
DIVERSITY TRAINING MANUAL

SECTION TWO EXPLORING THE ISSUES

- 2.1 THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN
- 2.2 THE INTERFACE BETWEEN CHILD ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- 2.3 ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE SERVICE DELIVERY**

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ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

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2.3

INTRODUCTION

This project is designed to assist domestic violence and related services to develop an accessible, comprehensive and inclusive response to all women and children exposed to domestic violence, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, class, religion, or first language. In this way, the project complements the access and equity strategy for SAAP services.

This section of the resource manual aims to facilitate practitioners' awareness of the barriers faced by women of non-English speaking backgrounds and their children in accessing information and services to assist with domestic violence. In addition, this module encourages practitioners to explore the role that agency policies and procedures have in either facilitating or hindering equitable and accessible service provision to immigrant/refugee women and children.

2.3.1

ACCESS & EQUITY ISSUES FOR AGENCIES & SERVICES

For the thousands of women and children given information, support and assistance in accessing safety every year there are countless others who have been unable to access services and accommodation because there is a lack of vacancies in refuge accommodation, a lack of services where they live, or because they are unaware that such assistance is available.

While there are many access and equity issues for agencies to address (including access for disabled women and for Indigenous women) this manual deals specifically with issues facing women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

For this purpose, the meaning of access and equity can be defined as follows:

Access:

Domestic violence services should be known by, and available to, every one 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.

Equity:

Domestic violence services should be developed and delivered on the basis of fair treatment of clients who are eligible to receive them. Services need to develop flexible responses to clients from diverse backgrounds.

Equity is not achieved by treating all people in exactly the same way. Equity acknowledges that everyone is different. Equity recognises that not everyone has had the same opportunities, education, life experiences, skills or knowledge and provides a service that takes those differences into account.

The following barriers may restrict access to services for women and children of non-English speaking backgrounds:

- Women and children may be illiterate in their own language, which effectively limits their access to education and information.
- They may fear retaliation from the abusive male. In some mixed race relationships the male may use the women's immigration status against her. For example, the male may tell the woman that she will be unable to remain in the country or may lose custody/residence of the children if she leaves the violent relationship.
- Many fear being ostracised from family, friends, religious community and/or social networks if they speak about the violence.
- Fear of bringing shame and dishonour to the family.
- Limited knowledge of the services available ie. Translating and Interpreting services, domestic violence services/refuges, ethnic community agencies, Centrelink, Department of Families, and other government departments and welfare agencies.
- Fear of statutory authorities. This fear may come from previous negative experiences with government authorities, either in Australia or their homeland. This may be a particular concern for refugee women and children who have fled repressive regimes.

- Fear of not being believed.
- A previous negative experience with a community agency/service.
- Services may be operating from an ethnocentric framework making them non-user friendly to women and children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- Services may not have policies, procedures, training, staffing and management representation aimed at ensuring service accessibility and equitable service delivery to all women and children irrespective of their country of birth, language, culture, race or religion.

Ø (Refer to Appendix for OHP 1).

One of the most commonly identified obstacles making it difficult for women of non-English speaking backgrounds to access services has been that of language differences. Language is central to effective communication. For a woman to be able to clearly explain her circumstances and express her feelings and needs, it is obviously preferable for her to speak in her first language. For a worker to be able to clearly explain, and feel confident that the woman has understood, the services and assistance available, including domestic violence laws and procedures, it is essential that the information is conveyed to the woman in her first language through an accredited, professional interpreter.

In times of crisis, trauma, and uncertainty, when the family needs to access support services it is often the case that children are used as interpreters. This is not a desirable practice. Children may generally pick up English more quickly than their parents as they are exposed to a wider social network at a younger age. For example children may attend mainstream child-care centres, pre-schools, primary and high schools; whereas their mothers may not have established social networks outside of her family or cultural community. However children do not necessarily have the level of understanding of language and terminology required, nor is it desirable to place children, who are themselves in crisis, in such a responsible and powerful position.

