

*Building Cultural Competence  
in Disability Services*



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If you want more information or assistance in building the cultural competence of your organisation please contact MDAA.

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# **Building Cultural Competence in Disability Services in NSW to Achieve Better Practice**

The NSW Disability Service Standards require services to provide support to individual service users in a manner that is sensitive to their age, gender, cultural, linguistic and religious background.

This implies that disability services across NSW need to be in a position to respond appropriately to specific, individual needs in a culturally diverse environment.

The following information is intended as a guide to assist your service in becoming more culturally competent. This will ensure that your service is in a better position to provide services to meet the needs of all people in your catchment area, including people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability. This booklet is to be read in conjunction with other relevant resources, such as the NSW Disability Service Standards *Standards in Action*.

Your service can use the Cultural Competence Standards outlined here to improve service provision in a variety of ways:

- to guide annual planning and service self-evaluation processes;
- to monitor progress of people from a NESB with disability against Action and Strategic Plans;
- to assist in the development of integrated service delivery models to meet the specific cultural and linguistic needs of service users;
- to identify gaps and needs in the provision of services;

- to identify staff, management and volunteer training and resource needs; and,
- to identify gaps and needs in policy development.

Principles and policies of social justice and access and equity underpin the Cultural Competence Standards outlined in this booklet for the provision of appropriate services which are responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse community.

## Access and Equity: Basic Approaches for More Accessible Services

For a service to achieve cultural competence, principles of access and equity must underpin the service's overall strategy and impact upon all activities throughout the entire organisation.

An integrated approach is vital to achieving social justice and access and equity for people from a NESB with disability in NSW. This means that services need to focus on:

- **Equality of outcomes for all service users**

For example: many agencies state that they treat every service user and potential service user in an equal manner. However, this is often a single uniform approach which, because of barriers posed by language and culture may not be sufficient to gain an equal quality of service for a service user with specific needs. Therefore, for a person from a NESB with disability, being treated as 'equal' to other service users may require having access to a range of specific support mechanisms that enable the recipient to achieve an equal quality of service and equal outcomes from that service. This may include having access to culturally appropriate advocates, translated information and/or interpreters.

- **A balanced approach**

For example: this usually begins with an examination of the service's external and internal processes. External processes include promotional activities, distribution of information, networking and consultations with the community. Internal processes include staff training and resources to ensure that the agency is in a position to deliver services that meet the needs of a culturally diverse community.

- **The integration of access and equity principles into the day-to-day operation of the service**

For example: such an approach usually begins with an examination of the service's Aims and Objectives, Mission Statement and Job Descriptions and is reflected in the agency's annual plan and budget.

# Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services responsive to community needs

## Standard 1: Service Access

### Cultural Competence Standard

The service has policies and strategies to redress any inequalities or disadvantages a service user, or potential service user, may have in accessing the service, with particular emphasis on those from disadvantaged groups including people from a non-English speaking background with disability.

### 1.1 Service Entry

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency provides information about the type of services it offers in formats that are accessible to all identifiable groups within its service catchment area. For example: information is provided, promoted and distributed to relevant target groups in languages other than English in written and/or audio formats.
2. The agency has established practices that achieve equity of access for people from a NESB with a disability. For example: a process is in place for prioritising service users from a NESB that have been placed on the waiting list.

3. The agency has intake processes that take note of special service requirements relating to a service user's culture, language or religion.

#### Enhanced Standards

4. The agency ensures that all new service users are provided with important information about user rights and responsibilities in a manner that is appropriate to identified service user needs. For example: information is provided via an interpreter and in written and/or audio format in the service users' preferred language.

## **1.2 Service Exit**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency has exit processes ensuring that service users from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds exiting the service are fully aware of all available options for any future service need.
2. The agency has an established referral policy that informs the referral agency of any cultural and linguistic factors that may need to be considered in the service delivery model designed to meet the user's future needs.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency liaises and networks with ethnic organisations and advocacy services that may assist the service user exiting the agency with the transition process to another agency.

## **Standard 2: Individual Needs**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

The service is responsive to the individual needs and personal goals of each service user, or potential service user, and services are designed and delivered in a manner that respects and accommodates each service user's culture, language and religion.

