This Guide was:

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**Cover photo:** MDA Ltd

**Cover Design:** Annette Madjarian and Kimberly Taylour, Navitas Public Relations Unit

First published as Guide to CHCSW401A on March 2011

**Modified to comply with CHCSET001 and updated in July 2019**

Margaret Piper, AMES Australia, MDA Ltd and Navitas English, 2016.

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Introduction

Aim

This course is designed for those working or intending to work with refugees and other forced migrants in a wide range of capacities, from direct service provision to policy or program development. It aims to provide these workers with the skills and knowledge to address the specific needs of this client group, recognising that these are additional to and distinct from those required for work in other areas within the welfare and services sector.

While this course has relevance for those working for services funded by the Department of Social Services, it is intended for all people whose work involves working with or for recently arrived refugees and other forced migrants. This includes but is not limited to those working in the settlement, health, education, employment, income support, housing, family support, youth, aged care and disability sectors. The course is also relevant for people working within government departments supporting these services.

This course will provide the participant with the knowledge component of the competency CHCSET001: Work with Forced Migrants. This unit is included within the qualification Certificate IV Community Services Work but can be imported into other relevant qualifications or be taken as a stand-alone unit.

To achieve the competency the participant will need to demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge in the working environment with minimal supervision.

Course Overview

This course has been developed in a format that allows the unit to be delivered over 12 sessions, each of 2 hours, involving face-to-face instruction.

It has also been developed to be delivered entirely off the job in the organisation’s training rooms through a combination of small group and individual activities.

The following table outlines the course breakdown and identifies the performance criteria addressed in each session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course overview and introduction to forced migration</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Australia’s response to forced migration</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>What is settlement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The impact of forced migration on settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment

Performance Evidence

You must show evidence of the ability to complete tasks outlined in elements and performance criteria of this unit, manage tasks and manage contingencies in the context of the job role. Amongst other tasks, there must be evidence that you have developed, delivered and monitored the delivery of a settlement plan for 3 groups of forced migrants.

Your teacher will provide you with additional information about the assessment task(s).

Competency

Assessment of the course is competency based. You will be assessed as Competent or Not Yet Competent.

If you successfully complete the training program and are assessed as Competent, you will be awarded a Statement of Attainment from the Australian Qualifications Framework for the following unit:

- **CHCSET001: Work with Forced Migrants**

If you are assessed as Not Yet Competent, you will need to arrange another assessment opportunity with your trainer.
Assessment Conditions

Skills must have been demonstrated in the workplace or in a simulated environment that reflects workplace conditions. Where simulation is used, it must reflect real working conditions by modelling industry operating conditions and contingencies, as well as, using suitable facilities, equipment and resources.

Assessment Appeals Procedures

If you wish to have your assessment results reviewed you may request this through you immediately after you have participated in the assessment. Any unresolved disputes may be referred to relevant the RTO Manager. Appeals against assessment results must be made within six months of the assessment or before the issuing of certification, whichever comes first.
**Topic 1:**
**Introduction to Forced Migration**

In **Topic 1** you will:

- learn about the topics that will be covered in the unit;
- learn about the assignments you are required to complete;
- be given some important definitions;
- be introduced to the concept of ‘refugee’ and learn about the international protection regime;
- explore what it means to be a refugee.

To begin, it is important to be clear about the meaning of core terms in the context of this unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration</th>
<th>In broad terms, the term ‘migration’ means moving from one place to another. In the context of this unit, it means moving from one country to another.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Forced Migration | Forced migration is movement from one country to another by necessity rather than choice. The catalyst for such migration might be:  
  - war or civil unrest  
  - persecution  
  - economic hardship  
  - environmental degradation ...  
  The opposite of forced migration is voluntary migration.  
  It is noted that in some cases, there might be elements of choice and compulsion in a person’s decision to move to another country. |
| Forced Migrant | Forced migrants are people who have been compelled to move countries rather than having done so voluntarily.  
  For the purposes of this unit, the term ‘forced migrants’ embraces people who have:  
  - entered Australia under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program;  
  - been granted refugee status in Australia;  
  - entered as business and skilled migrants but where the prime motivation for leaving was to escape violence and/or persecution; and  
  - arrived with a family reunion visa linked to anyone in the above categories. |
It might also be used in the future to cover people who have been displaced because their home/homeland is no longer viable due to global warming.

It is noted that the term ‘forced migrant’ is not widely used in Australia, though it is internationally. It was selected for use in this context because unlike the word ‘refugee’, it does not have a narrow technical definition and is not linked to any visa subclass.

| **Refugee** | The term ‘refugee’ is used colloquially in many ways but in the context of this unit, it will be used in its legal sense as set out in international law (in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees).

It defines a refugee as a person who:

‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country…’ |

| **Refugee Status** | Refugee status is granted to people who are determined to fit the definition of a refugee.

Refugee status bestows certain rights on its holder, most importantly protection from being forcibly returned to their country of origin. |

| **Asylum Seeker** | An asylum seeker is a person who is seeking the protection of another country and in so doing is exercising one of the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

*Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution*

UDHR Article 14

One of the outcomes of such an application might be the grant of refugee status. An asylum seeker might also be allowed to remain on other grounds or, if there are no grounds to remain, be compelled to return to his/her country of origin.

While every refugee will at some time have been an asylum seeker, not every asylum seeker is a refugee. |

| **Internally Displaced Person** | The term ‘internally displaced persons’ or IDPs is used to describe people who have been forced to flee or leave their homes, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised border. |

**NOTE:** definitions of other relevant terms are included in Appendix 1.
What is Migration?

While migration is a broad term and can mean many things (including the seasonal movement of animals, birds or fish), in this context ‘migration’ is used to refer to the movement of people across an international border. It can be voluntary or forced.

Refugees

As you will learn in class, there are various types of forced migrants but it is important to recognise that refugees are distinct. This is because:

- the definition of a refugee is codified in law,
- refugees are protected by a specific international treaty.

The term ‘refugee’ is defined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugee Convention) which is the key international treaty on refugees. The same definition is incorporated into Australian law. The definition is included in the table at the beginning of this section.

In order to be determined to be a refugee, a person must satisfy all four of the following criteria. Refugees must:

- be outside their country of origin;
- have a well founded fear of persecution: in other words, there must be a high probability that they will experience grievous abuse of their rights (persecution) if they were to return to their country of origin;
- be targeted for persecution because of one or more of the following; their:
  - race
  - religion
  - nationality
  - political opinion, and/or
  - membership of a social group;
- be unwilling or unable to receive effective protection from the government of their country of nationality or habitual residence.

It is important to note that people fleeing war or civil unrest do not automatically fall under the definition, though in some cases they do. They only do if, in the context of the unrest, they are being targeted for any of the grounds outlined above.

The International Protection Regime

There is an international treaty specifically dealing with refugees: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (sometimes called the ‘Refugee Convention’).

The Refugee Convention was written in response to the population displacement after the Second World War and made specific reference to this caseload. As time went on, it became apparent that the ‘refugee problem’ was neither related only to WWII nor confined to Europe. To remove the temporal (time) and geographic limitations of the
Convention, a protocol (the **1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees**) was drafted and adopted.

There is general agreement that both treaties are central to the international refugee protection regime.

In addition to defining the term ‘refugee’, the Convention and Protocol set minimum standards for the treatment of refugees and defines States’ obligations towards refugees.

The office of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** (UNHCR) is the agency with the prime responsibility for the protection and welfare of refugees. As its name suggests, it falls within the United Nations system and receives its mandate from the United Nations General Assembly.

