

At MDAA we do **advocacy**. This means we work together with people with disability, families, and the community to promote, protect and secure the rights and interests of people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their families and carers in NSW.

How we can help you and your family

Individual Advocacy: A worker, called an advocate, works with you when your rights are ignored. The advocate will 'stand beside' you and support you, so you can make your own decisions and get what you need. An advocate can help you stand up for your rights, for example, when you have problems with housing, immigration, work, school, and disability services.

How we can help your community

Advocacy Development: We work together with groups of people with disability and their families to learn more about standing up for your rights and needs. This can help you to have a say about the things that are important to you.

Community Development: MDAA can work with your community to increase knowledge and awareness about disability, disability services and the rights of people with disability.

Systemic Advocacy: We lobby politicians and government departments to make things better for people from a NESB with disability and their families.

Our advocacy and community development services are free.

Turkish

Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW



opening doors

Disability experienced in Turkey and Australia



Working for a NSW where the diversity of disability and culture is anticipated, supported and celebrated

Acknowledged by

Turkish Welfare Association Inc.
Türk Dayanışma Derneği

Australian Turkish and Kurdish
Community Services Co-Op LTD



NSW Auburn Turkish Islamic
Cultural Centre Inc.

Maeve Dunnett and Sandra Schlossar wrote this report for the

Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW

PO Box 9381

Harris Park NSW 2150

Australia

Phone: +61 (0)2 9891 6400

Fax: +61 (0)2 9635 5355

E-mail: mdaa@mdaa.org.au

Website: www.mdaa.org.au

© Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW

First published November 2004

ISBN 1-920821-09-0

This report is copyright. Non-profit community groups have permission to reproduce any part of the report, so long as the original meaning is maintained and proper credit is given to the author and the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW. All other persons and organisations wanting to reproduce material from this report should obtain permission from the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW.

MDAA gratefully acknowledges the support of the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

Acknowledgments

'opening doors' was undertaken by MDAA together with many individuals and organisations to increase the knowledge about disability in different ethnic communities.

MDAA would like to thank everyone from the community who helped us with this project.

Contents

How we treated people with disability in the past	6
Were there any events that changed attitudes to people with disability?	7
Has the language we use to talk about people with disability changed?	8
What are the stories or beliefs about disability in Turkey?	9
Are there any differences in the way city and country people respond to disability?	10
What services are there for people with disability?	11
What role do families play in caring for people with disability?	12
What does the community know about the rights of people with disability? How has this changed over the years?	13
Web Sites used in writing this document	15
What is Disability?	16
What support can people with disability get?	17
How to find out more about services for people with disability	18

Disability experienced in Turkey

This introduction is about disability experiences of Turkish people and families. Some of the attitudes and beliefs discussed are also common to other cultures.

How we treated people with disability in the past

Turkey lies where East and West meet and has had many cultural influences over the centuries, giving Turkey its own rich, distinctive cultural flavour. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey our laws and social structures have not been based on Islamic Law, though Islam maintains a strong influence on society and most of the population is Muslim.

In the past and today, responses to disability vary enormously among individuals and different groups in the community. A long time ago in the Ottoman Empire people with mental illness were paid attention and were treated with very progressive techniques. Doctors knew about the connections between biological changes and emotions and monitored the pulses of people suffering from extreme fear, anxiety or clinical depression. Music was used to calm their pulses down and a silent and serene environment was created to soothe their souls. The therapy also included the positive influences of nature and gardens and recitations of the Koran. More recently our responses were influenced by whether there were any services available or whether the person lived in the country or the city.

Disability was generally not considered as something that people and families could talk about. With a lack of other services available and feeling stigmatised, families would often take their family member to see a religious person to be healed and cured. Religious leaders also played and continue to play a role in the

lives of people with emotional or psychological difficulties who might be reluctant to seek help from many more formal services.

Parents would sometimes blame each other for causing the disability and families had difficulty accepting disability as part of their lives. One of the consequences is that many people with disability were put into institutions, especially people with more complex support needs.



