



Government of Western Australia
Department for Child Protection
and Family Support

**DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND
FAMILY SUPPORT**

**CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CaLD)
SERVICES FRAMEWORK**

December 2013 revised edition

Introduction

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) engages with culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) families and communities to support families and create safety for children. To be effective in this work it is important for staff to develop cultural competence and provide a tailored response to families from different cultural backgrounds.

Western Australia's CaLD communities apply a wide variety of child rearing and parenting practices, which in some communities have prevailed despite prolonged years of adversity and trauma. The Department respects the diverse ways in which parents and communities raise their children and aims to understand these cultural practices and community strengths.

However, if the Department believes that a child has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, action must be taken regardless of whether the source of the harm is seen as a cultural practice or acceptable in the family's country of origin.

Cultural practices can never override the safety and wellbeing of children and CaLD children must be afforded the same level of safety as others. This is best achieved with an understanding of the cultural considerations, which provide background and context, but must not override case practice decision making and safety planning.

The Department should work in partnership with other services for migrants and refugees, to assist with early intervention and prevention responses. These services, along with senior members of the community, can assist to explore and consider options when responding to CaLD families where the safety and wellbeing of children is compromised.

The key approaches outlined in this framework are consistent with the strategic priorities of the *Department for Child Protection Strategic Plan 2012-2014*. The Department's values, outlined in the Strategic Plan are an effective guide for working with CaLD communities, families and partner agencies.

Respect

Respect for diversity through listening, understanding and accepting differences, underpins how we work.

Teamwork

Collaboration and team work with children, families, communities and partner agencies is recognised as fundamental to effective work with CaLD groups.

Openness

Having open and transparent policies and processes for clients and partner agencies is particularly important where language and the experience of other cultures could interfere with understanding.

Responsiveness

Being responsive to the diverse needs of children, families and communities is important to providing the most appropriate service response.

Statistical snapshot

This Framework uses the term 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CaLD) to capture the diversity of language, religion, culture and ethnicity in the Western Australian community. CaLD refers to the wide range of cultural groups and individuals that make up the Western Australian population and who differ according to religion, race, language or ethnicity.

The community of Western Australia has broad cultural diversity. The Australian Bureau of Statistics census figures from 2011 indicate:

- 30.7 per cent of Western Australians (687,425 persons) were born overseas;
- over 270 different languages are spoken; and
- over 100 different faiths are practised¹.

Western Australia is home to an increasing number of people from new and emerging communities. People who have arrived under Australia's humanitarian program (refugees) often have high needs as a result of the length of time spent in refugee camps, the lack of informal support networks in Australia and the additional assistance needed to address the settlement challenges they face.

The growth in diversity across the community and particularly families from refugee communities has resulted in an increase in the number of people from CaLD backgrounds coming into contact with the Department, including:

- 462 notifications at 30 June 2011 (3.2 per cent of total notifications);
- 593 notifications at 30 June 2012 (3.5 per cent of total notifications); and
- 706 notifications at 30 June 2013 (3.8 per cent of total notifications).

Between 1 January 2011 and 31 June 2013, the primary reasons for CaLD clients contact with the Department were domestic violence, child protection concerns, family support and financial assistance.

Increased demand for services is pronounced for metropolitan districts with a high CaLD population such as Mirrabooka, where intervention with the CaLD (predominantly the African and Sudanese community) accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the district front-end workload. This district has a specialist community child protection worker who is proactive in community prevention and education.

By undertaking partnership approaches, Mirrabooka and other metropolitan districts have maintained low levels of CaLD children and specifically children from African families, entering the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department. The numbers of CaLD children in the care of the CEO being:

- 192 CaLD children at 30 June 2011;
- 233 CaLD children at 30 June 2012; and
- 234 CaLD children at 30 June 2013.

This makes up less than six per cent of children in care at 30 June 2013.

National and state policies

The Commonwealth Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) manages immigration, citizenship, ethnic affairs, customs and border control. DIBP is also responsible for Australia's Humanitarian Program.

¹ Office of Multicultural Interests: http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_stats.asp

Under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* (the IGOC Act) the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is the legal guardian of Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHMs). The Department provides assessment and case management for some of these minors until they turn 18 years of age, in a joint program with the Commonwealth Government. These processes are outlined in the Casework Practice Manual (CPM).

The Department of Social Services (DSS) takes the lead on settlement and multicultural policy, including Multicultural Access and Equity and the National Settlement Framework, and administers most settlement and multicultural affairs programs.

The Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) program provides practical support to humanitarian clients to help them settle into the community. Community sector services deliver the HSS program on behalf of the Commonwealth Government and provide specialised and intensive case management support to humanitarian entrants with exceptional needs. Where the Department becomes involved, information about a family's eligibility for or involvement in this program should be sought.

A useful source of support is the Office of Multicultural Affairs website Directory of Services and Contacts for New Arrivals in WA at http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_msd.cfm.

