

Address barriers to services

Identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent or limit the access of CALD young people to your service is very important. For more information about service access barriers, see Module 2.

Meet the needs

Identifying and responding to CALD young people at their point of need, as defined by them, is essential to attracting them to your service. This cannot be achieved without engaging them and their communities in an ongoing consultative process and encouraging their active participation in the planning and delivery of services. For tips on how to consult with CALD young people, see Module 4.

Provide trained staff

Ensure that all workers and volunteers receive regular youth-specific, cross-cultural training and support so they are able to effectively engage and develop rapport with CALD young people. If possible, employ workers from CALD backgrounds to break down potential barriers between your service and young people.

Create youth friendly surroundings

Another important strategy is to create and maintain a youth friendly environment in which every aspect of your agency's operations from policy to décor is mindful of CALD young people. Consider using visual displays that promote cultural diversity. Feature the images of CALD young people in your promotional materials. If your service is not youth-specific, consider creating a separate youth space and/or appointment times for young people.

Be flexible in service delivery

Many CALD young people are very relaxed about time, punctuality and keeping appointments so it is important to be flexible with service delivery, for example, providing a drop-in service. It is also advisable to allow more time than usual for appointments because they are likely to start late and go on for much longer than planned. Young people in general lead different lives than adults so it is also important to arrange youth programs for times when they are likely to attend, that is, in the late afternoon, in the evenings and on weekends.

Respect confidentiality

Many CALD young people fear there will be intended and unintended breaches of confidentiality if they access community services, particularly in relation to personal, sensitive or culturally taboo issues. This fear may be heightened if they come from a small or close-knit community and are assigned workers from their own cultural background because information could easily be passed on to their families and community. When promoting your service to CALD young people, it is therefore important to provide constant reassurance about confidentiality.

Trusting relationships

When promoting your service to CALD young people, it is very important to be clear about what you can and cannot provide and avoid making promises unless you are certain you can keep them. Broken promises, no matter how well intended, cause frustration and disappointment and can ultimately result in a breakdown in trust.

Youth friendly programs

Many CALD young people are not interested in participating in programs that are educational in focus so it is important to explore ways of incorporating social, cultural and recreational activities into your programs. Consult with young people about their different needs and preferences.

Reading material

Due to lack of a familiarity with mainstream Australian culture and systems, CALD young people will take longer than their Anglo-Australian peers to understand how your service works and what it can offer them. Ensure you provide reading material that they can take home to absorb at their own pace and, if possible, provide the material in their first languages. The material should also be youth-focussed, clear and easy to understand. Some CALD young people are illiterate in their first language so if possible information should also available in non-written form, for example, videos. Try not to overload young people with too much information as most of it will be forgotten, especially if it pertains to issues that are not immediate concerns for them.

Outreach in the community

The key to getting your service known to CALD young people and their communities is to engage in outreach. Visit schools with a high CALD student population, attend community functions and events, hire stalls at multicultural festivals and ensure that multicultural agencies and others involved in service delivery to CALD communities know about your service. For a list of key multicultural contacts, see Appendix A. Consider partnering with other agencies on programs that are already reaching CALD young people. Ensure that any promotional material you disseminate is both youth friendly and culturally appropriate. Be creative and promote your service in a way that will appeal to young people. Focus on the fun and social elements.

Where can I find more information?

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Module 4

Facilitating consultations with young people from culturally diverse backgrounds

What is youth consultation and why is it important?

Youth consultation encompasses a range of activities designed to obtain young people's views, experiences and preferences about an issue, plan or proposal in which they have an interest or stake. Youth consultation is based on the principle that all young people have the right to actively and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect them and their wider communities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the most widely accepted human rights agreement ever developed, holds that young people have a fundamental and democratic right to participate in community life and that adult society has a corresponding legal and moral responsibility to preserve and advance this right. But what does this involve? Good practice not only requires that young people be given a voice in decision-making but that they also be provided with the conditions necessary to effectively exercise this voice. For adult society, this involves both a willingness to share power and a genuine commitment to provide whatever encouragement, support and practical assistance is required.

Youth consultation in policy and program development

There is a growing trend within the government and community service sectors to ensure that young people's voices are heard in policy and program development, with consultation being used as one of the ways to elicit this voice. Some of the benefits of consultation for young people include greater youth participation, a sense of ownership and responsibility for issues, plans and proposals, improved communication skills, increased confidence and self-esteem and greater links to community services. The benefits for service providers include increased understanding of youth issues and a greater capacity to make informed decisions and meet identified service delivery needs.