In more recent times families would usually care for their family member who has disability and would be treated with affection and compassion. At the same time, however, some families would feel shame about the disability and would not want others in the community to know and so people would be hidden from the community in the family home. This was especially so for people with mental illness and intellectual disability.

Were there any events that changed attitudes to people with disability?

After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923 and after the years of hardship caused by World War II, people's attitudes toward disability started to change slowly. Since then many reforms in science and social life have taken place.

In recent years our awareness and attitudes towards people with disability have changed a lot because of more international contacts, the Internet and media. Greater awareness in the international community of people with disability influenced Turkey to change its legislation, to foster the rights for people with disability and to expand the service system. Our ongoing efforts to integrate into the European Union also play an important role.

In 1994 the Turkish Parliament adopted the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disability to set certain standards for people with disability.

Two devastating earthquakes in the Marmara Region in 1999 had huge effects on everyone's life. They killed thousands of people and left many injured and with a permanent disability. Disability became more visible in the community. We created new services and centres for people with disability. In 2000 the Handicap International Turkey Programme started its support programme for people with disability, including victims of the Marmara earthquakes. Together with local organisations they built and supported centres in the region for therapy and rehabilitation for victims of the earthquakes with disability.

In 2000 a new approach, community based rehabilitation, was implemented. This changed the awareness and behaviour of the community towards people with disability through forming relationships with people, their families and institutions. This approach tried to provide equal opportunities for people with disability, integrate them into the community, give them more autonomy and raise awareness and sensibility within the community.

Has the language we use to talk about people with disability changed?

In the past we used language that was often negative and tended to put people down and was degrading to the person with disability. Now the language we use to describe disability is changing, describing disability in a more positive way. But still terms such as "handicapped" and "disabled people" are common in everyday use.

What are the stories or beliefs about disability in Turkey?

Disability is still seen as a medical condition, which needs medical treatment and rehabilitation to be cured or eased. The social dimension of disability is still not understood and persons with disability are often segregated. Social, political and economic exclusion still persists.

There is a lot of variation in people's beliefs about disability and how people respond to disability. For some of us disability is a blessing because it reminds us that we are not made of steel. Others believe that it is God's will and perhaps it is a teaching or that God is testing our belief, our compassion or our patience. Some of us find there is enormous respect in the community for people with disability.

Hatice

Hatice has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair to get around. She lives with her family, who includes Hatice in all parts of family life and believes in Hatice's right to a good education and an active life. Hatice's family takes her everywhere and expects people to accept her for who she is.

When a child with disability is born generally the family finds it very hard to adjust and accept the disability, and sometimes they never come to terms with their child's disability. Parents might expect other people to look down on them because of their child's disability and they might get very depressed. Some families withdraw from community life and isolate themselves.

Suheyla and her family

Suheyla is the youngest daughter of Fatma and Hasan. Suheyla has an intellectual and physical disability. Before Suheyla was born, Fatma and Hasan and Yunus their son were a gregarious family, very active in the life of the community, often having family and friends to visit in their home. After Suheyla was born they stopped inviting friends over and became less and less involved in the community.

How a person is received in their family and community also has to do with their ability to communicate easily. When the person cannot do this, things are much harder for them.

Many people feel pity towards people with disability and there is a strong belief that a good life is not possible when there is disability. In general the stigma attached to people with physical disability is less than the stigma experienced by people with mental illness, intellectual disability or brain injury.

When a person has a mental illness or an intellectual disability, some people believe the person lives without a healthy soul and therefore needs treatment. Other people try to find healing through a spiritual leader.

Are there any differences in the way city and country people respond to disability?

In the cities many buildings are not accessible for people with physical disability, but in the country where many people are poorer, houses are accessible as they are built without steps.

In the city there are more services and parents are more likely to seek professional help. In the past in the country we often sought help from religious leaders and were also more likely to use traditional herbal formulas for health care. Nowadays we accept the help of local doctors.

In rural areas our community is very close and there is more informal social support, so it is easier for people with disability to participate in the community, particularly people with intellectual disability. This is much more difficult to do in the city as people often don't know their neighbours and local community and city life is much faster, with not so much time for those kinds of relationships.