Based in Geneva, UNHCR has over 16,800 staff in 134 countries (as at May 2019). The agency’s annual budget for 2019 is US $8.6 billion.

Go to [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) to learn more about UNHCR and to see the texts of the Refugee Convention and Protocol.

The Refugee Convention is not the only international treaty that is relevant for refugees. Refugee Law sits side by side with – and overlaps in part – with other important international legal instruments that fit within other areas of international law.

**Refugee Law**

- International Humanitarian Law
- International Human Rights Law

**Refugee Status**

The process of determining whether someone is a refugee is done either by the government of the country to which the refugee has fled or by staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In both instances, they assess the person’s claims against the definition of a refugee contained in the Refugee Convention.

Refugee status gives certain rights to refugees. These are outlined in the Refugee Convention. The most significant of these rights are:

- the right not to be sent back to a country in which their life or freedom would be in danger
- the right to receive public relief and welfare support at the same level as nationals
- the right to access education and health care
- the right to work
- entitlement to be issued with identity papers and travel documents.
It is important to note that there is an exception to the granting of refugee status. If a person fits all of the criteria BUT has committed a war crime, a crime against humanity, a crime against peace or a serious non-political crime, that person is excluded from receiving the protection accorded by refugee status.

**The Refugee Experience**

Talking about ‘the refugee experience’ is a huge generalisation because no two refugees have the same ‘experience’. Even people within the same family will be exposed to different events and view the things that happen to them in different ways according to a variety of factors including their gender, age and disposition.

Having said this, it is possible to point to some common characteristics of forced migration that have an impact on those caught up within it. In their *Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees*, UNHCR seek to portray the complex interplay of factors affecting refugees. These have been summarised into the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences in country of origin</th>
<th>Experiences in country(ies) of first asylum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Consequences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. fear, anxiety, grief, guilt, depression, shame, helplessness, loss of ability to trust etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal and Social Consequences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. social and economic dependency, loss of control, poor health, disrupted education/employment, lack/loss of family support, changed family relationships, cultural racial and religious integrity undermined, loss of sense of place/belonging etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Durable Solutions for Refugees**

UNHCR talks in terms of three ‘durable solutions’ for refugees:

- **Repatriation**: every refugee dreams of being able to return in safety and dignity to their homeland but this requires substantial and durable change to have occurred for it to be a viable option.

- **Local Integration**: there was once a time when many refugees were able to make a new life in the neighbouring country to which they first fled. This was seen as preferable because the language, religion and culture were often similar to their own. Over the years, the willingness of host states to offer this as an option has declined (in large part because of the absence of support from the

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1 Adapted from UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees: Section 1.3 pp16-17. At [http://www.unhcr.org/3d985c8d6.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3d985c8d6.html)
international community) so now, while it remains a solution in theory, it is available to very few refugees.

- **Resettlement:** this involves moving to a third country, often a long way away (both in distance and culture) from the refugees’ homeland.

Some 37 countries work with UNHCR to provide resettlement places to refugees, though most offer very small numbers of places and consequently only a very small proportion of the world’s refugees (< 1%) are resettled in any one year.

By far the majority of refugees are resettled by three countries: Australia, Canada and the United States. On average Australia has had the highest per capita resettlement program.

Selection for resettlement involves an assessment in addition to that undertaken to determine whether a person is a refugee and is done primarily on the basis of risk. This could be any one or a combination of the following risks:

- being sent back to a country in which they would face persecution,
- being expelled to a third country where they would face danger,
- exposure to violence,
- being arbitrarily detained,
- having no access to any form of support;
- the absence of a durable solution.

Consideration is also given to whether it is viable for the refugee to return to their homeland.

If they cannot safely or viably remain where they are, and if return is not an option, UNHCR assesses their suitability for resettlement. **Because the number of resettlement places is limited, resettlement is typically only an option for less than 1% of the world’s refugees in any given year.**

The responsibilities of nations engaged in the resettlement of refugees have been clearly defined by the UNHCR as providing protection and access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals.

While there is much talk of durable solutions, the reality for the majority of the world’s refugees is that these remain elusive and they must confront other far less durable solutions:

- Being ‘warehoused’
- Involuntary return; or
- Engaging in secondary movement.
References

UNHCR Handbooks:

UNHCR Resettlement Handbook: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=46f7c0ee2&query=resettlement%20handbook


Useful websites:

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: www.unhcr.org
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: www.ohchr.org
- Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org
- Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org
- US Committee for Refugees: www.refugees.org

Simulations:

Against All Odds: an online game developed by UNHCR which lets you experience what it is like to be a refugee. http://www.playagainstalodds.com/

Refugee Realities: a simulation event developed by Oxfam Australia that gets participants to step into the shoes of someone who has been forced to flee their home. http://www.oxfam.org.au/refugee/public/index.php

A Refugee Camp in the Heart of a City: project developed by Medicins San Frontiers that enables people to experience life in a refugee camp. http://www.refugeecamp.org/home/

Journals:

Forced Migration Review – Oxford University - http://www.fmreview.org/

Forced Migration Review (FMR) is published three times a year by the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University. FMR is available free of charge in print and online. Since it was launched in 1987 it has gained a global reputation as the most widely read publication on refugee and internal displacement issues.

Refuge – York University – www.yorku.ca/refuge

Refuge is an interdisciplinary journal published two times a year by the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada. It aims to provide a forum for discussion and critical reflection on refugee and forced migration issues and provides analytical, reflective, and probing articles from a wide range of disciplinary and regional perspectives.
Activities

1. Visit the UNHCR website (www.unhcr.org) and spend some time looking at the resources it contains. Pay particular attention to the country pages.

2. As mentioned, Human Rights Law is also provides important protection tools for refugees. What is ‘Human Rights Law’ and what do you think some of the most important human rights treaties for refugees might be?

3. What is International Humanitarian Law and why is it relevant for refugees?

4. Which countries other than Australia assist UNHCR to resettle refugees?

5. Why do you think countries resettle refugees?

6. What do you think the consequences might be of the fact that less than 1% of refugees are resettled each year?
7. What is ‘warehousing’ in the refugee context and where are the largest populations of warehoused refugees?

8. What are the consequences of warehousing?

9. If you were forced to leave your own country, what would your priorities be?

10. If you were forced to leave your own country, how would you like to be treated?
Topic 2: Australia’s Response to Forced Migration

In Topic 2 you will look in broad terms at how Australia, specifically the Australian government, responds to forced migration. The session will begin with the overall response then focus on how refugees and other forced migrants come to Australia.

### Important Definitions

| Resettlement | The process of identification, selection and preparation of Humanitarian Program entrants for travel to a third country (in this case, to Australia). In other words, it relates to things that predominantly happen outside Australia. |
| Settlement   | The finer points of the definition of ‘settlement’ will be discussed in Topic 3 but the key point of relevance here is that the word is typically used to describe things that happen in the post-arrival context – including the adaptation process through which refugees and other forced entrants go and the services available to them. |

### Whole of Government Response

There are many ways in which the Australian government seeks to address the issue of forced displacement. These include but are not limited to:

- working through the United Nations and with countries in our region to address the root causes of displacement;
- helping countries improve their governance and human rights observance through dialogue and training;
- providing humanitarian assistance to refugees through the overseas aid program;
- providing resettlement places;
- granting asylum (a protection visa) to people in Australia who fit the definition of a refugee.
The Humanitarian Program

Two of the ways Australia responds to refugees involve refugees coming to Australia and they are collectively referred to as the ‘Humanitarian Program’.

