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A holistic view

Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are often hesitant to seek advice from health services or health professionals. Perhaps this is because Indigenous Australian people view their health holistically. A holistic view takes into account the physical, spiritual, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of individuals and communities. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander relationships within the community, as well as their spiritual link to the land and their ancestors, often feature when interpreting health issues.



Many Indigenous Australian people believe that illness is caused by evil spirits, or else that it is payback for behaviours such as disobeying certain cultural practices. Many also believe that the destruction of sacred sites where spirits live causes illness or natural disasters, such as floods and fires.

Diversity of Indigenous Australian cultures

Cultural diversity refers to the many differences in language, law, ceremony, lifestyle, customs and beliefs in a community. Indigenous Australian cultures have strong links to 'country' – the term refers to not only the land, but also to the people, animals, birds and plants that inhabit it, and the creation spirit that formed the world. The Dreamtime stories, songlines and ongoing Dreaming, which apply to Indigenous Australian families, can be fostered through the education and teaching of their children from a very young age.

In every population, there is a wide range of backgrounds, personalities, values and beliefs represented. The same is true in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations. For example, in the greater Sydney area alone there are 34 Aboriginal groups. Within these groups, there are four languages and a variety of cultural customs.

Whilst every community will have common ground and similarities within them, they will also have different issues and attitudes. No single Indigenous Australian person or group is the knowledge holder for the whole community. Hence, it is important to always recognise and acknowledge diversity and individual needs and approaches.

Diversity of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

The cultures of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are complex and extremely diverse. Aboriginal people come from mainland Australia, Tasmania and other islands such as Stradbroke Island and Groote Eylandt. Torres Strait Islander people live between the top of Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

Locally, Aboriginal people use different words to describe themselves as Indigenous Australians.

The following information outlines these terms as they roughly refer to the area of Australia a group comes from.

Reception and inquiry services

The reception or inquiry service should show empathy and positive communication when dealing with any information or service inquiry. An understanding of how family relationships and, skin systems work, and knowledge of practices surrounding death and dying, can help avoid misunderstandings. For example, refrain from mentioning a dead relative's name as this is taboo in Indigenous Australian culture.

Diagnostic services

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people may not like their blood or urine being taken. They may find it shameful or embarrassing. If this is required, an interpreter or an Aboriginal liaison officer should be involved in explaining the necessity of taking specimens.

Cultural knowledge

Understanding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures enables non-Indigenous workers to dismantle the traditional power relations between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous co-workers. Here are some more examples of why some systems and procedures may be found confronting and/or alienating.



Inpatient services

The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander kinship systems emphasises that everyone is related to one another, so in most Indigenous affairs, including sickness, death and ceremonies, the whole community participates. The presence of extended family may assist an individual's recovery and wellness. If you work in a hospital setting, visiting rules may need to be flexible to accommodate the many relatives of the sick individual who may visit at different times.



Outpatient and community services

Learning about Indigenous Australians can deconstruct the negative stereotypes and assumptions that many people have about Indigenous Australians. An open mind can make a difference in your dealing with Indigenous outpatients receiving community services. For example, practise listening to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people rather than telling them what to do; show empathy and use effective communication skills to avoid conflict and misunderstanding.



Screening services

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people may have personal barriers that make it difficult for them to participate in screening services such as breast, cervical, bowel or prostate scans and tests. Many Indigenous Australians, particularly women, do not like taking their clothes off in the presence of carers/workers.

Other aspects of cultural life

Cultural awareness training should be part of the induction or orientation program of new staff and as ongoing training in the community services workforce.

Cultural life

Here is a brief overview of some other aspects of cultural life in an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community:



Birthing and 'women's business'

Birthing is 'women's business'; only women can be present. Although a male doctor may be acceptable for consultation and information sharing, it is good practice to ensure a female doctor is available to attend the birth. It is also a good idea to consult with an Indigenous Australian health liaison officer or staff for ethical and culturally appropriate advice.



Attitude to death

Indigenous Australians have a particular approach to death. To speak or use the name of a deceased person indicates lack of respect for the deceased and for their bereaved family. Accordingly, a deceased person may be mentioned only indirectly. The name of a dead person is never mentioned and photographs or videos of the deceased have to be destroyed. This can be important to know if you are working in a hospital or a nursing home.