(For more information refer to section 3.2 "Working in a cross-cultural context" and section 4.1 "Working with children: a practical perspective")

Another significant barrier to effective intercultural communication is ethnocentrism. This is basically an attitude held by people who believe the characteristics, values and customs of their own ethnic group serve as the standard against which all other cultures are to be judged. This means they believe that their own ethnic group has the only "right way" of living within a society and expecting people from other ethnic groups to conform to their way (Diversity in Child Care Qld Inc, 1999, p.9). Services that function on an ethnocentric premise are therefore not open and flexible in their response to women and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

(For more information refer to section 3.2 "Working in a cross-cultural context")

2.3.2

HOW DO AGENCIES & SERVICES ENSURE THAT THEY ARE ACCESSIBLE & EQUITABLE TO WOMEN & CHILDREN FROM ALL RACES, RELIGIONS & CULTURES?

The development of clear agency policies and procedures that address issues surrounding cultural diversity and the needs of non-English speaking background women and children is fundamental to accessible and equitable service provision. Policies and procedures that do not take cultural diversity into account will result in exclusive service provision, whereas services are funded to be inclusive. Clear policies and procedures will ensure that best practice standards are achieved.

Access and equity principles should be central to the agency's philosophy and/or mission statement rather than an adjunct to it. Moreover, agencies need to ensure that access and equity objectives are clearly defined and that a range of strategies are developed that take into account the barriers that prevent women and children of non-English speaking backgrounds from accessing mainstream services.

working with immigrant and refugee women and children affected by domestic violence.

- Access demographic data about the language spoken and country of origin of people in your geographic community. This is obtained from the Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics and will assist you in developing links with non-English speaking background communities in your target area.
- Keep records of the ethnicity of women and children accessing your service. Keeping demographic information allows services to identify those communities which are accessing the service and the languages in which information and documentation should be translated.
- Provide staff training in cross-cultural communication issues.
- Actively seek to employ bi-lingual workers. This serves several purposes. Firstly, it makes the service more accessible to women from diverse cultural backgrounds, secondly it acknowledges that the agency is committed to a non-discriminatory workplace and thirdly, it gives recognition to the skills and abilities of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

(Professional Education Taskforce, 1991, p.161).

☐ (Refer to Appendix for OHP 2).

An activity has been designed to challenge practitioners' assumptions about accessible and equitable service delivery in relation to the provision of services to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds in domestic violence situations. (Refer to the Appendix for Activity 1).

2.3.3

MYTHS & FACTS

Myth

'Women from non-English speaking backgrounds will not want to go to a women's refuge.'

Fact

This myth discourages women from leaving violent relationships. The priority is for the woman and her children to feel safe. Information about refuges and options for safe accommodation must be given to the woman to allow her to make an informed choice about whether or not to access refuge accommodation. It is the responsibility of the refuge to ensure women from all backgrounds are as comfortable as possible in the refuge.

Myth

'People from that cultural community only talk to each other. They don't want any help or intervention from outsiders.'

Fact

Many people from non-English speaking backgrounds are isolated because of language differences, lack of access to information and services, experiences of discrimination and racism. These factors create barriers to obtaining assistance from mainstream services. Coming into contact with a worker from her own background may be very comforting for some women. It is important therefore, to network with ethnic community agencies such as the Immigrant Women's Support Service.

Myth

'It is too difficult to communicate with people who do not speak English.'

Fact

An interpreter is as close as the telephone. Using an interpreter makes it possible to communicate with a person who speaks a language different to your language.

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SECTION 2.3.5 **ASSESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE SERVICE DELIVERY** EVALUATION SHEET

In order to gauge the effectiveness of section 2.3 we are asking participants to provide us with their valuable opinions, which will enable us to determine if the manual provides relevant and useful material to participants and, pending the availability of funding, make appropriate changes.

Please hand in your evaluation sheet at the time of training or complete and return your evaluation sheet to -

Immigrant Women's Support Service
Diversity Training Project – Evaluations
PO Box 5490, West End, Qld 4101

1. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate the content of this section "Accessible and equitable service delivery?"

1. Excellent 2. Very good 3. Good 4. Average 5. Poor

2. On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate the usefulness of the activities?

1. Excellent 2. Very good 3. Good 4. Average 5. Poor

3. If you believe that the section could be made more effective what changes could you suggest?

4. Do you work directly with children in domestic violence situations?

Yes

No

5. Do you think this module has the capacity to assist you to work more confidently with children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

Yes

No

ACTIVITY 1 **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Aim:

To increase practitioners/services awareness of the issues surrounding accessible and equitable service delivery.

This activity is designed to challenge practitioner's assumptions about accessible and equitable services in relation to providing services to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds in domestic violence situations.