The Humanitarian Program is managed by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and performs two key functions:

- it provides a **durable solution** to refugees and other especially vulnerable people overseas who have been determined to be in need of protection and for whom no other solution is viable. Such people are granted permanent visas overseas and then resettled in Australia under what is often referred to as the **offshore** component of the Humanitarian Program;

- it provides **protection** to people who are already in Australia, have legitimate fears about returning to their country of origin and are determined to meet the definition of a refugee. This is often referred to as the **onshore** component of the Humanitarian Program.

Australia has been resettling refugees and other forced migrants in significant numbers since the end of the Second World War. During this time, over 800,000 people from many parts of the world have been resettled.

**Visa Categories**

All forced migrants residing permanently in Australia have a visa, the subclass of which can give you important clues as to the person’s background and mode of arrival.

The most common visa classes for forced migrants are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visa Subclass Number</th>
<th>Visa Name</th>
<th>People to Whom it is Issued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>Most have been identified by UNHCR and referred to Australia for resettlement. Must be a refugee and have a protection need that can only be met through resettlement. In some cases, those granted refugee visas have self-identified or have come to DHA’s attention through another channel. The needs of subclass 200 holders vary according to their background and circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>In Country Special Humanitarian</td>
<td>As the name suggests, this visa is granted to people still in their country of origin (i.e. they are not refugees). Most are identified by UNHCR or DHA. Very few of these visas are granted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lack of flight does not necessarily mean a lack of trauma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Visa Subclass</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Special Humanitarian Program</td>
<td>Holders must have suffered substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of their human rights. They are not required to be refugees but in most cases are. There must also be a link to Australia in the form of a sponsor (proposer) who will be their main supporter after arrival. Their needs are similar to refugee visa entrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Emergency Rescue</td>
<td>Cases identified by UNHCR and moved because the person is in imminent danger. Holders of this visa will have high levels of recent trauma and will have not had time to prepare for relocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Women at Risk</td>
<td>Cases usually identified by UNHCR and are typically either single women or female headed households and their dependents. They have been selected because of their vulnerability. There is a high probability that the principle entrant (and sometimes the dependents) will have experienced significant torture/trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>866</td>
<td>Permanent Protection (onshore)</td>
<td>Visa issued to those recognised as refugees by the Australian government after they sought asylum in Australia. In most cases these visas are issued to asylum seekers who arrived by plane and resided in the community while their claims were being examined. In cases where the visa was granted before 2013, the person might have arrived boat and experienced periods of destitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>785</td>
<td>Temporary Protection</td>
<td>Visas issued from 2015 to person(s) who arrived by boat and was determined to be a refugee. See <a href="http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au">www.homeaffairs.gov.au</a> for more details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>790</td>
<td>Safe Haven Enterprise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The flag signals visa subclasses where it can be presumed that holders will have experienced high levels of trauma and will have complex settlement needs.
The criteria used for the grant of a visa are set down in Australian law. Each applicant is individually assessed against these criteria which are designed to ensure that visas are granted to applicants with the most compelling need for resettlement.

In addition to meeting the criteria attached to each visa subclass, applicants must also undergo health and character checks to satisfy public interest criteria.

When looking at the entry of forced migrants to Australia, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that some forced migrants arrive under the general migration program because they have been able to satisfy the criteria for grant of a family, business or skilled visa. While they might not be classified as ‘refugees’ for the purpose of migration, it does not mean they have not lived the refugee experience and do not share the needs of humanitarian program entrants.

### Management of Forced Migration into Australia

The size and composition of the Humanitarian Program is determined each financial year (1 July – 30 June) by the government after a detailed process of consultation.

The number of Humanitarian Program visas granted varies from year to year. Visa grants over a 6 year period are shown in the table below. Up to date figures can be found on the DHA website (www.homeaffairs.gov.au/media).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>12,012</td>
<td>6,501</td>
<td>6,002</td>
<td>6,730</td>
<td>6,642</td>
<td>7,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Humanitarian</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>4,515</td>
<td>5,007</td>
<td>5,032</td>
<td>5,407</td>
<td>6,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onshore Protection</td>
<td>7,504</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>2,747</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>1,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other(^4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special allocation(^5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,790</td>
<td>8,208</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Proposal Pilot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,019</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,768</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,756</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,555</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,968</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,576</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Statistics from DHA.

\(^4\) This includes visas granted for a range of reasons such as for medical treatment or to enable resolution of status.

\(^5\) The additional commitment of 12,000 places refugees from Syria and Iraq was delivered over 2 program years.
The composition of the program also varies from year to year, reflecting the assessed resettlement needs at the time.  

Application processing times vary according to the circumstances of the country of residence, the complexity of the case and whether there are any health and character issues to be considered. DHA service standards require that 75% of all offshore humanitarian lodgements are finalised within 12 months of lodgement.

The location in which an entrant settles is, to a large extent, determined by whether the entrant has a ‘link’ to Australia. The link could be a family member or friend or a group that has proposed (sponsored) the entrant. If such a link exists, the entrant will be resettled in the same location. Typically more than 70% of entrants have some link to people in Australia.

Humanitarian Program entrants are not compelled to remain in the place they were initially resettled. It is not uncommon for entrants to relocate at some stage after arrival. There are many reasons for this secondary movement. It might be because they have found a friend or family member living elsewhere; it might be because of better work opportunities or cheaper rent in a particular location; or it might be for any one a myriad of other reasons.

Travel costs of entrants with a refugee visa (visa subclasses 200, 201, 203 and 204) are paid by the Australian Government and travel is organised by the International Organisation for Migration. Entrants granted a Special Humanitarian Program visa (visa subclass 202) are responsible for their own travel costs. This usually involves their link in Australia (their ‘proposer’) either paying the fares or taking out a loan which the entrant will be responsible for replaying after arrival. The latter is by far the most common way this is done.

---

6 Table from Australia’s offshore Humanitarian Program 2017-18. DHA.
7 There are several no-interest loan schemes, including one run by IOM, that support the travel of humanitarian entrants to Australia.
Preparation of Entrants for Resettlement

It is well recognised that the settlement outcomes of humanitarian entrants are much better if they begin to receive targeted support and assistance before they leave for Australia. There are two main ways in which this occurs:

The Australian Cultural Orientation Program

The Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO) is an orientation course for offshore entrants provided overseas and is usually delivered over 5 days. It gives an initial introduction to various aspects of Australian life and culture, as well as practical information about the journey to Australia.

Pre-Departure Medical Screening

Pre-departure Medical Screening (PDMS) is a voluntary health check usually undertaken about 3 days prior to travel. This is separate to the mandatory health check associated with visa grant and is intended to assess fitness to travel and identify any medical issues that might require prompt attention after arrival. If an entrant is assessed as not being fit to travel, this does not affect their visa. The person will receive treatment and travel when determined to be fit to do so.

References


Most recent fact sheets on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program issued by the Department of Home Affairs. See www.homeaffairs.gov.au


Making Multicultural Australia. www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au


Activities

The following activities are recommended to help you gain a better understanding of the issues covered in this topic.

1. What are the two key functions of Australia’s Humanitarian Program?

(1)  

(2)  

2. Answer the following questions about humanitarian visas:
   i. If your client has been recognised as a refugee, what visa subclass(es) might s/he hold? _________________
   ii. Which visa subclass(es) typically involve a referral from UNHCR? ______
   iii. Which 2 visa subclasses should alert you to a high level of vulnerability?
   iv. What is the main difference between a visa subclass 866 and the other visa subclasses?
   v. What is the unique feature of a visa subclass 201?