Death ceremonies

Death ceremonies of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people can take up to two weeks or even longer, depending on the status of the dead person. People with support needs or co-workers may request extended leave to attend funerals. Give them time to practise what is called 'sorry business'; this is an important part of Aboriginal culture where everyone expresses their grief. Refrain from thinking about the notion of 'walkabout' when they haven't returned on the day they are supposed to. 'Walkabout' is an insult to Indigenous Australian people.



Time

Aboriginal observance of time and measurement may sometimes cause concern or conflict in the workplace because it is often in contrast to non-Indigenous attitude to time. Be sensitive to this especially in terms of scheduled meetings and appointments.

Cultural differences in service delivery

Other cultural differences you may encounter when supporting Indigenous Australians, will require a shift in some of your approach to service delivery. Here are some examples.

Delivering services

1

Interpersonal approach

When dealing with older Indigenous Australians, support workers need to be mindful of the place of Elders in their community as well as the communication fundamentals of interacting with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition to building rapport, showing empathy and taking a non-judgmental approach, workers need to be mindful of the verbal and nonverbal cultural norms of the people they are providing services to. You also need to allow for potential gender barriers confronting the people you are working with.

2

Thinking and learning styles

Indigenous Australians often think and learn differently to non-Indigenous Australians. Much of their teaching and learning occurs through story and art. Likewise, Indigenous Australians may have different concepts of time and family to non-Indigenous Australians.

Coordinators and support workers need to take factors such as these into account and be flexible in accommodating people's sense of time and the role of extended families in the treatment and wellness of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

3

Expectations

Non-Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australians have different expectations about community services. Non-Indigenous Australians generally understand that community and health services are built on systems and processes, and they must follow a procedure to access these services.

On the other hand, the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians is a family and community affair. Indigenous Australians tend to prefer that service providers work collaboratively with the community to identify needs and not focus on predetermined issues or solutions. They expect their culture is to be taken seriously and that community and health services acknowledge that their needs may not be the same as other people in receipt of your services.

Geographical remoteness

The remoteness of some Indigenous Australian communities results in people having fewer opportunities or less inclination to access services. A trip to a city or regional centre for health or welfare services, particularly if a period of separation from family or community is involved, can result in stress and further illness for the person or their relatives.

Lack of relevant and culturally appropriate education

Learning styles that are not based on oral, visual and demonstrative methods have left generations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with inadequate education. This presents a significant barrier to their ability to participate in health, welfare, education and community services, a problem exacerbated by information that relies on the written word and unfamiliar technical language.



Many Indigenous Australian families have bad memories of their school experiences. In many cases they were not allowed to speak their own language and they did not have opportunities to learn about their own culture in the classroom.

Oral and visual information can be used to provide information and advice in an accessible way to such families.

Lack of meaningful employment or occupation

Some Indigenous Australian perceptions of employment may be easily misunderstood by non-Indigenous people. Money and material possessions may not be integral to an Indigenous Australian person's life. Keeping their culture and maintaining relationships with family, the community and the land take precedence over work and earning a living. Likewise, sharing whatever possessions they have with each other is embedded in Indigenous Australian culture.

Sometimes, Indigenous people have problems keeping occupations that are not meaningful to them. They may avoid jobs that require a lot of paperwork, reading or conceptual thinking, or authoritative/bureaucratic positions in a hierarchal working environment.

For community services workers, this can help explain the attitudes of many Indigenous Australian people with health services needs and provide a basis for understanding the outlook of Indigenous Australian co-workers.

Environmental health factors

Many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing is affected by environmental health factors that result in unhygienic conditions and the transmission of disease and illness. Seen predominantly in rural areas, these environmental factors include:

- ▶ poor housing conditions and overcrowding
- ▶ poor hygiene standards
- ▶ open sewerage and inadequate or poorly maintained sanitation facilities
- ▶ unreliable or unsafe water supply
- ▶ dogs and other animals living closely with humans.



Health issues and treatment

It is not unusual for sick Indigenous Australian people to present themselves for treatment in hospitals or health clinics when their illness is already in an advanced state. Because of the delay in seeking treatment, the prognosis is generally not favourable; treatment is likely to be complex, with a greater chance of failure or reduced life expectancy.