The State Government has adopted the *WA Charter of Multiculturalism* and under the principle of fairness, promotes "the pursuit of public policies free of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion on the basis of characteristics such as origin, 'race', culture, religion, ethnicity and nationality".

Other relevant State Government policies include:

- the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, which sets outcomes for the Department's *Equity and Diversity Management Plan* so that the Department's workforce better reflects its client base and that the services it provides are responsive and appropriate.
- the *Policy Framework for Substantive Equality*, which enables State Government services to respond to the specific needs and circumstances of people from Aboriginal and CaLD backgrounds in order to achieve equitable outcomes.
- the *Western Australian Language Services Policy*, to assist people who are not proficient in English to access professional interpreting services. The Department has corresponding CPM guidelines on when and how to access interpreters.

Legislation and key policy directions

Children and Community Services Act 2004

Specific provisions exist within the *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (the Act)* for a child's cultural identity to be taken into account when planning for their care². Section 80 *Guidelines for the placement of certain children*³ is operationalised through the CPM

² s.8 (1) In determining what is in a child's best interests the following matters must be taken into account –

(i) The child's age, maturity, sex, sexuality, background and language

(j) The child's cultural, ethnic or religious identity

(k) The child's physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, developmental and educational needs.

s.10 (1) If a decision under this Act is likely to have a significant impact on a child's life then, the child should be given –

(a) adequate information, in a manner and language that the child can understand ...

(c) any assistance that is necessary for the child to express those wishes and views

³ s80. Guidelines for placement of certain children

(1) the CEO must establish written guidelines to be observed when making placement arrangements for children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

(2) Without limiting the scope of the guidelines, they are to address the need to preserve and enhance a child's cultural, ethnic and religious identity.

chapter 7.1 - Departmental Child Placement Guidelines, which emphasise the need to consider the child's cultural identity in planning and placement. Every child in the care of the CEO should have a cultural plan.

The Department applies the principle that, along with the parents and family of the child, the community of the child has a primary role in safeguarding and promoting the child's wellbeing and to be supported to care for the child. Implementing this relies on quality relationships with CaLD community groups.

Links to other practice frameworks

Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework

The Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework sets out the principles, practice disciplines, processes and tools to achieve an inclusive approach with families.

The mapping, assessment of harm and danger and safety planning undertaken in Signs of Safety meetings with the family, should include the extended family, key community members and other agencies working with the family. This allows for family networks to be part of the safety plan and cultural issues to be addressed, maintaining the focus on safety for the child. If attempts to build safety around the child do not succeed and the child comes into the care of the CEO, extended family may identify suitable family or community placements.

For families where English is a second language, the Signs of Safety framework provides clear and straightforward language and encompasses the use of visual tools that assist the family to understand and engage. The approach similarly allows for greater engagement of the extended family and community and agency supports. It also achieves clarity regarding the Department's concerns and the family's goals. These are sound and culturally appropriate strategies when working with people from CaLD backgrounds.

Foster Care Partnership

The Foster Care Partnership recognises that general and relative carers make the biggest difference in the life of a child in care. Carers are the Department's partners in the care and protection of these children. When a child is in out-of-home care, the most important thing the Department can do is to support the placement to succeed.

Most children are placed with relative carers or members of their community and a process of support and engagement to build the capacity of carers to meet carer competencies may need to occur. This should take place through the process of assessment, ongoing engagement and review. Specific cultural and language needs are considered as part of this process.

The Foster Care Partnership requires the participation of carers in planning for the child. Whether placed with relative or general foster carers, cultural planning is essential and undertaken in partnership with carers to enable meaningful plans to maintain a child's connection to their culture.

Residential Care (Sanctuary) Framework

The *Residential Care Sanctuary Framework* describes the overarching model and core elements of how the Department's residential homes operate, providing a coherent therapeutic approach to care recognising and addressing children's past trauma.

Residential homes provide therapeutic environments that support children to make behavioural change and develop important life skills such as decision-making, problem solving and conflict resolution. The identification of children's cultural identity and background needs contribute to the development of therapeutic plans that support and maintain connection to family and community.

Family Support (Responsible Parenting) Framework

CaLD families - in particular those arriving as refugees, face significant challenges during their initial settlement period. Background issues of trauma, differing parenting practices and expectations of young people's rights and behaviours can lead to parent/child conflict and parent's experiencing difficulty asserting authority. This can be compounded as young people adopt an Australian lifestyle. Background trauma, frustrations around settlement and cultural views on gender roles can also contribute to family and domestic violence.

The provision of family support and child centred family support requires a focus on community and culturally appropriate support. Parent Support and Best Beginnings can assist and empower CaLD families to strengthen their parenting and care for their children safely. These programs work in a way that makes sense to families from CaLD backgrounds, using resources with visual elements and simple language.