3. Go to the Department of Home Affairs website and find the answers to the following questions:
   i. How many Humanitarian Program Visas were granted last financial year?
   ii. What were the top 5 countries of birth?
iii. Are there any changes in the top 5 countries of birth compared to the previous year’s program?

iv. Why do you think this is the case?

4. What is the mandate of the International Organisation for Migration (www.iom.int)?

5. What functions does the International Organisation for Migration provide to assist Australia’s Humanitarian Program? (Hint – there is more than one function)

6. What are the key objectives of the AUSCO program?

7. Why is it important for you, as a worker, to be aware of what entrants are taught in the AUSCO program?
Topic 3: What is Settlement?

In Topic 3 you will explore the concept of ‘settlement’ and examine how this applies to forced migrants, in particular:

- the stages of settlement;
- settlement needs; and
- settlement indicators.

You will also learn about the various services that are available to forced migrants and the principles that underpin the delivery of settlement services.

Definition of Settlement

‘Settlement’ is a term that everyone uses but for which a simple definition is hard to find. The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘settle’ as meaning, amongst other things, ‘to establish or become established in an abode or place or way of life’. But when you add the displacement that characterises the forced migration experience, the term ‘settlement’ takes on whole new dimensions.

The Australian Government defines settlement as:

...the process of adjustment you experience as you become established and independent in Australia.\(^8\)

Another interesting definition of settlement comes from a Canadian agency providing services for migrants. It defines settlement as:

... a long-term dynamic process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in immigrant communities.\(^9\)

A key component of both definitions is the emphasis on empowering entrants and ensuring they become self-reliant. There is a strong view that the welfare model (where everything is done FOR the person) is a thing of the past and that there needs to be a model that builds on continuous settlement achievements through the promotion of independence.


Stages of Settlement

There is wide acceptance of the notion that refugees and other forced migrants go through various stages as they adapt to life in their new country. Different authors give the stages different names but essentially they describe the same process.

The Centre for Multicultural Youth uses different names and presents the stages/ phases of adjustment in a graphical form. This graph highlights three important aspects of the adjustment process:

- There are broad trends in the way entrants feel about their new life and these change over time.
- The emotional journey of an entrant (as depicted by the wavy line) is much more like a roller coaster than a steady progression.
- If entrants receive appropriate support in a timely manner, they will move towards integration into their new community. If they are not supported, there is a chance that they will end up being marginalised.

Irrespective of how the stages are presented, there is agreement that there are stages and that there is no set time frame for people to move through the stages. Also, just as with the well-recognised 'Stages of Grieving', it is not predestined that an individual will progress through all of the stages or how long it will take before s/he progresses to the next stage.

One of the challenging realities of humanitarian settlement is that within one family, individuals will move through the stages at different rates.

These issues are complicated in many instances by cultural differences (some cultures have a strong community focus whereas contemporary Australian culture is very much focused on the individual) and by the absence of extended families (in which the various members have clearly defined roles).

**Settlement Needs**

While forced migrants share many of the settlement needs of all migrants, for example they will need somewhere to live, some form of income etc, they also have needs that are additional to and distinct from those of voluntary migrants, not least because of:

- the trauma they have experienced;
- their (often lengthy) periods of deprivation since leaving their country of origin;
- the lack of control they have had (and often still have) over their lives;
- their fear and/or distrust of government, the military and the police;
- their lack of financial resources and belongings.

Often when people think about the needs of forced migrants, they think in terms of very practical things, forgetting that there is a parallel and equally important set of needs – those that relate to how the entrant feels, thinks and reacts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical Needs</th>
<th>Emotional Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-embarkation preparation</td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial information and orientation</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Control over the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Ability to plan for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Restoration of sense of dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income support</td>
<td>Regaining a sense of self worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Regaining a sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>Maintaining relationships within the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torture-trauma counselling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming part of the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for special needs groups (eg unaccompanied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is vitally important that those responsible for meeting refugees’ practical needs recognise that they also have a responsibility to recognise and meet their emotional needs.
Indicators of Settlement

Views about when a person is ‘settled’ and should be used to measure whether this has occurred have differed over time. The Government position is that there are four key indicators of settlement:

- Social participation
- Economic well-being
- Independence (or ‘agency’)
- Personal well-being.

All four are seen as closely interlinked components of the same system. To be effectively settled, a person needs to score well in all four categories.

The things that are used to measure settlement include but are not limited to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement Indicators</th>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social participation</td>
<td>- English proficiency&lt;br&gt;- Participation in education and training&lt;br&gt;- Participation in community life (school, volunteer work, faith community, sporting or recreational group etc)&lt;br&gt;- Citizenship (or intention to become a citizen)&lt;br&gt;- Amount of community acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic well-being</td>
<td>- Employment&lt;br&gt;- Level of income&lt;br&gt;- Job satisfaction&lt;br&gt;- Satisfaction with accommodation&lt;br&gt;- Level of debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence (‘agency’)</td>
<td>- Ability to make choices (about own life)&lt;br&gt;- Ability to gain access to and make use of community and government services&lt;br&gt;- A reliable source of income (from employment or Centrelink)&lt;br&gt;- Drivers licence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal well being</td>
<td>- Physical health&lt;br&gt;- Mental health&lt;br&gt;- Level of personal confidence&lt;br&gt;- Sense of safety&lt;br&gt;- Sense of connection to Australia&lt;br&gt;- Level of self esteem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Services Available to New Entrants

Successive Australian Governments have held firm to their commitment to provide resettlement opportunities to refugees and other forced migrants, there has also been bipartisan support for the provision of high quality services.

The government also recognises that Humanitarian Program entrants will have needs additional to and distinct from other groups of migrants and will have a continuing need for assistance from both government and the community sector for some time. To accommodate this, the Government funds additional support programs for humanitarian entrants over and above the general settlement services.

Government policy with respect to the provision of services for refugees and other forced migrants sits thus within the framework of Multiculturalism as reflected in the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society and the National Integrated Settlement Strategy.

Refugees and other forced migrants receive support from a wide range of sources including:

- Department of Home Affairs (DHA) funded agencies;
- services provided or funded by other government (federal, state and local) agencies;
- services that receive funds from the community and/or religious institutions;
- volunteers from both refugee groups and the mainstream community.

The following table outlines some of the key programs through which services for refugees and other forced migrants are funded. It is by no means all inclusive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DHA Funded Programs</th>
<th>Key Programs Funded by Other Government Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP)</td>
<td>English as a Second Language Program (ESL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)</td>
<td>Specialist Torture and Trauma Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)</td>
<td>Specialist Health and Mental Health Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minors (UHM) Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, refugees and other forced migrants have the same entitlements to mainstream services as all other permanent residents and citizens of Australia, including to:

- Centrelink
- Medicare
- jobactive
- Public housing and community housing
- Family support programs
- Youth programs
- Aged care
- Primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Sport and recreation programs etc.