The causes of late presentation are likely to include:

- ▶ poor education in health matters
- ▶ reduced access to suitable healthcare facilities
- ▶ a reluctance to use centres that are predominantly non-Indigenous.

Key aspects of cultural safety

In your workplace, you develop relationships with various groups of people including:

- ▶ your co-workers, supervisors and management
- ▶ individuals in your care and their family members
- ▶ visitors to your service or program
- ▶ health professionals, case managers or service coordination staff
- ▶ other services providers or care services.

The way you work with people from each of these groups is important, as the relationships you develop with them are a reflection on you professionally, as well as on your workplace or organisation. Think about how you speak, interact and behave when dealing with others and be considerate of their views, values and backgrounds.

There are many ways to actively build good workplace relationships with others. This often depends in part on who the person is, as well as your role in interacting with them. Two fundamental requirements are mutual respect and tolerance of diversity.

Legislation, codes of practice and workplace policy

Workplaces are obliged to establish and follow policies, procedures and practices that are consistent with legislation, regulations and codes of practice.

There are international and Australian laws that ensure all people are treated equally and all cultures are respected.

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), for example, states that racial discrimination is against the law. Its aim is to ensure that all people are treated equally regardless of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin.



Australia is also a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

You do not need to read all the legislation regarding culture and discrimination; the important thing is that you understand the laws are there to ensure people are treated equally and with respect, regardless of differences in age, culture, physical characteristics and capabilities.

Australian legislation includes:

- ▶ *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- ▶ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- ▶ *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- ▶ *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- ▶ States and territories also have their own anti-discrimination laws; for example, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic.) and the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld).

Identify and use resources for effective service delivery

Effective service delivery relies on the right kind of resources being available to those who work with and care for Indigenous Australian people. Cross-cultural awareness is essential for effective service delivery; one of the most important resources is people who understand Indigenous Australian culture and their sense of family and community. At an organisational level, policies and procedures provide direction for educators dealing with Indigenous Australian people with support needs, and how to modify the physical environment to enhance service delivery.



Do you regularly reflect on situations you encounter in your work practice as a way to develop your own cultural safety practices?

A culturally safe organisation

At an organisational level, in consultation with Indigenous Australian community leaders and workers, services providers should develop culturally appropriate policies and procedures that provide direction for workers dealing with Indigenous Australian individuals. At the same time, the physical environment can be modified to enhance service delivery.

Here are some indicators of a culturally safe workplace.

A culturally safe organisation:

- ▶ acknowledges cultural diversity among its staff and support recipients with appropriate policies and procedures
- ▶ analyses the extent to which it can respond to the cultural needs of Indigenous Australian individuals and workers
- ▶ includes cultural knowledge and awareness in all aspects of the planning, delivery and evaluation of its services.

Cultural safety evaluation

To evaluate the extent to which cultural safety is integrated in your own work and in your workplace it is a good idea to put yourself in the shoes of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual and ask questions similar to those in the following information.

Questions an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual may ask themselves

- ▶ Is the environment welcoming and friendly?
- ▶ Is my family welcome here?
- ▶ Is there a safe place available to talk?
- ▶ Are there Indigenous Australian workers available?
- ▶ Does it value Indigenous Australian people with support needs? For example, are there posters, art work and flag around?
- ▶ Is there information available on Indigenous Australian events happening in the community?

2A Ensure work practices are grounded in awareness

We form our own ideas of other cultures from information we gather from direct contact with people from other cultures, from the media and from other people's experiences and perceptions. From these sources it is easy to make general assumptions about other cultural groups. We may then become biased about how we see them. This is known as cultural bias.

Cultural bias

Cultural bias leads to negative stereotyping and discrimination. For example, 'Indigenous Australians people are violent and do not listen to their Elders' is a stereotype held by some non-Indigenous people. It's not always easy to understand how our own culture can influence how we think, feel and behave. Developing an awareness of our cultural biases takes us a step closer to providing an effective and culturally safe work environment for Indigenous Australian people.

For example, consider how cultural awareness, rather than cultural bias, around attitudes towards older people can influence how we practise.

Indigenous Australian experiences and non-Indigenous Australian experiences are often in contrast to one another, as shown in the following information.