Huseyin

Huseyin was a young man with a brain injury who lived with his family in a small town where he was able to participate in community life and all the townsfolk knew him and watched out for him. Huseyin's family had to move to Istanbul for work and a short time after they moved Huseyin went for a walk as he often did in the past. Huseyin disappeared and has never been seen again.

What services are there for people with disability?

Only a small percentage of children with disability go to school. There are not enough schools for all children with disability and in the country the distance to travel is too great for many children. In assessing a child's ability parents are often not given support or information about child's needs. There are special schools for hearing or sight-impaired children, with boarding facilities for country students and since 1987 mainstream schools have been allowing children with disability to integrate with non-disabled students, so some schools have support staff for students with disability. Young people with disability, particularly people with sensory or physical disability, are encouraged to get training and employment.

Kemal

Kemal is deaf and when he was a child living in the village with his family, his parents decided to send him to a residential school in the city, where he could learn sign language, get an education and a trade. Now Kemal is a car mechanic, married with 2 children and living in the village where his parents and brothers live.

Community organisations for people with disability are becoming more and more important. They increase awareness about disability and people have started to talk about disability. Unfortunately existing resources are very limited and there is no funding from the government. These organisations have to survive with donations from the people.

In the cities there are rehabilitation services, though they are very expensive. There is some community transport and there are some concessions such as tax exemption and identity cards, which entitle people with disability to concession prices for theatres and public transport.

There are some day services mainly for people with intellectual disability, provided by non-profit organisations and social security provides some subsidies for these services. For all these services there are many more people who need the service than places available.

What role do families play in caring for people with disability?

Family and tradition are central to daily life in Turkish society where we take the honour of the family and the role we each play in the life of the family seriously.

We see it as the duty of parents to care for their children till they are 18 years old and for life if they have a disability. The main carer of a child with disability is usually the mother with some involvement from the father and siblings. When the person is an

adult there is more emphasis on the sex of the carer and the person with disability being the same. Many people believe God will punish you if you don't care for people with disability and that the family will have a bad reputation. These beliefs can contribute to families feeling guilty and having difficulty asking for help and services and they can often continue to feel this way after they begin using services for their child with disability. But also families see it as their responsibility, that when they can't help their child any more they need to find help somewhere else.

What does the community know about the rights of people with disability? How has this changed over the years?

The Turkish constitution enshrines the rights of people with disability to equal access to education, tailored to meet the needs and capacities of the individual. The reality however falls a long way short of this.



There is legislation about access to buildings and transport but it is patchy. The Turkish constitution states that employers who have more than 50 employees are required to employ 2% people with disability but there is no penalty for ignoring this law and few people with disability have jobs. Getting employment is an important issue for people with disability. The main reason for high unemployment rates among people with disability is the lack of training and education. Most cannot continue education after primary school. Many people with disability work in sheltered workshops.

People with sensory and physical disability have associations that campaign on particular issues, and Visual Impairment Week is supported by state TV. In universities students can obtain support

required for their disability by seeking assistance from the Student Selection and Placement Centre.

In 1997 the "Supreme Council for the Disabled" was established as part of "The Presidency of Administration for Disabled People" (*Ozurluler Idaresi Baskanligi*). This Presidency, which is attached to the Prime Ministry, is to help build up a national policy for people with disability, to co-ordinate activities between national and international organisations, and to seek and find solutions to the problems experienced by people with disability. It works on medical treatment, education, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and the integration of people with disability into social life. Unfortunately the Presidency has no powers to stop discrimination against people with disability.

Although the outlook has improved strongly, nevertheless to a large extent people with disability remain socially, politically and economically excluded in Turkish society.

Web Sites used in writing this document

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/5a6ca4d942bf383585256a0700804dac?OpenDocument>

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/ae72e7ebd261d420c12569340043b9e7?OpenDocument>

<http://www.koeri.boun.edu.tr/deprenmmuh/Kocaelireport.pdf>

<http://www.eumap.org/library/datab/Documents/1082029524.88/FinalEN.pdf>

http://www.independentliving.org/standardrules/UN_Answers/UN.pdf

http://www.isec2000.org.uk/abstracts/papers_u/uzundermir_1.htm



Disability experienced in Australia

What is Disability?