Up to date information about DHA-funded programs can be obtained from the DHA website: www.homeaffairs.gov.au and information about other key settlement programs can be found as follows:

Torture and Trauma Counselling Services:

- Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASTT): www.fastt.org.au

Refugee Health:

- NT: www.pnnt.org.au
- Qld: Mater Online: www.materonline.org.au/services/refugee-services
- SA: Migrant Health Service: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
- TAS: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) takes the lead in ensuring that the needs of refugees and other forced migrants are met by its programs and by the programs of other federal, state and local government agencies. To this end it undertakes a variety of activities including but not limited to:

- gathering data about settlement outcomes;
- conducting research and evaluating programs;
- funding specialist programs that respond to identified needs;
- maintaining regular dialogue with other government agencies;
- promoting interagency coordination of policy and programs and working to ensure seamless cross-agency service delivery;
- overseeing the national planning framework for settlement service delivery.

It is also relevant to note that the response of federal government agencies is underpinned by the Social Inclusion Agenda which was launched in 2009. The objective of the Social Inclusion Agenda is to ensure that the policy and programs of government agencies are designed, developed, coordinated and delivered in a way that meets the needs of the whole population – especially disadvantaged members within it.

Recently arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants have been identified as a disadvantaged group. For more information on Social Inclusion go to:


State and Territory governments also play an important role in planning and service delivery. See:

- www.multicultural.vic.gov.au
- www.multicultural.nsw.gov.au
- www.multicultural.qld.gov.au
- www.multicultural.sa.gov.au
The Role of the Community Sector

While government agencies play an important role in planning service frameworks, with a few exceptions, the actual delivery of services is done by the community sector. It is within this sector that you are most likely to be employed and it is with this sector that entrants will come into most contact.

There are many different groups who come under the broad title of ‘community sector’. They include:

- community-run organisations;
- church/religious based organisations;
- ethno-specific community welfare agencies;
- volunteers (both mainstream and from the refugee communities);
- proposers (sponsors) and community based support agencies.

In addition, there are other agencies that perform the same or similar functions that fit into a rather ambiguous space that is neither government nor community. Included in this are:

- for-profit companies;
- some service delivery arms of government.

As previously mentioned, government funding (particularly but not exclusively from DHA) is very important for this sector. Some community agencies do not receive any government assistance (in large part as the result of a conscious decision to retain independence). Many others balance government funding with funding from their constituency and/or from fundraising.

Between them, the community sector agencies, volunteers and proposers provide most of the key services both in areas specific to humanitarian entrants and also those available to all migrants. These include but are not limited to:

- meeting entrants at the airport and helping them settle into their initial accommodation;
- giving initial orientation to the area and making sure the entrants have completed the necessary formalities (opened a bank account, registered for social security, enrolled their children in schools etc);
- assisting the entrants to gain access to services that will meet their various needs e.g. language instruction, housing, education, employment, health care etc;
- providing basic household goods; and
- providing an essential link between the entrant and their new country.

It is recognised that if service delivery is to function efficiently, there must be liaison between the policy/funding bodies and those who are providing the services. This occurs at many levels, from the specific project level to the policy level. Each state and territory has forums that provide opportunities for community agencies to discuss program
operation with the relevant government agencies. At the national level, peak non-government organisations (NGOs) meet with both the Department of Home Affairs and with Centrelink on a regular basis. There is also a committee which advises the Minister on settlement issues (the Settlement Services Advisory Council).

**Settlement Service Principles**

Agencies delivering the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) for the Department of Social Services are required to apply a set of principles to their work.

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### HUMANITARIAN SETTLEMENT PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

Some of the key principles guiding the delivery of the HSP are as follows:

- **Service Providers** work collaboratively with community service providers and professionals to ensure the best possible settlement outcomes for each Client.
- **Service Provider personnel** are skilled to work appropriately with Clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and are respectful of the cultural and religious values of Clients.
- **Service Providers** deliver services innovatively to maximise Client outcomes and effective use of resources.
- **Clients** are active participants in the case management process. Outcome goals and activities are developed in collaboration with the Client and are tailored to each Client's needs and personal circumstances.
- **Clients** are individuals who have the inherent right of respect for their human worth and dignity.
- **Service delivery** draws upon Client strengths, with the aim of assisting Clients to participate fully and independently in the Australian economy and society.
- **Each Client** has one case manager who is the central point of contact and assumes overall responsibility for identifying and addressing changing needs.
- **Services** focus on achieving sustainable Client outcomes by developing skills and competency, supporting realistic expectations and transitioning Clients to independence, other settlement services and/or mainstream service systems.

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The HSP Principles are worth studying. While they apply specifically to services delivered under the Program, it can be argued that they constitute a sound set of principles which should guide all settlement service delivery.

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11 For the full set of Principles see the DSS website: [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au)
**SCOA’s Settlement Service Standards**

In May 2016, the Settlement Council of Australia launched its **National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards**. These are the culmination of an extensive round of consultation within the sector and aim to:

- ensure consistency and the maintenance of high quality settlement services across Australia;
- encourage and stimulate best practice and promote a culture of continuous improvement;
- strengthen service delivery, client outcomes and impact;
- provide a reference point for organisations to use in periodic reviews of service delivery;
- provide the impetus for capacity building within agencies and the sector more broadly.

The Standards are aligned with the Government’s National Settlement Framework and the Settlement Services Principles (see above). They are also intended to reflect human rights principles and a client-centred approach.

**References**


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13 At the time of writing, settlement related information was still on the DSS website. It is expected that it will transfer at some stage to the Department of Home Affairs website ([www.homeaffairs.govau](http://www.homeaffairs.govau)) when the departmental reorganisation is completed.


Good Starts for Recently Arrived Youth with Refugee Backgrounds: promoting well being in the first three years of settlement in Australia. Sandy Gifford, Ignacio Correa-Velez and Robyn Sampson. La Trobe Refugee Research Centre. 2009.

Activities

1. Write your own definition of ‘settlement’.

2. Why have you chosen to include the things you did?

3. Find the UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (2002) on the UNHCR website (www.unhcr.org) and read Chapter 1.3.

4. What are the key ways in which UNHCR’s depiction of the Stages of Settlement (in Chapter 1.3. of the UNHCR Handbook) differ to those in the Phases of Adjustment graph in this section? Comment on the significance of these differences.
5. What are the 7 Service Principles of the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society?

6. Of these Service Principles, which two are mentioned most often in the context of service delivery and what do they mean?

(a) ____________________________________________________________________________

(b) ____________________________________________________________________________

7. You will have noted that there is also a different set of service principles – one that relates specifically to work with humanitarian entrants (the Humanitarian Settlement Service Principles included above). What are 4 key things that distinguish this from the more general principles in the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
8. Choose one of the practical settlement needs shown in the table in this section. Explain how you would go about meeting this need in a way that ensured that as many of the emotional needs as possible can also be met.

9. Select one or more of the Commonwealth Government agencies that provides services for refugees – preferably one you don’t know much about. Go to their website and find out about their programs.

10. What do you think the main roles of the peak non-government agencies in the settlement sector should be?
Topic 4: The Impact of Forced Migration on Settlement

In Topic 4 you will explore the various ways in which forced migration affects people, in particular the impact of:

- changing gender roles;
- pressures within the family;
- torture and trauma;
- the use of obsolete survival strategies.

As previously mentioned, forced migration is very different to voluntary migration where people have not only made a free and conscious decision to move, they have also had the opportunity to make plans, pack belongings, say goodbye etc.