### **2.1 Individual Planning and Review**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency has in place a process that identifies the individual service user's wishes, strengths, linguistic and cultural needs and integrates these into the Individual Service Plan (ISP).

#### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency actively promotes to service users the choice to utilize disability advocacy services and/or ethnic community representation in the development and review of their Individual Service Plan (ISP).

## **Standard 3: Decision Making and Choice**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Service delivery is culturally and linguistically appropriate and responsive to each individual service user's need, thereby supporting service users to overcome any barriers to their participation in decision-making and planning relating to the services they receive.

### **3.1 Informed Decision-Making**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency provides information in appropriate languages and accessible formats to assist service users to make informed choices. For example information is provided relating to benefits and risks involved in proposed activities.
2. The agency ensures that service users from a NESB are aware that they may involve an advocate of their choice.
3. The agency informs service users about other services that may be approached to assist in meeting their needs, including ethno-specific agencies.

#### Enhanced Standards

4. The agency has in place strategies for decision-making and service user participation that take account of cultural differences in approaches to decision making (eg. collectivist versus individualistic approaches).
5. The agency seeks expert advice, to assist in the provision of services and activities that promote the user's dignity and independence in accordance with the cultural and religious background and lifestyle of the user.

## **Standard 4: Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Services provided to each service user, regardless of language spoken or cultural background, promote the service user's equal, effective and comprehensive civil and legal rights to privacy, dignity and confidentiality in every aspect of life.

### **4.1 Service User Records**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency routinely collects information that includes:
  - Service users' and carers' preferred language;
  - Service users' and carers' preferred medium for communication (eg. audio tape, interpreter, translated information);
  - Ethnicity and country of birth of service user;
  - Birthplace(s) of service users' parents; and,
  - Other relevant information which may impact on service delivery. For example: service user's religion, religious practices or dietary requirements.
2. Where necessary, the agency uses professional interpreters to obtain and document informed consent.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency trains staff to be sensitive to and respectful of cultural and religious beliefs and practices surrounding privacy, dignity and the conveying of personal information. When appropriate, expert advice is sought.

### **4.2 Notification of Deaths of Service Users**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency trains staff and management to be sensitive to and respectful of cultural and religious beliefs and practices when informing a family from a NESB of the death of a family member.

#### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency seeks expert advice concerning appropriate arrangements for the deceased, if the deceased is from a religious or cultural background which may require particular practices.

## **Standard 5: Participation and Integration**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Each service user is afforded the opportunity to participate in their personal development and community life and is assisted and supported in a culturally appropriate manner to do so.

### **5.1 Participation and Integration**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that proposed services and activities are not in conflict with the service user's cultural and religious beliefs and practices.
2. The agency offers service users the choice of being linked with other service agencies, either ethno-specific or generic services, or both.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency networks and liaises with relevant ethnic organisations to facilitate the participation and integration of service users into their own communities. For example: forging links with cultural clubs and social/recreational activities run by the service user's cultural community.

## 5.2 Agency Co-ordination

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency compiles a community profile so that current information is available about the ethnic background of residents in the service's catchment area.
2. The agency aligns the ethnic profile of applicants and the agency's current service user groups to more closely reflect the demographics of the service catchment area.
3. The agency investigates referral rates when there is a low or nil response from local ethnic communities to assess what steps need to be taken to improve services.
4. The agency gathers and makes available, resources pertaining to ethnic communities. For example: the collection of appropriate service directories, reference books, statistical information.

### Enhanced Standards

5. The agency develops its service information through consultation with service users and ethnic communities, and with regard to the ethnic profile of the area.
6. The agency promotes its services to all potential service users. For example: through ethnic radio and in ethnic newspapers and newsletters.
7. The agency creates an inclusive and 'non-threatening' atmosphere within the office/service environment to make service users from a NESB and their families feel more comfortable and welcome. For example: information is provided in different languages and posters and pictures depict different cultural settings.

## **Standard 6: Valued Status**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Each service user is afforded the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs that enhance confidence, develop skills, respect culture and promote a valued social role in the community for people from a non-English speaking background with disability.