Indigenous older person

- ▶ Has full responsibility for passing on traditions to the next the generation
- ▶ Is respected and revered by younger family and community members
- ▶ Is a decision-maker, including discipline, punishment and settling disputes within the family and community
- ▶ Is a leader in performing rites and ceremonies (e.g. initiation of young boys and girls)
- ▶ Is a carer of children and adviser to young people



Non-Indigenous older person

- ▶ Tells stories about the 'old days'
- ▶ Can be a burden to family, especially when offspring have work and/or family commitments
- ▶ Has 'old' ideas that are not very helpful in dealing with the modern generation
- ▶ May have a role as a church elder, but their involvement in family activities may be seen as interfering
- ▶ Can be a ready and useful source of child care

Negotiate roles and responsibilities in the workplace

Community services workers need to be mindful of the value of involving Indigenous Australian people with support needs and co-workers in making decisions through negotiation and discussion.

The outcomes of sharing decision-making about roles and responsibilities with Indigenous Australian individuals are shown below, along with things that need to be acknowledged when working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander co-workers.



Outcomes include:

- ▶ respect for support recipients and fellow workers
- ▶ the chance to participate in decision-making about issues affecting them
- ▶ cooperation with workers
- ▶ ensuring that they have equal access to services and resources
- ▶ knowing their rights as customers of the service.



Indigenous co-workers:

- ▶ have a cultural perspective that has a major influence on how they approach their work and people with support needs
- ▶ should be included in decision-making about how they can contribute to an effective workplace
- ▶ should be able to advocate for Indigenous Australian people with support needs
- ▶ have a duty of care to work in a manner that is not harmful to individuals' health and safety.

Culturally safe work practices

One of the most important strategies in developing and maintaining effective workplace relationships is to establish culturally safe work practices.

A culturally safe environment is one where there is no denial of a person's identity and no challenge to who they are or what they need. When applied to Indigenous Australian individuals, community services workers and communities, it is very much about sharing knowledge and experience.

Culturally safe work practices require that you:

- ▶ establish rapport
- ▶ be sensitive to what culture means for service recipients, educators and communities
- ▶ use interpersonal skills that acknowledge the integrity and worth of service recipients, educators and communities
- ▶ show respect and empathy
- ▶ be supportive and non-judgmental
- ▶ listen rather than talk.

Degrees of cultural awareness

For most people, cultural awareness does not happen overnight. It is something that must be worked on and cultivated as you live and work with people from different social and cultural backgrounds to your own.

There are several levels of cultural awareness outlined below (adapted from Quappe and Cantatore, 2007, *What is Cultural Awareness Anyway? How do I build it?* which can be found at: www.culturocity.com/articles/whatis-cultural-awareness.htm).

Levels of social awareness

My way is the only way

People are aware of their way of doing things, and their way is the only way. They ignore the impact of cultural differences.

I know their way, but my way is better

People are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider that their way is best. Cultural differences are seen as a problem and usually ignored or downplayed.

My way and their way

People are aware of both ways of doing things. They realise that cultural differences can lead to both problems and benefits and use diversity to create new solutions.

Our way

People from different backgrounds come together to create a shared culture. They talk with others to create a new solution to meet the needs of a particular situation.

Have the right attitude

You may not know everything about the socially or culturally diverse individuals in your care, but you can still build bridges by having the right attitude. It is well known that the right attitude can form a strong link between people of different backgrounds, not matter what your work role.

Here are some useful suggestions (adapted from Quappe and Cantatore, 2007, *What is Cultural Awareness Anyway? How do I build it?* which can be found at: www.culturocity.com/articles/whatis-cultural-awareness.htm).

Admit that you don't know

- ▶ Admit that you don't know everything. This is part of the process of becoming culturally aware. Assume differences, not similarities.

Suspend judgment

- ▶ Suspend your judgment. Collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it.

Have empathy

- ▶ Have empathy. Try standing in another person's shoes. This is the best way to learn more about how other people would like to be treated.

Display empathy

Empathy, the ability to share and understand another person's emotions and feelings, must be part of all dealings with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and co-workers. Here is some information for further consideration.

Empathy

Displaying empathy in all dealings:



Cultural safety

Empathy is vital if you want to provide a sense of cultural safety. It allows community service workers and coordinators to share the experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and co-workers.



Interactions

Empathy is important as many Indigenous Australian people feel insecure in their interactions with health, welfare and community services systems.