The circumstances of forced migration are such that they can have a profound impact on those who have experienced it. The following table from UNHCR gives an overview of some of the stressors and the possible personal and emotional consequences of these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Sources of Stress</th>
<th>Possible Personal and Emotional Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ongoing danger in country-of-origin</td>
<td>fear and anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continuing separation from family members</td>
<td>loss of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of understanding/hostility on the part of government officials</td>
<td>grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injustices</td>
<td>lack of family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minority status in a dominant culture</td>
<td>guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited community support networks</td>
<td>loss of a sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prejudice and hostility on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion</td>
<td>cultural, racial or religious integrity undermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited access to cultural and religious institutions</td>
<td>identity undermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor social status</td>
<td>lack/loss of social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gender role and status adjustment</td>
<td>family conflict and tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intergenerational adjustment</td>
<td>fear about the future and of not coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>altered capacity to plan the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underemployment</td>
<td>social and economic dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficulties in accessing education and health care</td>
<td>poor health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insecure housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new and unfamiliar environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of proficiency in the language of the receiving society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR Handbook on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees 2002

As you can see, many stressors and their consequences are included in this table and they are discussed in detail in the UNHCR Handbook (see [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)).
Some of the ways in which forced migration has an impact on people are explored below.

**Changing Gender Roles**

Gender roles in Australia are not nearly as clearly defined as they used to be. Both in the home and the workforce, gender roles have changed over time and, by and large, the population has accepted these changes. It is no longer seen as unusual for men to:

- cook, clean and undertake other chores at home;
- take time off to care for children while the woman goes out to work;
- report to women in the workplace; etc.

And for women to:

- be able to make the choice about when or even if they have children;
- pursue a career;
- expect to take an equal role in decision making about things concerning the family; etc.

We are so used to such things now it is easy to forget that it was not always like this and that in many parts of the world the things we take for granted are seen as highly irregular.

Despite having been alerted to the fact that things are done differently in Australia, many entrants:

- find it difficult to come to terms with behaviours and attitudes that run counter to all they have ever known;
- are reluctant to embrace the positive aspects of gender equality because it is hard for them to recognise that by doing so, they are not discarding their culture and identity.

Complicating the problem in many entrant families is that, in some instances, women find adjusting to life in Australia easier than men. Possible reasons for this include the fact that it is easier for a woman to pick up the roles traditionally assigned to her (mother and homemaker) after arrival than for a man to become the breadwinner and guide. It is also the case that many entry-level jobs are more suitable for women and female entrants will sometimes find themselves employment before the men in the family. The woman thus becomes the person who is interacting with the external environment and her competency and increased independence can be very challenging for her husband and older sons.

While this is an issue for any migrant coming from a more traditional culture into Australia, it can be argued that the challenges are greater for those from refugee backgrounds because the refugee experience itself is likely to have already placed relationships between husbands and wives under considerable strain and is often associated with:
• extended periods during which the man has not been able to be the provider and where he has been unable to protect his family;
• the mistaken belief that resettlement will mean that ‘everything will get back to normal’.

It is important that service providers avoid being judgemental of entrants when they display attitudes and behaviours that seem out of place in contemporary Australian society but at the same time they should remember to:

• help entrants recognise that making some concessions in relation to their expectations about gender roles can be advantageous to them and does not mean that they are not respecting their cultural values;
• model constructive behaviour;
• be vigilant for signs that tensions within the home generated by changing gender roles are resulting in abuse and/or violence;
• be ready to refer entrants to trauma counselling services, family support programs or other relevant services if need be.

**Challenges for Families**

While the maintenance of a strong and mutually supportive family unit is very important for successful settlement, it is not all that easy to achieve. There are multiple factors arising from the forced migration experience that place enormous strains on families.

First amongst these are the demographics of the current entrant caseload. The recent trend has been for:

• a high proportion of entrants to be under 25 years of age;
• small numbers over 40 years of age;
• significant numbers of large families (with 5 or more members).

The implications of the above include:

• the absence of ‘elders’ within communities to provide advice and guidance during the complex transition to life in Australia;
• the fact that a significant proportion of the caseload will never have known a ‘normal’ life;
• because of their size, the large families are likely to be affected by financial and housing stress.

Another relevant characteristic of the current caseload is the amount of time the refugees have spent in limbo, either in refugee camps or living a hand-to-mouth existence on urban fringes. With the increasing emphasis on resolving some of the world’s protracted refugee problems, more and more of the current cohort of entrants have spent at least a decade (sometimes considerably longer) in situations of deprivation and dependency, where adults had little opportunity to develop a work ethic.
In addition to having to adjust to changing gender roles (as discussed above), families face many challenges adapting to life in Australia. These include but are by no means limited to:

- parenting;
- different rates of adjustment;
- young refugees challenging boundaries;
- generational shifts;
- managing a budget;
- remittances;
- separation;
- blended families;
- lack of recreational pursuits;
- adjusting to different laws and societal expectations.

Tensions resulting from all these stressors can, if not appropriately addressed in a timely manner, result in substance abuse and/or family violence.

**Torture and Trauma**

Torture is the deliberate use of physical or psychological methods that cause a person severe pain and suffering with the intention of punishing, intimidating or extracting information from him or her. The torture must be perpetrated by a public official or at his or her direction.

*United Nations Declaration Against Torture*

Experts put the figure of the number of refugees who have experienced torture or other traumatic events at somewhere between 70 and 90 percent.

When torture is used, a whole society, not just the individual who is being tortured, lives in fear. Other society members are afraid that it will happen to them. In this way, torture is a tool of social control used by a system that rules individuals and societies through fear.

**Trauma** is deep distress, intense anxiety, psychological pain and/or fear that results from a particular event or series of events. Most refugees and other forced migrants will have experienced not just one but a series of traumatic events. These might have included:

- witnessing a loved one being hurt or murdered;
- being attacked and/or injured, often by the police or military;
- being subjected to or witnessing rape or some other form of sexual violence (this applies to women, men and children);
- witnessing acts of violence against community members, including mass murder;
- arbitrary arrest and imprisonment;
- disappearances of family members and friends;
- persistent long-term political oppression;
- living in fear for their lives;
- being forced to flee from their home;
- perilous journeys in search of sanctuary;
People rarely identify themselves as survivors of torture and trauma. It is thus very important for workers to know enough about the situation in their clients’ country of origin and something about the sorts of experiences they were likely to have had in exile to be able to make informed guesses as to the likelihood of someone being a survivor of torture and trauma. These can then be tested with the use of careful questioning. Examples of suitable questions are:

- When did you leave your country?
- Did you choose to leave or were you forced to?
- What was the journey to Australia like?
- Have you spent time in a refugee camp?

Having a sense of the clients’ background helps a worker to develop their settlement plan and also guides them about the extent to which they need to be vigilant for signs of trauma. Be aware that gathering appropriate and sufficient information to help your client takes time and patience.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the name given to a number of symptoms which often occur following exposure to extreme trauma. Common symptoms of PTSD include:

- difficulty concentrating;
- high levels of chronic anxiety;
- increased irritability and sometimes aggression;
- difficulty sleeping (either because of nightmares or because the mind keeps replaying events);
- flashbacks;
- feeling worried, fearful or helpless in situations which present no danger;
- feeling hopeless about the future and having difficulty making plans;
- feeling guilty about something they did or feel they should have done, or even for just being alive and safe when others are not.

Children also suffer from PTSD. Common symptoms amongst children include:

- nightmares;
- regression to an earlier developmental stage e.g. bedwetting;
- atypical fear reactions e.g. when meeting new people;
- changes in behaviour at home or school, including being naughty or rebellious;
- changes in mood e.g. being uncharacteristically sad or withdrawn or conversely, being overactive and difficult to manage;
- displaying acts of aggression towards others;
- self-harm and/or engaging in dangerous behaviours.