### **6.1 Valued Status**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency has a core principle/statement/value that acknowledges and supports a positive social role for people with disabilities from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
2. The agency demonstrates in the way it provides services and trains its staff that it values and respects the cultural, religious and linguistic background of each service user.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency networks and liaises with ethnic communities, agencies, groups, individuals and forums to promote awareness of the positive value of people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
4. The agency targets ethnic communities in the delivery, promotion and development of community education activities, sessions, and programs.

## **Standard 7: Complaints and Disputes**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

The service encourages each service user to know their rights and responsibilities with regard to the services provided and to know how to exercise these rights without fear of retribution. Further, each service user is supported to understand their rights in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and responsive to individual need.

### **7.1 Service User Complaints and Disputes**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that service users from a NESB are informed at intake of their rights relating to complaints and disputes. For example: rights information is provided in an appropriate language and accessible format.
2. The agency offers service users from a NESB professional interpreters in all complaints and dispute resolution contexts.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency actively promotes to service users from a NESB the availability of disability advocacy services for support in all complaints and disputes.
4. The agency regularly invites advocacy services to provide information sessions to service users from a NESB and their families and carers.

## **Standard 8: Service Management**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

The service has policies and systems that ensure well planned, efficient and accountable management practices responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse community in the provision of a high quality service.

### **8.1 Structure and Function of the Governing Body**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency actively encourages and recruits people from diverse cultural backgrounds onto the agency's Governing Body to align its ethnic profile with the demographics of the service catchment area.

### **8.2 Service Policy Development and Review**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency's policies and practices are underpinned by and reflect access and equity and social justice principles.

### **8.3 Service Planning and Review**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency implements an Action Plan for outreach to ethnic communities in the service's catchment area with specified annual targets, access strategies and monitoring mechanisms to measure progress against the Plan.

2. The agency has clearly defined budget line items for translation and interpreting services and for publication and production costs of written and audio materials.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency has in place strategies which ensure the involvement of service users from a NESB and their families in all service planning and review processes. For example: the service conducts language specific focus groups and one-to-one interviews.
4. The agency carries out an annual planning process that includes consultation with the ethnic community in order to identify any gaps in the agency's targeting, outreach or promotional strategies or service delivery.

## **8.4 Anti-Discrimination**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency has policies and practices in place that prevent racial discrimination from occurring, including direct and indirect forms of discrimination. For example, policies exist to prevent the following situations from occurring:
  - a person is refused a service because they did not speak English;
  - a person is refused a service or receives an inferior and/or inappropriate service because they could not clearly articulate how their service needs could be met. This could also be due to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the services or programs available

from the agency and/or lack of understanding of unfamiliar terms and concepts such as 'Respite Care'.

#### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency ensures that cultural and linguistic needs of service users are respected and responded to. For example: service users are able to observe their religious holidays and festivals, service information is available in appropriate languages and formats, service activities are culturally appropriate and interpreters are available for consultations.

### **8.5 Staff Recruitment and Orientation**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency actively recruits staff from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example: by advertising in ethnic newspapers and informing ethnic organisations of job vacancies.
2. The agency takes account of qualifications gained overseas as an indicator of the applicant's relevant skills.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency includes "demonstrated knowledge and experience in cross-cultural issues" as an "essential or desirable criterion" in position advertisements.

## **8.6 Staff Management and Professional Development**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that all staff undergo cross-cultural training and training in the use of interpreters, including refresher and upgrade programs.

### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency supports staff to improve their repertoire of skills, awareness and sensitivity to the needs of people from a NESB with disability by encouraging staff to participate in conferences and forums relating to issues and needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disabilities.
3. The agency includes cross-cultural competence as a component of the staff appraisal process.

## **8.7 Staff Complaints and Disputes**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that policies and mechanisms dealing with staff complaints and disputes are available to all staff in appropriate languages and accessible formats.

## **8.8 Occupational Health and Safety**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency's policies and procedures on Occupational Health and Safety are available to staff in appropriate languages and accessible formats.

2. The agency has policies and procedures in place which protect staff from racial abuse (eg. racial harassment and home visit policies). The policies are available to all staff in appropriate languages and accessible formats.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency provides training and orientation for Occupational Health and Safety in a manner which is accessible to all staff.