Barriers to participation

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face language, cultural, social and economic barriers that limit or prevent their participation in youth consultation activities. Common barriers are as follows:

- Language. Many CALD young people are effectively excluded from participating in mainstream consultation processes due to limited English language proficiency.
- Culture. The majority of CALD young people from new and emerging communities are not familiar with the terms youth participation and consultation or the activities associated with these terms. Most are not even aware when organisations are consulting. These young people are still trying to come to terms with mainstream Australian culture and systems and are often not as confident, articulate or informed as other CALD young people.
- Pre-migration experiences. Many CALD young people from refugee backgrounds have witnessed or experienced traumatic events that may affect their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills. For more information, see Module 2.

- Fear or distrust of government. Some CALD young people may be distrustful or fearful of government consultation processes because they have experienced (or their families have experienced) corrupt or oppressive governments in their home countries. CALD young people who have witnessed the repercussions of speaking out against governments and political systems may be unwilling to offer their opinions on government youth policies and strategies, for example.
- Family. Some CALD parents and carers are cautious about allowing their children to participate in activities outside their family or community due to a lack of familiarity or distrust in mainstream Australian culture. Some parents place special restrictions on young women, for example, they may not permit them to participate in some or all outside activities, or if they do, they may insist they be chaperoned by male family members.
- Formality and subject matter. Some of the structures and processes used in youth consultations are foreign and meaningless to CALD young people, particularly refugees from new and emerging communities. Also, the subject matter of many consultations is too involved or is not relevant to their immediate needs.
- Treating CALD young people as a homogenous group. One size does not fit all - there are differences within and between cultural groups based on age, gender, religion, education, social status and other factors including the extent to which the young person has acculturated to mainstream Australian culture and where she or he is situated in the resettlement process.
- Tokenism. CALD young people are often asked to participate in decision-making processes, ostensibly to obtain their perspectives, but then their input is ignored. Unfortunately some organisations only want to appear to be consulting without actually doing it.
- Time. Many youth consultation activities are designed with the expectation that young people will fit in with the organisation's schedule. CALD young people, like other young people, lead busy and full lives and have to juggle competing interests and demands.
- Transport. Many CALD young people do not participate in youth participation activities because of transport problems.

Consultation methods and processes

A wide range of methods can be used to consult with CALD young people, for example, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, videos, debates, murals, role play, collages, banners and photography. Some of these methods may not be appropriate for all CALD young people and others may need to be modified to accommodate a particular cultural group's needs. Regardless of the method adopted, however, adherence to the following good practice principles will encourage the participation of CALD young people:

- Ensure that young people have a say in the focus, method, processes and frequency of consultation. The consultation should be designed to elicit their views, experiences and preferences; it should not be about asking them to rubber-stamp an organisation's preconceived plans and ideas. Increasing CALD youth participation in your organisation's consultation processes may require a major shift in culture, policies and practices to ensure young people are genuinely able to influence decision-making and effect change.
- Know your target group and design your consultation accordingly. If you are consulting with young people from refugee backgrounds, for example, keep in mind that some have had very little or no formal education or have experienced disruption to their education prior to arriving in Australia. Some may not be literate in their first language.

- Value the skills, knowledge, experience and expertise of young people by paying their expenses, giving them appropriate feedback and acknowledging their contributions.
- Make connections with parents and families as well as young people to build trust and dispel any uncertainty they many have about your organisation. Provide reassurance to parents about the purpose of your consultation and the potential benefits to their children. Ensure they receive the necessary information in the appropriate languages. If necessary, arrange transport for young people to and from the consultation.
- Keep in mind that CALD young people may be more difficult to reach than other young people so it is important to develop an effective promotions strategy. Consult with CALD young people themselves or multicultural organisations for helpful suggestions.
- Depending on the purpose of your consultation, you may need to include parents/carers, community leaders and multicultural organisations.

Facilitating a consultation session with CALD young people

When preparing your consultation session, be creative and plan to use visual as well as written resources to accommodate those with English language difficulties. If you are planning to use written material and are unsure whether it will be understood, ask some young people to review it.

If English is an issue, speak a little more slowly and clearly but do not raise your voice or patronise young people. Avoid colloquialism and slang and be sensitive with the use of humour. Clearly explain unfamiliar or complex terms. Keep in mind that nodding and smiling do not always convey understanding. Many CALD young people nod and smile even (and especially) when they do not understand. Watch out for non-verbal cues that could suggest people do not understand, for example, loss of concentration, blank stares, fidgeting, talking in their own languages to friends and keeping quiet. If in doubt, seek feedback from CALD young people on communication issues.