If problems are acute, persistent and/or interfere with daily functioning, they need to be addressed through referral to a specialist counselling program.

Then comes the tricky issue of raising with the client that you think they would benefit from seeing a counsellor. In many countries the notion of counselling is unfamiliar or is equated with something that ‘mad people have’. Getting this conversation wrong can result not only in the client refusing help but also severing the relationship of trust between the worker and their client. The following from Foundation House provides some guidance as to how the issue can be tackled.
Raising the Topic of Counselling with Clients

Begin with saying what you have noticed in the way of a problem. For example ‘I have noticed you have been crying a lot’ and this has led you to wonder if there are ongoing difficulties.

Ask them if there is anything you can do to make things easier in the setting in which they are in.

Let them know that it is not unusual for people to feel that way, particularly if they have experienced hardships and violence before coming to Australia.

Ask if they have had any bad experiences prior to arrival or since arrival which they may not want to talk about but they think might be affecting them. (Do not ask questions such as ‘Have you been tortured?’).

Check if they know where to go for physical/medical problems.

Indicate that if they are having problems which are not physical but are problems to do with not being able to concentrate or worries, or sleeplessness, that they can also see a doctor about them.

Tell them about the local torture and trauma counselling service and explain that this agency has been set up to help people who have been through war, civil violence, and political oppression.

If they indicate that they have had such experiences but are not interested in pursuing help, you could give them the required information for self referral at a later date. Show acceptance of their refusal and indicate that they can talk about it with you any time later.

If clients indicate that they do want help and a referral, say that you could refer them, if they agree or they could refer themselves.

Ask if there are any questions they would like to ask about your contact with them or any other agency If none are asked, reassure about confidentiality and advise that there may be a waiting period.

The above inquiries should not be made unless there is some time available to do so and follow up with a referral if necessary. It is also important not to offer more than can be delivered.

If you are making a referral, agree to inform the client when you have actually made the referral. Tell them the outcome, such as whether they have been placed on a waiting list and how they will be contacted.

Every state and territory has its own specialist agency that provides support to survivors of torture and trauma and collectively they have developed excellent resources and training programs.

ACT: Companion House: www.companionhouse.org.au
New South Wales: STARTTS: www.startts.org
Northern Territory: Melaleuca Refugee Centre: www.melaleuca.org.au
Queensland: QPASTT: www.qpastt.org.au

South Australia: STTARS: www.sttars.org.au
Victoria: Foundation House: www.foundationhouse.org.au
Western Australia: ASETTS: www.asetts.org.au.

Use of Obsolete Survival Strategies

It is not uncommon to hear workers complaining that their clients are ‘ungrateful’ or ‘demanding’ or expressing frustration that their clients are not telling the truth when asked by others whether they have received a particular service. Similarly, they might complain that they withhold important information.

It is easy to be judgemental about such things and not think about why entrants are behaving in these ways.

One of the most important things you need when you are working with refugees and other forced migrants is empathy. You need to be able to put yourself into their shoes and think through why they might be thinking and acting in a particular way … and if you do this, you will quite often recognise that the things they do which seem difficult or counterproductive are actually the very behaviours that helped them to survive in their own country and/or in the country of first asylum.

For example:

- if people have spent a long time living in a situation where everything is scarce and they don’t know when they will get more, it is understandable that they will look for ways to get extra. This might mean service shopping, i.e. going to several agencies asking for the same things … and if it means saying that you have not received these things before, so be it;

- if getting the things you needed to keep your family alive meant competing with others, you learn to be very demanding. After all, the people who were polite and stood back ran the risk of missing out or even dying;

- many forced migrants come from countries where it is expected that you pay a bribe in order to get things done. It can be hard for entrants to accept both that this is not necessary in Australia and that they might get into trouble if they offer a bribe;

- in the totalitarian regimes from which many refugees come, spies and informers are used to tell the government if people were transgressing in any way. Survival meant learning not to trust anyone … even neighbours, friends and family members … and especially not anyone associated with the government. Learning to trust again takes time;

- both in their home country and in countries of first asylum, refugees had good reason to fear people in uniform – police, the army, local militias etc. It is very common for newly arrived refugees to be afraid of the people we tend to think of as those to whom we turn for help. Even the fact that they have been told that things are different in Australia does not necessarily take away the fear.

Not all survival strategies are counterproductive in their new environment. In order to survive refugees had to be strong, patient, forthright, flexible and creative (amongst other things). These are all very useful traits that can assist their settlement.
The challenge for you is to:

- recognise learnt behaviour patterns that will interfere with entrants getting the support they need and work with the entrants to help them understand how to reshape these strategies for life in Australia;

- draw on and reinforce the positive coping strategies, helping entrants understand how these can be put to good use in Australia.

References


*Rebuilding Shattered Lives.* Foundation House. 1998.\(^{15}\)


Activities

1. Imagine that you have just been miraculously – and unexpectedly – transported to a remote village in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

   (a) What skills do you have that you think would be most useful to you in your new home?

\(^{15}\) The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) publications and resources are available on their website [www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au) for free download, however these materials can only be presented or reproduced with prior written permission. For more information, please contact the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture **info@foundationhouse.org.au**.
(b) What survival skills that are useful in Australia do you think would of little use (or even cause big problems for you) in PNG?

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6. Visit the website of the Torture and Trauma counselling service in your state/territory. What are the most useful features within this website for you as a worker?
Topic 5: Understanding Refugee Communities

In Topic 5 you will explore the concept of a community from the perspective of the settlement of forced migrants, focusing in particular on:

- why communities form;
- how communities can be assisted to become constructive and supportive entities;
- the role of culture and identity.

What Makes a Community

The word ‘community’ has a number of meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. For the purpose of this unit it is defined as follows:

Community = a group of people who share common characteristics and are bound together by interests and common aspirations.

When we speak about a community in the context of refugees and other forced migrants, we are usually referring to a group of humanitarian entrants who choose to associate with each other because they share one or more of the following characteristics:

- their tribal affiliation, ethnicity or nationality;
- their religion;
- their political opinion;
- the location from which they came;
- the time of or reasons for their expulsion from their country of origin;
- the location of or experiences during exile;
- common interests or aspirations;
- other factors seen as relevant to the individuals concerned.

In addition, these people have chosen to associate with each other for particular reasons (both practical and psychological). Every individual within that community probably has a slightly different set of reasons for coming together with the others but there are some common themes. These include but are not limited to:

- seeking comfort in the familiar;
- seeking security in numbers;
- recreating ‘family’;
- preserving the struggle;
- supporting new entrants;
- preserving their culture.
One of the common misconceptions in the settlement sector is thinking that all communities are alike – or at least similar. When you reflect, however, on the many factors that underpin the formation of communities and the very different backgrounds from which their members have come, it is easy to see that this is not the case. Then when you add individual personalities into the mix, it is easy to see that any discussion about ‘refugee communities’ must, at best, be based on broad generalisations.

It is also important to recognise that all communities are affected by events in their country of origin or concerning members of their community elsewhere and it is likely that there will be times when communities become more politicised and divided by factions. The key for workers is to be sensitive to developments affecting the communities with whom they are working and seek advice from community elders, bi-cultural co-workers and others to whom they have links. Equally important is for workers from within these communities to remain neutral and act in a professional way.

Before leaving this section, there is a significant point that must be made: communities form rather than are formed. In other words, a community forms when the members of a community believe there is a reason for them coming together rather than because they are told they should form a community. Outsiders (e.g. workers) might suggest that one way entrants can achieve certain objectives would be for them to form a group or organisation but this will only happen if they have the desire and drive to make it happen. This doesn’t mean to say that they will not benefit from support, advice or mentoring along the way.