Barriers to effective communication

It is important to identify the barriers to effective cross-cultural communication in your workplace. These barriers may include:

- ▶ lack of understanding of kinship relationships
- ▶ differences in nonverbal communication (for example, avoiding eye contact is a mark of respect in some Indigenous Australian cultural groups)
- ▶ use of direct questioning that discourages a narrative-style answer
- ▶ difficulty for Indigenous Australian people to express numbers, time or distance, as traditional languages do not provide a means for quantifying information
- ▶ language differences (Indigenous Australian people do not always understand jargon or certain western concepts).

Cultural brokers

As well as using the services of an interpreter, Indigenous Australian liaison officer or a colleague with specialised skills, there are other professionals and specialists who can help you meet your duty-of-care responsibilities to service recipients. People such as healthcare workers, teachers, community workers and your colleagues can act as effective culture brokers, bridging the gap between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and western culture.



Role of culture brokers

A cultural broker is a person who mediates between people of different cultural backgrounds for a particular purpose, such as reducing conflict or producing some kind of change.

Nurses and teachers are sometimes thought of as useful cultural brokers

- ▶ They have experience in dealing with conflict situations between cultural groups.
- ▶ They are often seen as having an affinity with/understanding of the two cultures.
- ▶ They can cultivate varied social relationships and mediate between people/systems or act as a go-between.
- ▶ They can translate interests and messages between groups.

Example

Example: interpreters and cultural brokers

Carrie Parker is a sexual health coordinator at a Perth medical centre and works with young women at risk.

As an Aboriginal person and trained nurse, Carrie's role is to provide a bridge between the health system and support recipients who find it difficult and confusing to deal with health professionals.

If tests reveal complications needing medical treatment, Carrie accompanies support recipients to hospital.

'They don't understand the language of doctors and nurses, so I'm liaison-person for the women. When the doctor's talking, I go through the medical language and put it into community language that the girls can understand.'



3A Support the development of effective partnerships

Successfully working in partnership with Indigenous Australian people requires their full participation, consultation and involvement in decision-making about issues affecting them. Participation in decision-making at a community level, with a focus on self-determination, is the focus of many service delivery programs.

Develop and implement strategies to increase participation

Consultation and negotiation are central to effectively delivering services to Indigenous Australian people. Establishing the level of involvement of the relevant Indigenous Australian people is an important part of the early negotiation process.

Identify early who the decision-makers are and how consultation is to occur; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people generally want to recognise their community obligations and kinship relationships; their involvement should be meaningful. Develop trust and credibility, allowing time for the decision-making process.

Consultation with community representatives

Consultation with Elders and leaders in Indigenous Australian communities is essential in developing strategies to increase participation of Indigenous Australian people in education, health and community services delivery. Observing appropriate protocols when working with Indigenous Australian people, including Elders and wider communities, is critical to establishing positive and respectful relationships. Consultation should always be seen as a two-way process, with both parties learning together and from each other.



Providing Indigenous Australian people with the opportunity to become involved in education, health, community services, justice and housing programs gives ownership to local communities and is consistent with their decision-making processes.

Use effective strategies to maintain relationships and resolve misunderstandings

Much about the relationships between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people and institutions can be explained through the history of Indigenous Australian dispossession.

Some of the effects of the history of European settlement for Indigenous Australian people living in contemporary Australian society are listed below. Services providers can respond with strategies that build trust and confidence in the service being offered.

Some effects of the history of European settlement

This emotional and cultural experience shapes the outlook of many Indigenous Australian people and the way they interact with non-Indigenous communities and institutions.

Barriers and stereotypes exist that impede access to services and the ability of an Indigenous Australian person to develop their skills.

Many Indigenous Australian people do not trust institutions.

Develop and maintain relationships

Providing a culturally safe environment and implementing strategies that reflect an understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander history and place are essential.

Services providers should:

- ▶ foster an understanding of spiritual relationships, the Dreaming and Indigenous Australian history
- ▶ be aware of family relationships, kinships and the place of Elders as decision-makers
- ▶ be flexible enough to support different cultural values and beliefs
- ▶ take a holistic approach to service, recognising all aspects of an Indigenous Australian person's life
- ▶ provide culturally appropriate care and educational programs and acknowledge individual differences
- ▶ maintain effective networks to ensure appropriate referrals can be made.