Use bi-lingual workers if appropriate and if resources permit to help break down language and cultural barriers. However, it cannot be assumed that young people will automatically relate to these workers just because they come from the same community. In fact, some young people may find it difficult to trust them because they are in a position to disclose confidential information to their parents and the rest of the community. When recruiting bi-cultural and bi-lingual workers, whether as volunteers or paid workers, it is therefore important to select people who are likely to be trusted by your target group.

Ensure your consultation concerns issues that directly interest or affect CALD young people or they will be difficult to attract and engage.

If your consultation is going to be long, ensure there are frequent breaks to maintain interest. During the session, it is important to monitor young people's responses and not put shy people on the spot. Some young people do not like talking in front of a group, especially about themselves.

Be aware that in cross-cultural groups, some young people may hold back if there are no participants from their own cultural background. Team building exercises can be used to make them feel more comfortable.

If you are planning to provide refreshments, it is important to ensure that the foods served are culturally and religiously acceptable. Young Muslims, for example, are only permitted to consume food which is "halal", which means "permitted" or "lawful". Halal has been used here as an example and is of course not the only food consideration. Information about culturally appropriate foods and beverages can be obtained from CALD young people themselves or multicultural organisations.

Where can I find more information?

Multicultural Youth SA (MYSA)
Telephone: 8212 0085 (business hours)
Shop 9 Miller's Arcade
28 Hindley Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.mysa.com.au

Australian Refugee Association (ARA)
Telephone: 8354 2951 (business hours)
304 Henley Beach Road UNDERDALE SA 5032
Website: www.ausref.net

Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)
Telephone: 8410 0300 (business hours)
113 Gilbert Street ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.multiwebsa.org.au

Module 5

Working with on-site interpreters

Why use an interpreter?

English language difficulties prevent many young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds from accessing community services, resources and supports. Everyone in Australia has the right to access community services and employing interpreters helps preserve this right. Interpreters are not just there for young people; they are also there for workers to enable them to be as effective in their practice as possible.

When is an interpreter needed?

You should employ an interpreter when the young person requests one or when you think she or he needs one. An interpreter may be needed when:

- There can be no margin for error in understanding the young person and his or her circumstances e.g., health issues.
- The young person does not speak English well and is experiencing distress or is in crisis. A young person may not speak English well when he or she:
  - is reluctant to speak, appears uncomfortable, looks for support from friends
  - breaks or misses appointments
  - cannot construct full sentences
  - cannot paraphrase what you have said in his or her own words

Who should I use to interpret?

If you require an interpreter, it is very important that you use a trained professional rather than the family or friends of the young person. Family and friends are not trained or experienced and may not understand the importance of remaining objective, respecting confidentiality and ensuring accuracy and honesty when interpreting for the young person, especially when it comes to taboo topics such as sex and mental illness. Also, unlike trained professional interpreters, family and friends are not bound by the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters Code of Ethics. Another reason why it is important to employ trained professionals is that young people may feel awkward or embarrassed discussing their issues in front of family and friends, especially personal or sensitive issues.

How do I work with an interpreter?

It is important to find out the young person's exact language or dialect before engaging the services of an interpreter. Keep in mind that it may not be possible to find a trained interpreter for all dialects, particularly those of minority groups.

Interpreters may only be able to interpret in the language/s they are fluent in so do not expect them to interpret in a similar language/s.

Given that some young people may feel uncomfortable discussing their issues with someone of the opposite sex, it is important to ascertain beforehand whether they would prefer a male or female interpreter.

If possible, brief the interpreter on the young person's case before the interview. You may need to ask for background information on the young person's culture but keep in mind that an interpreter cannot speak for an entire cultural group because cultural norms can differ within and between cultural groups.

Ensure you have a private place to conduct the interview and organise the seats in a circle with your seat slightly in front of the interpreter's and facing the young person. This allows the young person to look at both you and the interpreter and ensures that he or she is included in the exchanges. Keep in mind that you will need to allow extra time for interviews with CALD young people compared to Anglo-Australian young people whose first language is English.

Begin by introducing yourself and the interpreter to the young person. Inform the young person of her or his right to confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality. Ensure you maintain eye contact with the young person rather than the interpreter unless you are speaking directly to the interpreter. Do not engage in a lengthy conversation with the interpreter in front of the young person unless it is absolutely necessary. If you do need to speak to the interpreter at length, ensure that the young person understands what the conversation will entail.

Speak to the young person as though there were no language barrier. For example, ask the young person "where do you live?'" rather than saying to the interpreter "ask him where he lives". Avoid jargon, use simple language, focus on one point at a time and pause frequently to give the interpreter time to translate your message. Keep in mind that the interpreter may use more words than you do. This is because meaning is interpreted rather than words and this may involve using more words than you have spoken.

