

Cultural safety in family violence prevention & response: Service provider perspectives on caring for children and young people from culturally and racially marginalised migrant backgrounds

Children and young people from culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) migrant backgrounds experience multiple barriers when accessing and engaging with the family violence service system in Victoria. This research examined stakeholder perspectives on cultural safety within the service system that supports children and young people from CARM migrant backgrounds who have experienced family violence.

RESEARCH METHODS



22 in-depth interviews with stakeholders



Interviews analysed using thematic analysis



Framework of cultural safety & intersectionality

KEY FINDINGS

We generated three key themes from the interview data. These themes focus on how cultural safety in the family violence service system impacts the health and wellbeing of children and young people from CARM migrant backgrounds.

THEMES

The lack of in-language communication between services & children who have experienced violence prevents equal access to care

Stakeholders discussed how inadequate communication between services and families increased risks to children and young people. They reported inconsistent use of interpreting services, and pressure on multilingual staff to act as interpreters despite not being accredited or trained. They also shared that children were often interpreters for their mothers.

““

She wasn't actually allowed to speak her language with the children and [statutory service] when they would visit. Because the person there was assessing them... to have access to mum. They couldn't understand her so they told [her] she had to speak English. They didn't use an interpreter.”

- Stakeholder 19

““

Children who are part of the family will have the interpreter role, and they will be exposed to lots of the things that are happening in the family... It will create some responsibility for the child to know about the family violence of the family.”

- Stakeholder 6

Cultural safety is just a “tick in the box”

Stakeholders outlined examples of performative or tokenistic gestures of cultural safety and were disappointed that it was up to individual practitioners to create a safe environment for clients.



“

On a service system level from my observation, there isn't enough in place to I guess respond in a culturally safe way. It kind of feels like it's left up to the individual. We do a lot of culturally sensitive training, cultural awareness training... But it feels like a tick in the box at the moment.”

- Stakeholder 18

Racist assumptions about families prevents the delivery of culturally safe services

Some stakeholders expressed racialised assumptions that family violence is an accepted part of certain cultures. Other stakeholders disagreed with this and noted they were seeing a positive shift in the service system towards understanding that domestic and family violence occurs in all countries and across all cultures.

“

Racism has made us feel as though it's culture that's the issue, not someone's choice to use violence.”

- Stakeholder 9

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR POLICY & PRACTICE?



Develop and implement specialised family violence training for interpreters & build practitioners' capability to work with interpreters confidently and safely, emphasising that children should never be used as interpreters.

Build collaborative partnerships with culturally and racially marginalised communities that inform the development of culturally safe and child and youth-centred service delivery.



Create supportive employment pathways that facilitate and support the recruitment of workers from CARM migrant backgrounds into the family violence service system. This will improve cultural safety across the sector and may support trust-building between services and families.

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