



Multicultural Centre for Mental Health and Well Being (Harmony Place)



Social Inclusion of People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (CALDB) – Strengths, Opportunities and Partnerships

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Introduction

- Australia is a multicultural society. 28% (493,678) of Brisbane's population was born overseas and 16% speak a language other than English at home. (2006 Census)
- Settlement services
- Specific / specialised services
- The Multicultural Centre for Mental Health and Well Being Inc. (Harmony Place)
- The case study
- Issues, Cross cultural practice, partnerships/collaboration: A vision of Harmony Place.



CASE STUDY



A woman contacts Harmony Place after it was suggested by a neighbour.

"Josephine is from a country in Africa, in her 30's accesses Harmony Place for issues related to mental health. An assessment of the presenting situation is done – Josephine arrived in Australia as a refugee; has lived in Australia for eight years and speaks English reasonably well; her husband died in a camp in Africa; she has three children between the ages of 5 months – 12 years and states that she is not feeling well 'in her heart'."



Issues of concern

- The refugee experience
- The mental health assessment
- Inability to sleep since her older child had been taken by the Department of Child Safety (DoCS)
- Suffering from constant headaches
- Feeling confused and overwhelmed
- She is visibly anxious and distressed
- Struggling with everyday tasks e.g. caring for her younger children, completing tasks
- Suicidal ideations

Cultural considerations



- Feeling shame about her situation
- Feeling isolated and ostracised from her community
- Powerlessness in the situation she is in
- Heightened sense of hopelessness e.g. 'it is God's will', 'God is punishing me'
- Increased isolation and fear about life in Australia

"Josephine had been working towards getting a Blue Card so that she could work in a nursing home. The involvement with DoCS rendered her unable to pursue her goals and has significantly impacted further on her mental well being."

Impact on Josephine



- Opportunities for employment declined
- Loss of confidence
- Financial hardship
- Loss of trust in the Australian system
- Loss of confidence in her parenting skills
- Mental health issues continue to exacerbate

Skills of the worker



Awareness of our limitations ...

- Own culture
- Own values and beliefs
- Own prejudice
- A sense of powerlessness
- Ability to effectively engage with the other

Organisation we work in



- Limitations of our role e.g. work with mental health
- Limitations of our role description
- Capacity to effectively engage in areas outside our expertise from the organisation's position
- Resources available
- Duty of care to the client
- Duty of care for the worker: WH&S

The National Mental Health Standards for Mental Health Services





Specific considerations to the needs of people from CALDB

Standard 7: "Cultural Awareness" states

"The MHS delivers non-discriminatory treatment and support which are sensitive to the social and cultural values of the consumer and the consumer's family and community".



Considerations

- Are we confident in our knowledge of specific cultures?
- Is it possible to know everything about all cultures?
- Is culture static?
- Are cultural values upheld by everybody in that culture?
- Do we include family and community?
- Do we use Interpreters?



Standard 11: Delivery of care (11.1 Access, 11.2 Entry, 11.3 Assessment and Review, 11.4 Treatment and Support and 11.4.C Medication and other Medical Technologies)



Considerations

- Does our organisation meet the requirements that standard 7 mandates?
- Do we have information in other languages?
- How do we access information in other languages?
- Can the client read in his/her own language?
- Do we have a policy on the use of professional interpreters?
- Can we use interpreters effectively?



Partnerships / Collaborative Work



"... the legal relationship of persons carrying on some business together with a view to profit".

The Macquarie Dictionary

Partnerships and collaborative work require ...



- They can be hard and difficult
- Sometimes uncomfortable conversations between services are needed
- Organisations need to want to forge a solid base that can address the demand in their services
- Great sense of good will from both organisations

Considerations



- Development of shared understandings of core philosophical values that underpin the relationship.
- Drawing of partnerships can be formalised by a memorandum of understanding (MOU).
- Allocation of time to nurture professional relationships and opportunities for shared knowledge.
- Development of shared tools e.g. support plan for the client with clear allocation of tasks.

Cross-cultural Competencies



Note:

Josephine demonstrates limited to no understanding or awareness of the Law in Australia



Some strategies



- Discussion between the organisation for joint case management
- Create opportunities for shared knowledge between the services
- Take an active role in being part of the Management Committee of the organisation

Some strategies



- Discussion of aspects of professional/client relationship e.g. role of worker, limitations of confidentiality.
- Use of professional interpreter or trained bilingual/bicultural worker.
- Explain reasoning behind decisions made with sound explanations of what is the Law in Australia.

Some strategies



- Opportunities for Josephine to share her way of thinking. Acknowledge that a person needs to understand and incorporate the views that in Australia there are **different rules which must be adhered to**. Change can only occur when time is taken to support, teach, explain, clarify and explore within an experiential context.

Some strategies



- English language skills alone do not equate to knowing. Effective and sound understandings only happen when time is taken to ensure a message is communicated and understood with shared common views.

Organisational Policies and Procedures



- *'we treat everyone the same'*
- Access and equity policies are in place and well disseminated amongst all staff.
- The organisation readily supports the engagement of professional interpreters or trained bilingual/bicultural workers.
- A budget item is allocated to cover the costs related to engaging a professional interpreter or trained bilingual/bicultural workers.

- New staff is adequately inducted to the access and equity policies of the organisation.
- The worker is supported when working with a person from CALD e.g. it may require more time.
- That the work is shared with all workers rather than individuals with 'special interests' and therefore running the risk of burnt out and limiting the opportunity for the development of skills in cross-cultural work.

Practical Considerations



- Not all CALDB people want to access their own community and/or Harmony Place
- Need to develop strategies to include people within their own community
- Strengthen, empower and support people to find their comfort zone
- Support people to access the broader community safely which can be outside their own

Practical Considerations



- Consider developing activities in your service that are sensitive to all including people from CALDB
- Take an interest in what people can offer including people from CALDB e.g. hobbies, artistic interests, story telling etc.

A vision of Harmony Place: Working in Partnerships Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012



Partnering with:

- Government Mental Health Services
- NGO' s Mental Health Services
- Other service providers