It is up to you rather than the interpreter to make the young person feel comfortable. Try to develop rapport with the young person by being welcoming and friendly but avoid the use of humour because it will be difficult to translate. When the young person is speaking, direct your attention to her or him and not the interpreter. Do not look back and forth between the young person and the interpreter.

Ensure the young person clearly understands what is being said by occasionally asking him or her questions. Also allow room for the young person to ask questions. Keep an eye on the young person's non-verbal communication to obtain an overall sense of how the interview is progressing. If the young person appears relaxed, the session is probably going well.

Maintain control of the interview as you would any other interview. It is inappropriate for the interpreter to take responsibility for the interview.

Remember to allow time for the interpreter to take a break if the interview is going to be longer than 30 minutes.

When the interview has concluded, encourage the interpreter to provide feedback on the session, including his or her perceptions of how it went and any cultural issues that may have surfaced.

Where can I find an interpreter?

ABC International Pty Ltd
Translating and Interpreting Services
Direct Booking Lines: 8364 5255 or 8364 3643 (24 hour service)

Interpreting and Translating Centre (ITC)
Multicultural SA
Telephone: 8226 1990
Website: www.translate.sa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)
Telephone: 131 450 (24 hour service)
Website: www.immi.gov.au/tis/index.htm

Where can I find more information?

Multicultural Youth SA (MYSA)
Telephone: 8212 0085 (business hours)
Shop 9 Miller's Arcade
28 Hindley Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.mysa.com.au

Australian Refugee Association (ARA)
Telephone: 8354 2951 (business hours)
304 Henley Beach Road UNDERDALE SA 5032
Website: www.ausref.net

Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)
Telephone: 8410 0300 (business hours)
113 Gilbert Street ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.multiwebsa.org.au

Southern Sudanese Young People

Background

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, covering 2.5 million square kilometres with an ethnically diverse population of 40.2 million people. Before 1821 when Egypt conquered Sudan, the country was comprised of many small independent kingdoms. The colonisation and restructuring of Sudan resulted in the unification of Northern Sudan which today consists of predominantly Arabic speaking Muslims.[1] Southern Sudan has remained largely fragmented consisting mainly of Indigenous African groups such as the Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Bari and Zande people.[2]

In 1953 the United Kingdom and Egypt finalised an agreement to grant Sudan self-government. Sudan celebrated it's independence in 1956 with British and Egyptian troops leaving the country on that same day.[3] However in 1955 a civil war was declared between the North and South of Sudan, stemming from an unequal distribution of power by Britain and a difference in religious and cultural beliefs. This war ended in 1972 when an accord was signed which pledged autonomy to Southern Sudan.[4]

Civil war between the North and South broke out once again in 1983 led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army for a new united Sudan.[4] Many peace initiatives have been attempted since 1990 with a Comprehensive Peace Agreement formally being signed in Nairobi in 2005, giving the people of Southern Sudan the right to self-determination.[5] This long-term conflict in Sudan has wreaked havoc on the South with an estimated 2 million people dead and 4 million people displaced.[1]

Ethnicity and Language

While the official language spoken in Sudan is Arabic, over 134 different languages are spoken throughout the country. 100 different languages are spoken in Southern Sudan alone, the most predominant being Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Shilluk, Zande, Acholi and Madi.[2]

Religion

Southern Sudanese people generally follow traditional religious or Christian beliefs.[1] The Dinka people who, make up the largest ethnic group in Southern Sudan, primarily believe in a universal God whom they call Nhialac. Dinka people have not been influenced by Islamic beliefs and have embraced Christianity. It is estimated that 70% of the Sudanese population are Sunni Muslims.[6] Despite the country's diversity, Sudan's history is marked by religious intolerance and persecution towards Christians.

Culture and Customs

Customs and culture varies between groups but generally Sudan is a patriarchal and hierarchical society. Women usually do not have the same rights and privileges as men and elders and people in authority are highly respected. The Dinka people tend to be less hierarchical, although the Sudanese government has attempted to formalise the position of influential elders.

