

# Overcoming Barriers

## Working with CALD Children in their Own Right

### NIFVS Forum Summary

On 14 March 2018, through the popular NIFVS [Overcoming Barriers resource](#), 60 participants explored the specific support needs of CALD children who have experienced family violence and considered how cultural assumptions can impact the safety of women and children who experience family violence. Psychologist Jennifer Dawson and a panel of regional experts discussed how practitioners can enhance their cultural sensitivity and work towards strengthening the mother-child bond.



#### Overcoming Barriers:

A toolkit to improve responses to CALD women and children who have experienced family violence



‘Culture is dynamic and fluid with visible parts (language, food and dress) and invisible parts (concept of values, beliefs, justice and gender roles)’  
Jennifer Dawson

#### Additional Challenges for CALD Families

Jennifer Dawson spoke about the additional challenges faced by CALD families including:

- Loss of extended family and community networks.
- Displacement.
- Witnessing torture and trauma.
- Children living between two sets of social rules.
- Discrimination and racism in the wider community.

#### What CALD Children Need

Jennifer discussed the key ingredients of working with CALD children who have experienced family violence.

- Build trust and rapport.
- Facilitate children to be in control of their own disclosures.
- Ensure children feel safe and are able to emotionally regulate before addressing the trauma they’ve experienced.



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## View Culture as a Resource

The panel of regional experts, Amuna Abdella, (Merri Health), Lucy Prinzi (inTouch), Margarita Karamitros (Anglicare) and Allen Jeffress (Berry Street) emphasised the importance of exploring culture with children and their mothers.

Their advice included:

- ⇒ Be curious about culture.
- ⇒ Don't let the fear of offending or making a mistake stop you from asking questions.
- ⇒ Consider pre-migration experience and its impact on women and children.
- ⇒ Use play to help children heal, especially through providing opportunities to enhance their attachment with their mothers.



Forum participants

## Anti-Opressive Approach

Participants discussed how as workers they could partner with mothers to understand and address the unique needs of CALD children.

Their advice included:

- ⇒ Treat mothers as experts, find out what their goals/ hopes for their child are.
- ⇒ Use an approach that is anti-oppressive, client-centred and empowering.
- ⇒ Actively listen and use open-ended questions and empathy.
- ⇒ Use reflective practice to question assumptions and develop self-awareness.



Panelists Margarita Karamitros & Amuna Abdella

## The Empty Jar Resource

Developed by inTouch as a therapeutic tool for children, [the Empty Jar](#) comes from a strength and feminist based framework, with a theoretical underpinning of trauma and attachment.

The NIFVS Partnership hopes to bring Empty Jar training to the region in late 2018. The Empty Jar book is available to purchase.



**Further Resources:** On the NIFVS website [Children and Young People](#) and [CALD Communities](#)