A disability is something that stops a person from doing things they want to in their day-to-day activities. At least 19%, or one in five people in New South Wales, will experience one or more of the following:

- blindness or vision impairment (even when wearing glasses or contact lenses)
- deafness or hearing impairment (even when fitted with a hearing aid)
- chemical sensitivity
- speech difficulties in their first language
- blackouts, fits or loss of consciousness
- disorientation in unfamiliar environment
- slowness at learning or understanding
- acute anxiety
- difficulty making decisions
- incomplete use of hands or arms
- difficulty in gripping or holding or carrying small objects
- physical weakness over distance or long waiting periods
- lack of balance and coordination
- incomplete use of feet or legs
- difficulty walking on uneven ground, stairs and slopes
- pain, fatigue and discomfort
- difficulty breathing

- long term illness
- medical conditions and/or physical trauma leading to one or more of the above

In Australia disabilities are often categorised into different types, such as: physical disability (e.g. polio, arthritis, burns, obesity, broken bones, amputation), intellectual or learning disability (e.g. autism, down syndrome, attention deficit disorder), psychiatric disability or mental health problem (e.g. post traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, depression), sensory disability (deafness, blindness) and neurological disability (e.g. brain injury, spinal injury – paraplegia and quadriplegia, cerebral palsy, Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis).



A disability can be permanent or temporary. Many people with disability say that what usually stops them from fully participating in the community is not their disability, but the barriers put up by society and the negative attitudes of the community.

What support can people with disability get?

In Australia people with disability have the same human rights as other people. This includes having the right to be part of the community, make their own decisions and receive services that assist them to have a reasonable quality of life.

People with disability have the right to all the services people without disability can get. General community services need to provide services to people with disability. Just because somebody has a disability should not mean that they cannot get general services. In many instances people with disability can get support and assistance from the same places as people without disability.

However, to ensure that people with disability have the same opportunities there are specialist services available only to people with disability. These services include:

- Services assisting you to get a job or more training such as *Employment and Vocational services*.
- Services assisting you and your family to have a break from each other such as Centre-based and In-Home *Respite Care*.
- Services assisting you with your personal care such as *Attendant Care Services*.
- Services assisting parents when you first find out that your child has a disability such as *Early Intervention Services*.
- Services assisting mainly younger people with disability to learn more skills such as the *Transition to Work Program, Community Participation Programs, Community Access Services or Day Programs*.
- Services assisting you to live in the community with support such as *Accommodation Support Services*.
- Services assisting you with technology, equipment, therapy and para-medical specialist services, such as *PADP (Program of Appliances for Disabled People)*.
- Services assisting you to have your rights respected and to get information, such as *Advocacy and Information Services*.

How to find out more about services for people with disability

While there are many services for people with disability, it is not easy to find out about them or find out what the right service is for you. Also sometimes the services are full and have a waiting list, or sometimes you don’t know who to ask and what service to ask for.

Here we have listed only a few services, services that say they will organise an interpreter if you need one:

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs is available to any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services. TIS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TIS phone: 13 14 50

You might have to pay a fee depending on the circumstances and depending on whom you are calling.

One good starting point to find out about things is Centrelink.

Centrelink phone: 13 10 21

Centrelink Multilingual Call Centre phone: 13 12 02

TTY phone: 1800 810 586

If you can go to your local Centrelink office, one good person to talk with is the Disability Officer.

Also a good place for you to start is the Commonwealth Carelink Program.

Commonwealth CarelinkCentres phone: 1800 052 222

TTY phone: 1800 555 677

Speech-to-Speech Relay phone: 1800 555 727

Another disability information service is IDEAS.

IDEASphone: 1800 029 904

You can also call the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA) which promotes and protects the rights of people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their families and carers.

MDAA phone (02) 9891 6400 or 1800 629 072