The most important cultural aspect of the Dinka people is the cattle camp where all social activities and norms are formed and expressed through song, poetry and folklore. The culture is centred on cattle as a means of trade, as well as having religious significance. The Dinka people are a proud and friendly people who live with dignity and integrity. They are also the least influenced by modern society.[7]

Family

Family is the cornerstone of the Sudanese society. Southern Sudanese families usually consist of extended family networks including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews. Sudanese families are usually hierarchical, with the head of the family being the first born son. He is responsible for all family members. Couples in Sudan generally have more children then the average Australian family and it is also common for men in Sudan to have more then one wife. The wife or wives of the head of the family are responsible not only for their own children but for the care of their nieces, nephews and cousins. As the children age, the roles are reversed and the children become responsible for the care of their parents, aunts and uncles.[8]

Dating and Marriage

Given the importance of family within Sudanese culture, dating and marriage are taken very seriously. Sexual relations are not permitted prior to marriage and initial contact between young single people occurs in the young woman's home under supervision. Contact outside the home is not permitted, however many young people are not forthcoming with their parents about their relationships with the opposite sex. Same sex relationships are also taboo within the general Sudanese culture.

Generally marriage only occurs with the permission of parents and elders. If a couple choose to marry without approval, generally they are not permitted to remarry or return to their families if the union fails. When married, the bride leaves her family and becomes part of her husband's family. The primary role of women is to maintain the home and care for the children and other family members associated with her new family networks.[8]

Among the Dinka people, every male is expected to marry as many wives as possible and raise a family of his own. Upon getting married, the groom must pay the bride's family a dowry, generally cattle. The price varies from bride to bride and the dowry is distributed throughout the bride's family network. The cattle the bride's family receives are used to cement alliances and reaffirm kinship rights and obligations.[7]

Sport and Recreation

Soccer, basketball and volleyball are popular sports enjoyed by the youth of Sudan. The Sudanese people have always been good fishermen, but this is more of a necessity than a sport. Men do however participate in hunting deer and other game for sport. Young Sudanese girls enjoy playing with dolls, jumping rope and hopscotch. They also play backgammon and board games.[9]

Holidays

January 1st is a time of celebration with both Sudanese Independence Day and New Year's Day being on this date. Unity Day is also celebrated on March 27, commemorating the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1972.[9]

Education

Of the 1.4 million young people aged 7 to 14 years in Southern Sudan at the end of 2003, only 40,000 young people were enrolled in education. Women tend to receive less education than men with only 18% of all school aged women being enrolled in school. Only 1% of all girls in Southern Sudan complete primary education. Schools in the South are under resourced with only 51% of all teachers being trained to teach either formally or informally.[2]

Women

Sudanese women traditionally remain in the home and have very limited access to education. However, ongoing conflict in Sudan is altering traditional roles with many women taking on the role of bread winners as well as

caregivers. Generally, women's assets are mutually owned by both the woman and her husband's family. Women also play a key role in social cohesion, cultural activities and kinship networks.[8]

Current Issues for Young People Living in Australia

There are approximately 7000 Sudanese refugees living in South Australia, many under the age of 30. Sudanese people mainly reside in Port Adelaide/Enfield, Charles Sturt, West Torrens, Hindmarsh and Woodville council areas as well as many other areas. The main cultural groups and languages that service providers will encounter are Bari, Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk and Zande.

The Young Refugee Experience

Many young Southern Sudanese people have experienced traumatic events which may affect their mental health and ability to effectively settle in Australia. Many have spent years in refugee camps and some have lost or become separated from parents and are being raised by older siblings or extended family members. Most experience varying levels of racism and discrimination at school, university, work and in the general community.

Intergenerational Conflict

Young people gain significantly more freedom and independence in Australia and this can result in family conflict. It is common for parents to feel they have been divested of status and authority by mainstream culture and many feel that young people are given permission to pursue freedoms which are at odds with, and at the expense of, the broader interests of the family. This especially occurs between younger boys and their parents.

Another issue causing conflict within families is the added responsibility placed on young people by parents and caregivers struggling to cope with the resettlement process. Because children generally learn the language and adapt to mainstream culture faster than their parents, they are often expected to help them with many aspects of cultural transition and resettlement.

Housing and Accommodation

Finding appropriate housing can be difficult due to the larger sizes of Southern Sudanese families. Most homes in Australia are built for families with five or less family members. Often there are Sudanese families of eight or more seeking accommodation. This creates problems for families wanting to be housed together. Due to family size, perceived financial insecurity and discrimination, landlords and real estate agents are often reluctant to accommodate Sudanese families. The Housing Trust can only offer limited solutions because most houses are inadequate for larger families.

Young people who arrive in Australia alone may live with an older sibling, an aunt, uncle or distant relative and in some cases, a foster carer. Depending on their age and experience, young people may decide to live independently, however there are no supported accommodation facilities for young refugees in Australia.

Financial

Young people soon adapt to the Western lifestyle of consumerism and want to fully participate but most are unable to due to limited finances. At the age of 16, young people are entitled to Centrelink payments. Many keep this money and do not contribute to household expenses while living at home. This places enormous pressure on parents and caregivers and can be a source of family conflict. Some young people believe they will be able to live independently on this payment but they often lack the skills to effectively manage their finances. It is common for young people to spend all their money on clothes, cars, mobile phones and entertainment, leaving nothing to cover other essential living expenses.