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Encourage increased participation

Encouraging the participation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait communities is important in the planning and development of programs. Setting up and being mindful of what is culturally appropriate means that the participation might be ongoing and could lead to a positive outcome for the program.



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Consultation and negotiation are central to getting Indigenous Australian people to participate. Establishing the level of involvement of the relevant community members is an important part of the early negotiation process. Lay the ground work by identifying who the decision-makers are and how consultation is to occur. It may be a good idea to begin with a focus group or ask an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander support worker to be involved to gain some insights into the decision-makers' role and what might be the best way to approach the community in a culturally sensitive way.

Encourage ongoing participation

To encourage ongoing participation and involvement, don't present ideas driven by process and rules that do not match the decision-making and communication styles of the group you are interacting with. Make involvement meaningful and try to encourage trust and credibility, and allow time for the decision-making process. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people generally want to recognise their community obligations and kinship relationships which may mean decision making is slowed.

Consider the following factors to encourage initial and ongoing participation.

Strategies to encourage participation

Ask a focus group about particular cultural information relevant to the community.

Identify the decision-makers.

Negotiate where and when the consultation will take place.

Know who should participate; for example, Elders and local family group representatives.

Establish which communication methods are required.

Make time for decision-making.

Collaborate to make people feel a part of the decision-making.

Develop trust, credibility and mutual understanding.

Involvement in planning of services and programs

Any decisions to be made about future planning or reviewing of a particular health service or program should involve members of the Indigenous Australian community. The health workers in community health services have expertise in health issues and treatments, but they need to work alongside and in collaboration with community leaders. These leaders are best placed to provide an insight into the workings and cultural context of their community.



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Community control means that the direction of health services is driven by the community; therefore community members must be involved in the planning process. Strategies that involve a community control model are more likely to lead to improved health outcomes because they evolve from the community itself.

Involvement in delivery of services and programs

Self-determination means that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait people are given the opportunity to participate and make decisions that relate to their own affairs. Indigenous Australian people can choose to be trained in qualifications that enable them to deliver health services and programs to their community. This strategy is being used as a way of overcoming the health disadvantages of some Indigenous Australian people and their communities. Workers trained in the health issues of Indigenous Australian people can work alongside the community with a unique view and understanding of the health issues particular to an area. They may also be able to find appropriate ways to make services more friendly and welcoming, increasing the use of these health services.

Example

Example: encourage self-determination and community control

Ruby was born in a remote area of Australia and had always wanted to train as a nurse. When she completed her degree, she was keen to go back and work in her local community. The local Aboriginal Medical Service employed her as a nurse. She works alongside other health professionals where they offer a comprehensive range of health services. Each health professional is multi-skilled and offers holistic and culturally appropriate health care to its community. Local community leaders have a key role in decisions made regarding their health service and Ruby enjoys working alongside the community to evaluate and review the health services provided.





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Topic 4

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Agree on outcomes against which cultural safety strategies can be measured**

- 4B Involve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in evaluations**

- 4C Evaluate programs and services against desired outcomes**

- 4D Revise strategies based on evaluation**

Evaluate cultural safety strategies

Services that are delivered in a culturally safe environment lead to empowerment and self-determination for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. To achieve this, it is important to include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of programs and delivery in terms of cultural safety strategies.

The evaluation process includes firstly agreeing on measurable outcomes, secondly on evaluating programs and services against these outcomes, and finally revising cultural safety strategies. There are several processes that can be used for evaluation but a model that may better suit Indigenous Australian communities might need to have less structure and allow for the measuring of success to occur in a specific cultural context.

Consultation is vital in each step of any evaluation. If revisions of culturally safe strategies are required, these revisions are more likely to be implemented and successfully adopted when the community has had control throughout the process.

Summary

1. Consultation will enable agreed outcomes to be developed and can then be used to measure success.
2. Measures of success need to be developed by the community for which they are to be used.
3. Cultural safety will differ between communities.
4. Involve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the collaboration process to enhance its meaningfulness to the local community.
5. Keep accurate documentation and records of the feedback. When interviewing, listen closely and allow time for responses.
6. Analyse feedback carefully and present recommendations in a clear way.
7. Collect quantitative and/or qualitative data for feedback information.
8. Consultation should be employed when revising and implementing any new strategies.
9. Improvements to cultural safety can be small or large, but either way will require a redirection of resources for implementation.