### **8.9 Facilities and Equipment**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that all staff members and volunteers are aware of all available options for service users in terms of facilities, resources and equipment. For example: staff and volunteers are informed of existing arrangements with ethnic agencies and other organisations regarding the sharing of resources, facilities and equipment.
2. The agency ensures that all relevant staff and volunteers are fully conversant with the operation and maintenance of all equipment. For example: appropriate information and/or instruction is provided, which may include the provision of translated materials and/or the use of interpreters.

#### Enhanced Standards

3. The agency conducts an inventory of facilities, equipment and resources and consults with relevant groups and individuals to ensure that it is able to respond appropriately to diverse community needs. For example: arrangements are made to conduct service user interviews at an appropriate ethnic agency.

## **Standard 9: Family Relationships**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Each person with a disability receives a service which recognizes the importance of preserving family relationships, informal social networks and is sensitive to their cultural and linguistic environments and needs.

### **9.1 Maintaining Links with Family and Friends**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency actively acknowledges the importance of family relationships within many ethnic communities and actively seeks to build positive relationships with families and communities to provide a culturally appropriate service. For example, by:
  - obtaining information about religious events and holidays relevant to the service user to encourage his/her involvement in family and cultural activities;
  - designing a service delivery model that, where relevant and appropriate, actively encourages family and friends of the service user to take an active and supportive role in social/recreational and other relevant activities undertaken by the service user; and
  - using culturally appropriate advocates and interpreters when relevant.

## **Standard 10: Protection of Human Rights and Freedom from Abuse**

### **Cultural Competence Standard**

Each service user receives services in an environment free from fear, abuse and harassment including abuse, harassment and neglect motivated by racial prejudice.

### **10.1 Advocacy**

#### Minimum Standards

1. The agency networks with local services and groups to seek information about options for culturally appropriate advocacy and, when possible and appropriate, uses advocates from relevant ethnic organisations.

#### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency promotes to service users the availability of appropriate advocacy services as well as ethnic community services to assist the service user with their interactions with the agency.
3. The agency assists potential advocates by linking them to agencies that provide relevant training/orientation relating to the role and responsibilities of advocacy in a cultural context.

## **10.2 Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that its services and activities do not conflict with cultural and religious beliefs and practices. For example: by organising appropriate consultations with service users in the design and delivery of activities.

### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency has put in place mechanisms for communication and consultation with service users, their advocates, family and carers relating to the service users' right to make decisions about elements of risk involved in chosen activities. For example: through facilitated meetings, focus groups and information sessions and, on the individual level, via interpreters and by the provision of appropriate information.

## **10.3 Guardianship**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency fully informs the service user from a NESB and their family when making an application for Guardianship orders and provides them with all the necessary information. For example: explaining the concept of guardianship, the role of the Guardian and implications for the service user and their family of a Guardianship order.
2. The agency ensures that professional interpreters are available when discussing Guardianship applications.

## **10.4 Nutrition and Health**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that the provision of a balanced and adequate diet includes foods that are culturally appropriate and tailored to individual tastes.

### Enhanced Standards

2. The agency ensures that staff and service management are aware of religious holidays and festivals and of the dietary requirements for service users for such events and provides the appropriate meals. The agency seeks expert advice when relevant.

## **10.5 Managing Medication**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency ensures that mechanisms are in place that allow the service user to be appropriately informed and aware of all important elements in the management of their medication. For example: changes to medication or routines relating to the provision of medication would be conveyed via an interpreter and/or by a culturally appropriate advocate when relevant.

## **10.6 Management of Abuse, Injury and Neglect**

### Minimum Standards

1. The agency provides information at intake relating to a service user's right to receive a quality service in an environment free from abuse, injury and neglect. For example: the information is provided in an appropriate language and accessible format, including translated information (written and/or audio) and/or via an interpreter.
2. The agency ensures that where incidents occur such as racial or sexual harassment or abuse (whether by word, attitude or actions) they are handled through the appropriate authorities and/or channels in a responsible, timely and culturally appropriate manner. For example: through the provision of professional interpreters, with the assistance of culturally appropriate advocates and seeking expert advice.