Language and Communication

English may be the young person's second or third language. Coming to terms with the nuances of a new language can be a long and difficult process. Lack of English language skills create barriers for young people, making it significantly harder for new arrivals to understand Australian systems and settle successfully.

Many Western words, expressions, concepts, jokes and humour have no equivalent in Sudanese languages and culture. There are also cultural differences with respect to non-verbal communication. For example in some cultural groups in Sudan a slow blink means "yes", cocking the head to the side means "I don't understand" and lack of eye contact can be a sign of respect.

Legal

Young males are especially vulnerable to finding themselves in legal difficulties, mainly stemming around traffic offences, for example driving cars without licences or registration. Young people are often completely unaware of their legal rights and can be taken advantage of in the community, for example, the workplace.

Women

A young woman's understanding about sexuality and women's health issues will depend on her level of education and whether she is a new arrival to Australia. Pre-marital sex, de-facto relationships, homosexuality, contraception and abortion may be sensitive or taboo subjects for those from traditional and religious families. This applies to both sexes. Women's information about sexual health issues should be delivered sensitively and only in the presence of other women.

Education, Training and Employment

Many young people struggle to adjust to Australia's education system due to lack of previous schooling, interrupted schooling, language and cultural barriers, the desire or need to gain employment and other factors. Young people are generally unaware of education, training and employment opportunities and services.

Community Services

Young people generally experience significant barriers when trying to locate and access services. Reasons include language, culture, lack of familiarity with the public transport system, lack of responsiveness on the part of services, distrust of (usually government) service providers as a result of experiences with oppressive regimes and gaps in services. Many young people, particularly young women, prefer to use services without the knowledge or involvement of their parents and caregivers. If parents and caregivers were to find out about their children's use of services, conflict may ensue. This is due to a lack of parental understanding and/or suspicion of services and an expectation that they be involved in their children's decisions.

Further Information

Multicultural Youth SA Inc (MYSA)
☏ (08) 8212 0085 🖰 www.mysa.com.au
Shop 9 Miller's Arcade
28 Hindley Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000

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[2] Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, *Education and Refugee Students from Southern Sudan 2005* [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: www.survivorsvic.org.au/pdfdocs/SudaneseStudentsWeb.pdf

[3] Sudan Net, *Sudan: A Historical Perspective* 2006 [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: http://www.sudan.net/

[4] ICE Case Studies, *Civil War in the Sudan: Resources or Religion? 1997* [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/sudan.htm

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[7] Gurtong Peace Project, Bringing the Southern Sudanese Diaspora Together, *Community Profile: The Dinka 2006* [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: http://www.gurtong.org/resourcescenter/people_tribe.asp?TribeID=94

[8] Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne), *Southern Sudanese Culture 2004* [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: www.miceastmelb.com.au/documents/SouthernSudaneseCrossCulturalTrainingReport.pdf

[9] Cultural Profiles Project, *Sudan: Sports and Recreation 2006* [Online, accessed Aug 2006] URL: http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/sudan/index.html

Refugee and Migrant Mental Health

What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is an umbrella term used to group a wide range of psychological conditions that differ in nature and severity. A mental illness can be more or less severe, short or long term, and one-off, intermittent or persistent throughout a young person's life. The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), a widely accepted handbook for mental health researchers and professionals, defines a mental disorder as a:

> clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress (e.g., a painful symptom) or disability (i.e., impairment in one or more important areas of functioning) or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom. (American Psychological Association 2000, p. xxxi)

What are the Causes of Mental Illness?

Western psychiatry and psychology attribute mental illness to a range of biological and environmental factors. Biological factors include genetics, disruptions in brain structure, altered neurotransmitter or hormone levels, injury and disease. Environmental factors include adverse life experiences such as war, poverty, neglect, divorce or a dysfunctional family life. While the exact cause or causes of most mental illnesses is unknown, it is widely believed that they occur as a result of the interplay between biological and environmental factors.

What are the Main Mental Health Problems Affecting Young Refugees?

The three most commonly reported psychiatric disorders in young refugees are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression and Anxiety (Lustig et al., 2004; Davidson et al., 2004). While there is a broad consensus in the research literature that young refugees are more vulnerable to mental health problems than the general population, there is less agreement about prevalence rates. Some American studies place the rate for serious psychiatric disorder at 40-50% (Kinzie, Sack, Angell & Manson, 1986; Kinzie, Sack, Angell & Clarke, 1989; Sack & Him, 1999), while Australian studies report a lower rate of 18-32% (Krupinksi & Burrows, 1986; McKelvey, Sang, Baldassar, Davies, Roberts & Cutler, 2002). The rate for psychiatric disorder in the general population is around 14-21%, according to a large-scale national Australian study (Sawyer *et al.*, 2001).