People Development Framework

In line with the 70.20.10 learning framework, the Learning and Development Centre (LDC) and the Learning and Development Network provide expertise and resources in the development and delivery of relevant cross-cultural learning activities. Staff are encouraged to access *Diverse WA*, OMI's online cultural competency training package, which is accessible through the OMI website or a link provided through the CaLD SharePoint site.

Key learning areas for child protection staff include identifying how personal values and belief systems may impact on work with CaLD clients; to understand the different migration pathways; and the common risk factors for child protection and domestic violence notifications. Understand specific issues related to refugee families such as torture and trauma and how to develop professional relationships with people from CaLD backgrounds can assist in carrying out child protection assessments.

The *Working with CaLD and Refugee Families in Child Protection Practice* is provided as advanced training, available to Department and community sector staff. This training assists workers to develop these skills and knowledge. Local learning occurs through the local learning and development teams, which provide a forum for child protection workers to share their experiences, knowledge and practice wisdom on the Department's work with CaLD children and families.

Connection to the Department's strategic priorities.

Capacity

Local strategies to develop the capacity of the Department to respond to CaLD communities include the use of dedicated reference groups; engaging with local community advisors; projects responding to local needs; and engagement with local community groups or organisations. Centrally, key partnerships of the Department include:

- engaging with OMI to partner on specific projects;

- with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, to assist with unaccompanied humanitarian minors and humanitarian entrants;
- peak ethnic groups who provide advice on emerging trends and issues; and
- key providers of services, such as ASeTTS WA and migrant resource centres.

The Department's responsive recruitment and retention initiatives support the development of a culturally diverse workforce and increase the capacity of the organisation. In 2012-13, 10.6 per cent of the Department's workforce was from a CaLD background.

The workforce includes staff from countries with higher numbers of refugees. This provides a growing capacity within the Department for advice and consultation provided locally. Districts have a continuing role in facilitating the provision of education and information sessions, particularly for refugees, humanitarian entrants and other new and emerging communities. This usually occurs in collaboration with other government and community sector organisations.

Performance

A CaLD Working Group, with representatives of the Department's key business areas and work units, meets regularly to monitor emerging child protection and family support issues and trends and the effectiveness of the Department's responses and services.

The *At Risk Youth Strategy 2011-2014* guides the Department's work with at risk young people, including those from CaLD backgrounds, by identifying those at the greatest level of risk. Responses to at risk young people, including those in care, should be done with consideration of the needs and resources of the communities where they reside.

The Department's *Better Care, Better Services, Standards for Children and Young People in Care 2007*⁴ guides the provision of quality care and services for CaLD children in the care of the CEO. The Department's Standards Monitoring Unit strengthens this process by considering CaLD service delivery and practice issues against the standards. This monitoring enables the Department to have a continual process for addressing any substantive equality issues which could arise. This is supported by a substantive equality meeting twice a year to provide coordination within the Department.

Development

CaLD Practice Networks (CPN) are being established by districts with growing CaLD communities to improve learning and development opportunities.

Community education is being delivered through local presentations, facilitated by partnerships with OMI, Parenting WA and a variety of CaLD community organisations and groups. This assists families to understand Australian parenting practices and the role of the Department in responding to child protection and family and domestic violence.

The CaLD SharePoint site provides easy access to selected information, direction and guidance about specific cultural issues and practices and complements the guidance provided in the Department's CPM. Resources available to staff include translated multicultural parenting resources, links to services, information on cultural and religious practices and country profiles.

⁴ *Better care, Better Services, Standards for Children and Young People in Care, 2007*. Available: <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Resources/Documents/Standards%20Monitoring%20Unit/Better%20Care%20Better%20Services%20-%20booklet.pdf>

The CaLD SharePoint site provides dedicated practice tools and resources on how to engage effectively with CaLD families, including:

- reference guide to working with CaLD families;
- CaLD fact sheet;
- CaLD cultural planning strategies;
- CaLD cultural plan prompt list;
- national guidelines for responding to forced child marriage; and
- managing interpreter issues in child protection practice.

Other practice support for staff is available in the CPM with chapters on language services, processes for booking and using interpreters and responding to female genital mutilation or forced child marriage.

Related Resources

- Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework
<http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Resources/Documents/Policies%20and%20Frameworks/SignsOfSafetyFramework2011.pdf>
- Residential Care (Sanctuary) Framework
http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Resources/Documents/Residential_Care_Sanctuary_Framework.pdf
- Family Support (Responsible Parenting) Framework
[http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/Documents/FamilySupport\(ResponsibleParenting\)Framework.pdf](http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/Documents/FamilySupport(ResponsibleParenting)Framework.pdf)
- People Development Framework
http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/Organisation/Documents/People_Development_Framework_2013-14.pdf
- Office of Multicultural Interests directory of services
http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_msdcfm