Strategies:

- Practitioners are asked to break into small groups of 4-5 people
- A scenario is presented to practitioners
- Practitioners are asked to critique an agency and determine the ways in which the service could become more **equitable** and **accessible** to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds. Bearing in mind the 7 broad principles for responding to all children inclusively. Discussion is to take approximately 10 minutes.
- Each group is to nominate a speaker to present their recommendations. Approximately 5 minutes per group.
- General discussion facilitated by trainers – approximately 10 minutes.

Scenario:

Colonial refuge is situated on the outskirts of Brisbane and has five staff. The refuge has just acquired 6 home units, one of which has been purpose built for disability access. The refuge has a counselling room and a room for children fitted out with a range of new equipment including puzzles, art and craft supplies, musical instruments, toys and dolls.

The workers at Colonial pride themselves on their ability to provide a quality service to women and children in domestic violence situations and would never turn anyone away based on their race or religion. Furthermore, the refuge workers assert that they provide an equitable and accessible service to all women and children who need assistance. However, they just have not had any clients who are from non-English speaking backgrounds who need assistance. Therefore, they believe that there is no need to have their policy and procedures translated into different languages.

Questions:

- Is this refuge achieving its aim to provide an accessible and equitable service, if not why?
- What strategies could the staff of Colonial refuge develop to become more **accessible** to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds?
- What strategies could Colonial refuge develop to provide a more **equitable** service to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE SERVICE DELIVERY

- Become familiar with using translating and interpreting services. Invite a representative to conduct a training session for your organisation.
(For information about using translating and interpreting services refer to section 3.2 "Working in a cross-cultural context")
- Ensure that there is not a total reliance on text to communicate. For example, signs and information can also be presented in a visual way with picture representations.
- Actively network and consult with bi-lingual workers and/or share case management with organisations such as the Immigrant Women's Support Service. These exist in most states in Australia and specialise in working with immigrant and refugee women and children affected by domestic violence.
- Access demographic data about the language spoken and country of origin of people in your geographic community. This is obtained from the Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics and will assist you in developing links with non-English speaking background communities in your target area.
- Keep records of the ethnicity of women and children accessing your service. Keeping demographic information allows services to identify those communities which are and which are not accessing the service and the languages in which information and documentation should be translated.
- Provide staff training in cross-cultural communication issues.
- Actively seek to employ bi-lingual workers. This serves several purposes. Firstly, it acknowledges that the agency is committed to an inclusive workplace and secondly, it gives recognition to the skills and abilities of people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

(Adapted from Professional Education Taskforce, 1991, p.161).

HANDOUT 1 **ACTIVITY 1** QUESTIONS

Questions:

- Is this refuge achieving its aim to provide an accessible and equitable service, if not why?
- What strategies could the staff of Colonial refuge develop to become more **accessible** to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds?
- What strategies could Colonial refuge develop to provide a more **equitable** service to women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds?

PURPOSE

This policy statement outlines **this organisation's** commitment to ensure that all eligible clients have equal opportunity to access the service and enjoy equality of assistance to meet their needs regardless of their individual circumstances, characteristics or backgrounds.

Or

This policy statement outlines **this organisation's** commitment to ensure that all eligible clients have equal opportunity to access the service and enjoy equality of assistance to meet their needs regardless of their ethnicity, gender, culture, language, religion, disability, lawful sexual activity, or geographic location.

PRINCIPLES

The assistance provided by (insert the name of the organisation) is underpinned by the following principles:

Respect:

Assistance is delivered from within a framework that promotes mutual respect.

Communication:

Every attempt is made to maximise communication with all clients.

Participation:

Clients enjoy equal opportunities to participate in making decisions about their own lives.

Responsiveness:

Every attempt is made to respond to the individual needs of clients.

Accountability:

The service is accountable for ensuring that clients are able to access and benefit from the assistance provided regardless of their individual backgrounds or circumstances.

These principles are consistent with the practice principles identified in the Practice Guidelines.

OUTCOMES

The (insert the name of the organisation) will work towards the achievement of the following outcomes:

- At agency level: The incorporation of access and equity objectives in the different areas of work in the organisation ranging from policies and procedures, staff employment and work practices, and service delivery.
- At client level: All eligible clients will enjoy equality of opportunities to access the service and to receive assistance to meet their individual needs regardless of their individual backgrounds or circumstances.