What are the Main Contributing Factors to Mental Health Problems in Young Refugees?

A number of pre and post migration factors place young refugees at increased risk of developing mental health problems.

Pre-migration Experiences of Loss, Trauma and Disruption

While young people's refugee experiences vary widely in nature and severity, all have experienced multiple personal losses and massive disruption to their lives which can result in,or exacerbate existing mental health problems.

Acculturation Stress

Adjusting to life in a new country can be very difficult for any migrant but it can be particularly difficult for refugees who have been subject to forced migration. Young refugees in the initial stages of resettlement have to contend with many difficult issues including learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture and systems, coping with pre and post migration experiences of loss, trauma and disruption, making new friends and for many, helping parents and caregivers cope with the resettlement process. Acculturation stress can seriously affect a young person's psychological wellbeing, impacting on mental health as well as education and employment outcomes and community participation. Previous trauma experiences, difficulties negotiating bi-cultural membership, lack of family, peer and community support, and broader social issues such as racism and discrimination can exacerbate acculturation stress and lead to social isolation and alienation (Brough, Gorman, Ramirez & Westoby, 2003; Nicholson, 1998; Selvamanickam, Zgryza & Gorman, 2001).

Poverty and Economic Hardship

Despite Australia's relative affluence, refugee families often experience poverty, unemployment or employment in low-status and low-income occupations, substandard accommodation, overcrowding and poor nutrition. Many young people lack the basic resources necessary to participate in school and community life, especially if the family is also supporting relatives who have been left behind in another country. The family's low socioeconomic status and attendant distress over all that has been lost can adversely affect the psychological wellbeing of young people.

Racism and Discrimination

Many young refugees, particularly those from visible minority groups, routinely experience individual and institutional racism in Australia. Both forms of racism can seriously affect a young person's wellbeing, impacting on mental health as well as socio-economic status and community participation (Selvamanickam *et al.*, 2001).

Loss of Parents

Some young refugees arrive in South Australia without their parents or guardians and are placed under the Guardianship of the Minister for Families and Communities. These young people may have lost their parents through death, disappearance or separation following social and political upheaval and insecurity in their countries of origin. Some children are placed in the care of older siblings, uncles, aunts, grandparents or other distant relatives while others are fostered by members of their ethnic community. The loss or absence of one or both parents can give rise to or exacerbate existing mental health problems, particularly in younger children and those exposed to abuse or neglect in their new families (Fazel & Stein, 2002).

Intergenerational Conflict

Intergenerational conflict can be an issue for many refugee families, particularly where there is disagreement over a young person's rate and level of acculturation to Western society. Intergenerational conflict often centres on a young person's desire for more freedom and independence, their education and career preferences, their personal attire and their relationship choices. Protracted conflict can result in mental health problems, family breakdown, youth homelessness and, where the family remains in tact, abuse or neglect of the young person (Refugee Advisory Resettlement Council, 2002; Westermeyer & Wahmanholm, 1996).

Limited Parental Support

Many parents are themselves suffering from mental health and other problems that in turn can affect the level of support provided to children and, in some cases, can also result in child abuse and neglect.

Identity Issues

According to Western psychological science, creating and maintaining a strong sense of self and identity, including cultural identity, is critical to a young person's development. For many young refugees, however, there is conflict surrounding cultural identity because they must reconcile two or more very different cultures. Some try to resolve this difficulty by identifying with Western culture, which can result in family conflict. Others respond by identifying with their culture of origin, which can expose them to increased racism and discrimination, especially if they belong to a visible minority group. For those unable to find a balance between their own culture and that of their new country, there may be considerable stress and alienation.

Lack of Access to Community Services, Resources and Support

Most young refugees do not have equitable access to community services, resources and support due to a range of language and cultural barriers and an overall failure on the part of the social service system to respond to the needs of a culturally diverse society. The resulting social isolation and exclusion can place them at increased risk of mental health problems.

