



## SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION WITH CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE YOUNG PEOPLE

Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people around the topic of sexual health poses unique challenges.

CALD communities in Australia encompass over 200 different language groups. This means that what may be appropriate for one person or community may not be appropriate for another. Sexual health can also be a very sensitive topic in many of these cultures.

The following tips may assist you when working with CALD young people around the topic of sexual health:

### Cultural information and support

- **Local multicultural health workers or CALD services are there to assist.** If you are unsure about specific cultural issues related to sexual health, these services can give valuable advice.
- **You may need approval from community leaders.** Engaging with some populations, for example religious groups, can be particularly challenging. You may need support and approval from community leaders to access these groups. Take care when choosing educational material.
- **Engage with the parents of young people where appropriate.** You may choose to send a letter to parents outlining the rationale for the program and give them opportunities to discuss and contribute to its development.
- **Do not make assumptions based on cultural stereotypes.** For example, do not assume a young person has certain cultural attitudes towards sexual health based solely on their parent's country of birth, or their cultural or religious practices.
- **Remember, providing sexual health information is important** – as is taking care not to offend community members. But you also have a responsibility to provide critical sexual health information, even if some offence may occur.

### Running information sessions

- **You do not need to use 'sexual health' in the session title.** Sexual health can be a sensitive topic. Consider promoting any information sessions as a 'men's/women's event' or a 'health event' rather than a 'sexual health' information session.
- **Consider using separate male and female facilitators.** In some cultures it can be inappropriate to discuss sex and relationships in a mixed gender environment.
- **Visual activities, storytelling, diagrams and interactive activities are useful.** English literacy may be an issue for CALD young people if English is not their first language. Professional interpreters to assist individuals and culturally specific resources may also help.

## Points to remember about participation

- **Never push people to participate if they feel uncomfortable.** Some young people may feel shame about their sexual health or sexuality. The topic may generate family conflict or community repercussions.
- **Some people may have difficulty expressing their gender or sexuality.** In some countries and cultures it is illegal to be gender or sexually diverse and may result in severe punishment or incarceration. Some young people may fear social, family or legal repercussions.

## Confidentiality and cultural expectations

- **You may need to clarify what 'confidentiality' means.** Some CALD young people may not be familiar with the concept of confidentiality in health care and welfare organisations. You may need to explain this before they feel comfortable talking about sexual health.
- **Being from a different cultural background can also make conversations easier.** Some CALD young people will be more comfortable that confidentiality exists when the facilitator is from a different cultural background. Seek advice from the community you are working with.
- **Be aware some people have experienced trauma and have not used services like this before.** Newly arrived young people may have experienced or been exposed to sexual violence and other trauma. They may have had limited access to information including biology, protective behaviours and consent. Their knowledge of sexual health services may be limited.

## Resources

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For sexual health resources specifically for CALD people, see:

SHine SA Multicultural Communities

[shinesa.org.au/community-information/working-with-multicultural-communities/](http://shinesa.org.au/community-information/working-with-multicultural-communities/)

Family Planning NSW bookshop

[fpnsw.org/categories/Bookshop/Multicultural/](http://fpnsw.org/categories/Bookshop/Multicultural/)

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

[mcwh.com.au/multilingual-e-resources.php](http://mcwh.com.au/multilingual-e-resources.php)

NSW Health Multicultural Health Communication

[mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/publicationsandresources#c3=eng&b\\_start=0&c1=Sexual+health](http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/publicationsandresources#c3=eng&b_start=0&c1=Sexual+health)

Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN), Promoting Sexual Health Amongst Resettled Youth with Refugee Backgrounds

[myan.org.au/file/file/Sexual\\_Health\\_Report\\_Web1.pdf](http://myan.org.au/file/file/Sexual_Health_Report_Web1.pdf)

For more information, try this short and engaging training resource in cross cultural communication for sexual health and blood borne viruses: Your Cultural Lens, [ycl.health.wa.gov.au/](http://ycl.health.wa.gov.au/)