

Responding to CALD women who have experienced family violence NIFVS Forum Summary

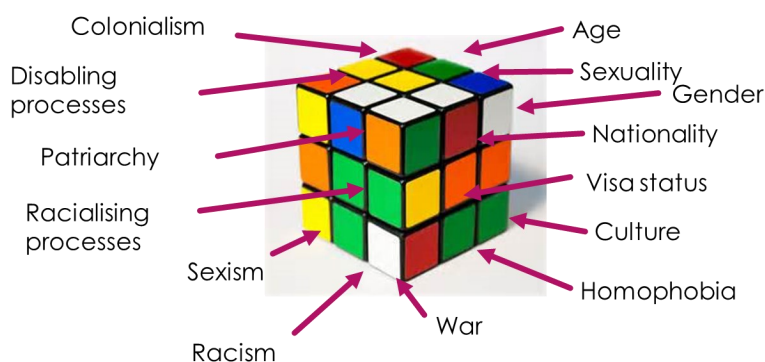
On Tuesday 24 November, 2015, 82 workers from family violence services and CALD services in Melbourne's northern region participated in a practice exchange forum to explore how to better respond to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women who have experienced family violence.

Attendees heard that family violence occurs in ALL cultures and that the incidence of family violence amongst refugee and migrant families is not higher when compared with non-migrant women. The presentations are summarised, below.

Impact of everyday prejudices on CALD women experiencing family violence

Regina Quiazon, Senior Research and Policy Advocate, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health

- CALD women experience similar forms of violence as non-CALD women but due to system/policy responses, they tend to endure violence for a lot longer.
- CALD women are not inherently vulnerable or 'at risk', but are made so by policies, structures and systems.
- It is important to look at how factors impacting women's capacity to seek help intersect—the 'Rubik's Cube' approach (pictured right).



Family violence provisions and visa applications

Luba Tanevski, Case Worker and Migration Agent, InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

- Family violence provisions introduced to the Migration Act in 1994 allow for women on a Spousal Visa to be exempt from the requirement to have stayed with their partner for two years before getting Permanent Residency.
- Women who are not entitled to apply for the provisions, including holders of student visas and working visas, have limited options to remain in Australia.



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Attendees also discussed barriers CALD women may experience when accessing services. They considered case studies and made recommendations based on their discussions. These learnings are summarised, below.

Barriers to CALD women accessing services

- Pre-migration history.
- Lack of knowledge about Australian law.
- Lack of access to interpreters.
- Fear of deportation (especially if threats of deportation are a tactic of abuse).
- Lack of family/community support to seek help.
- Fear of being ostracised by family/community.
- Desire to resolve issues within the community.
- Fear that their community will be viewed as 'more violent' or that violence will be seen as a 'cultural problem'.
- Fear of authority and institutions (e.g. police, justice system or child protection).
- Lack of culturally-appropriate and translated resources.
- Cultural insensitive, discriminatory or racist services responses.
- Difficulty navigating a complex system (especially if English is not their first language).



Family violence workers could consider...

- the intersection of oppressions that impact women from CALD backgrounds;
- a woman's pre-migration history;
- a woman's cultural background;
- a woman's potential fear of authority, based on previous experiences;
- explaining roles of people in the system (e.g. police) so women know what to expect from their involvement;
- that women often highly value the family unit (including extended family) and may not want to separate;
- employing bilingual or bicultural workers;
- taking responsibility for offering an interpreter;
- attending cultural competence training or accessing advice from community members.

CALD workers could consider...

- being clear about what family violence is;
- understanding and using the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF);
- being aware of the indicators that family violence might be occurring;
- informing the community that family violence is a crime;
- ensuring that, if you are asking about whether family violence is occurring, you can respond appropriately;
- having separate assessments for women and men and choice of interpreters;
- prioritising safety planning, especially if women are worried about breaking up their families.
- challenging the myth of 'it's in their culture'.

These initial learnings will be built on to create a resource about engaging with CALD women who have experienced family violence. The resource will be available in 2016.