Refugee Understandings of Mental Health and Illness

What is defined as mental illness in Western culture is often not regarded as such in non-Western cultures (Kleinman, 1987). Some cultures have not even developed a concept of mental illness (Gongguy, Cravens & Patterson, 1991), much less one that corresponds to Western understandings. Moreover, many non-Western cultures have different explanations for "mental illness". Where a behaviour or condition is recognised as abnormal, it is often attributed to sin, lack of faith in God, demonic possession, ancestral wrath, hexes, curses or thin blood. There are also cross-cultural differences in the expression of mental illness. As many non-Western cultures make no distinction between the mind and the body, it is very common for psychological problems to be expressed in physical complaints. These different cultural understandings about mental illness have been linked to lower use of mental health services by refugee and other culturally diverse populations. It should be noted, however, that as new arrivals become more familiar with Western mental health concepts and interventions, they often add them to their own (Leong & Lau, 2001).

Mental Health Service Utilisation

There is growing concern in the national and international literature that many young refugees in need of mental health care are not accessing appropriate services. While very few studies have investigated service utilisation by young refugees, research undertaken with non-refugee ethnic populations reports widespread under-utilisation of services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, 2001). Studies have also found that when ethnic populations do access services, they are unlikely to receive the same level and quality of care as the general population (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999, 2001).

While most young refugees do not access mental health services, they often turn to peers, teachers, school counsellors and non-mental health service providers for help. It is widely recognised that these non-mental

health professionals are finding it very difficult to cope with refugee mental health issues. It should be noted, however, that most young refugees with mental health problems do not themselves identify a need for mental health care. Mental health issues are often eclipsed by immediate settlement needs such as learning the English language, adjusting to the Australian education system and making new friends.

Further Information

Multicultural Youth SA Inc (MYSA)
☏ (08) 8212 0085 www.mysa.com.au
Shop 9 Miller's Arcade
28 Hindley Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Mental Health Care Services

Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service
☏ (08) 8346 5466 www.sttars.com.au
12 Hawker Street, BOWDEN SA 5007

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
Women's and Children's Hospital
☏ (08) 8161 6622 (Boylan Ward)
☏ (08) 8161 7227 (Dept. Of Psychological Medicine)
72 King William Road, ADELAIDE SA 5006

Northern Region
☏ (08) 8252 0133
Sidney Chambers, 50 Elizabeth Way, ELIZABETH SA 5112

Eastern Region
☏ (08) 8207 8999
5 Darley Road, PARADISE SA 5075

Western Region
☏ (08) 8341 1222
78-80 Dale Street, PORT ADELAIDE SA 5015

Country Services
☏ 1800 819 089

Migrant Health Service
☏ (08) 8237 3915 www.mmha.org.au
21 Market Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Migrant Resource Centre of SA
☏ (08) 8217 9500 www.mrcsa.com.au
59 King William Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000

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Appendix A

Key Multicultural Contacts

Service providers	*Address*	*Telephone*	*Website*
Multicultural Youth SA (MYSA)	Shop 9, Millers Arcade, 28 Hindley St, Adelaide 5000	8212 0085	www.mysa.com.au
Australian Refugee Association (ARA)	304 Henley Beach Rd, Underdale 5032	8354 2951	www.ausref.net
Multicultural Communities Council (MCC)	113 Gilbert St, Adelaide 5000	8410 0300	www.mccsa.org.au
Survivors of Torture, Trauma & Rehab. Service (STTARS)	12 Hawker St, Bowden 5007	8346 5433	www.sttars.org.au
Western Area Multicultural Youth Service (WAMYS)	65 Woodville Rd, Woodville 5011	8408 1313	www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au
Migrant Health Service (MHS)	21 Market St, Adelaide 5000	8237 3915	
Lutheran Community Care	PO Box 288, Kilburn 5084	8269 9300	www.lccsa.org.au
Migrant Resource Centre of SA (MRCSA)	59 King William St, Adelaide 5000	8217 9500	www.mrcsa.com.au

Schools with a high multicultural student population	*Address*	*Telephone*	*Website*
Thebarton Senior College	40 Ashley St, Thebarton 5031	8352 5811	www.tsc.sa.edu.au
Adelaide Secondary School of English	253 Torrens Rd, West Croydon 5008	8340 3733	www.adsecenglish.sa.edu.au
Underdale High School	19 Garden Tce, Underdale 5032	8301 8000	www.underdale.sa.edu.au
English Language Services	5th Flr, Renaissance Cntr Adelaide 5000	8226 6555	www.els.sa.edu.au
Gilles Street Primary School	91 Gilles St, Adelaide 5000	8223 6432	www.gillesstps.sa.edu.au
Ingle Farm Primary School	2 Belalie Rd, Ingle Farm 5098	8262 4864	www.inglfarmps.sa.edu.au
Pennington Primary School	Butler Ave, Pennington 5013	8447 1933	
The Pines Primary School	42 Andrew Smith Dr, Parafield Gdns 5107	8281 2199	