**Helping Communities to Develop into Constructive and Supportive Entities**

As mentioned repeatedly in this unit, one of the most important objectives of settlement work is empowerment. It is sometimes easier to do things for a client or a community group, but all this does is create dependency (and a huge workload). It is far better to assist entrants join forces to achieve common objectives.

In broad terms, there are three things that often get in the way of communities being able to form efficient and effective community organisations:

- lack of understanding of how things work in Australia relative to how things operated in their former country(ies);
- inappropriate leadership;
- external agendas with regard to particular groups.

None are straightforward to rectify but the first is typically the easiest for an ‘outsider’ to confront.

**Forming an Organisation**

Most entrants come from countries where things are far less regulated than in Australia. Here there are lots of laws that have been introduced to protect the public but at the same time mean that people cannot just go out and do what they want. For example:

- it is against the law to fundraise without permission from a government department;
- you cannot hold a public event without insurance;
- you cannot hire a hall unless you are linked to a legal entity;
- you must abide by occupational health and safety laws;
you can be sued if you damage something or someone is injured at one of your events; etc.

New entrants soon realise that if they want to do anything more than just meet in someone’s home for social reasons, they will have to formalise their structure in some way. The options open to them are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unincorporated not-for-profit Association</strong></td>
<td>• Very loose structure</td>
<td>• Members are personally liable if things go wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Members free to join or leave</td>
<td>• Cannot seek funding from the public</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Not able to apply for grant funding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group auspiced by an established organisation</strong></td>
<td>• Legal protection</td>
<td>• No separate identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Guidance and support</td>
<td>• Must abide by rules of auspicing agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incorporated Association</strong></td>
<td>• Can make own decisions</td>
<td>• Must register and abide by rules</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can open bank account</td>
<td>• Must pay set-up and annual fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can apply for funding</td>
<td>• Must submit annual returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can fundraise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has legal protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Ltd</strong></td>
<td>• Can make own decisions</td>
<td>• Very expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can open bank account</td>
<td>• Rules are complex and are better suited for trading or for profit entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can apply for funding</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can fundraise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has legal protection</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has national coverage</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Most community groups choose either the auspicing or incorporation option, sometimes starting off by being auspiced by an established organisation and then progressing to incorporation at a later date. Whichever path they choose to follow there are things they must know and things they must do.

**Effective Leadership**

To be an effective leader, or an effective member of a leadership team, a person must have the right combination of:

- motivation;
- skills;
- knowledge;
- legitimacy.
One of the things that often happens in society as a whole is that the wrong people often put themselves forward as leaders, and refugee communities are not exempt from this. Without in any way seeking to diminish the superb leadership that exists within many refugee communities, it is important to understand a few of the reasons why some refugee community groups struggle:

- Many countries from which refugees and other forced migrants come are highly class based. When they come to Australia, people from within the ruling classes believe that they have a right to take on leadership roles and to tell others what to do ... just as they did back home.

- Linked to the above is that there are also occasions when a person who would make an ideal leader believes it is not their place to lead because they come from a caste, class or other group traditionally seen as playing only subservient roles within the community.

- The highly regulated environment in Australia requires community leaders to know about all sorts of things - incorporation, insurance, fundraising etc etc – most of which are quite alien. Many community leaders don’t know what they don’t know. They expect that things will operate in Australia in much the same way as they did in their home country.

- Scarcity within refugee camps and settlements can lead to situations where certain individuals use intimidation and aggression to ensure they get their share (or more than their fair share). These people believe that the same tactics will work just as well in Australia and use them to try to exert influence over others.

- Some community groups focus heavily on the past and on what happened in their country of origin. Old animosities prevail and there is a sense that wrongs must be righted. Groups fixated on such things find it hard to focus on their new life in Australia and to come to terms with the need to live side by side with other groups that came from their country of origin.

- Part of the refugee experience is being stripped of your sense of self-worth. Some people see resettlement as providing them an opportunity to regain this and use a variety of tactics including engaging in (sometimes grandiose) self-promotion and gathering around themselves a group of people for the purpose of affirming their status.

- Another characteristic amongst some entrant groups is that they have spent very long periods in refugee camps and, except for a small group of individuals who were lucky enough to get work with UNHCR or NGOs, they have had little experience with ‘work’ and have effectively become institutionalised ... expecting that things will be given to them.

- There are also some community leaders who are either cowered by or obsessed with ‘important people’. At the one extreme you will see leaders who ‘don’t want to bother others with their problems’. On the other hand you have leaders who are obsessed with being seen to know people they believe are important, especially politicians, and the concerns of their community are often overlooked.

When you reflect on all of this it seems quite miraculous that the groups that form within refugee communities do as well as they do and that so many manage to achieve quite remarkable things.

This being said, it has to be acknowledged that some groups struggle – usually for want of effective leadership as a result of one or more of the above reasons – and the
challenge that confronts community development workers is to find a way to turn this situation around. This is never easy, especially for someone from outside the community and there is not a simple strategy that can be used. Each situation requires careful analysis and the adoption of a strategy tailored to meet the specific circumstances. This being said, there are **some useful hints** for a worker confronted with a dysfunctional community group:

- **Don’t leap in.** Take time to get to know the group and remember, things are rarely as they seem at first.

- **Talk to other people** who know the group to try to get a better understanding of the dynamics within it and seek their advice about possible courses of action.

- **Be careful not to be judgemental.** You might need to point out the consequences of certain courses of action (or inaction) but don’t tell them that what they are doing is ‘wrong’.

- **Don’t try to take over.** As tempting as it might be to take on doing things for the group, this is not sound community development and will not help them in the long term.

- If you are young … or a female … or both … recognise that many community leaders will not be open to taking your advice and will not necessarily believe that you are capable of assisting them. Sometimes it is possible to work through this by being **patient, undemonstrative and constructive.** Sometimes you might need to call in someone they are likely to respect and work through this person.

- Provide as many positive examples as possible. This might take the form of ‘how to’ guides such as the MDA Guide for Community Leaders\(^{16}\) or possibly even introducing them to someone they are likely to respect and who is willing to take on a mentoring role or finding an established community group that will provide support (see below).

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\(^{16}\) The *Introductory Guide for Community Leaders*, and the accompanying ‘train the trainer’ kit, can be obtained from MDA: [www.mdaltd.org.au](http://www.mdaltd.org.au).
Support for Emerging Communities

Federal, state and local governments recognise the importance of supporting new and emerging communities. In addition to funding direct settlement services, there are also grants and other programs that are targeted at the communities themselves.

**Strong and Resilient Communities** grants were introduced in early 2018, replacing the Strengthening Community Activity Grants. The grants are intended to:

- help foster community cohesion by increasing people’s sense of belonging and engagement; and
- strengthen the capacity of communities to become more self-reliant and empowered to address local solutions.


In addition, **state and territory governments** support a number of initiatives. For more information go to the website of the relevant agency:

- [www.multicultural.nt.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.nt.gov.au)
- [www.multicultural.qld.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.qld.gov.au)

Similarly many **local councils** are very active in supporting groups within their area through small grant programs or in-kind support. Information about these programs can usually be found on their websites and/or you can contact the Council’s Community Liaison Officer.

In addition, it is important not to overlook the value of **mentoring**. Mentoring in this context involves linking members of a small and emerging community with those from an established community so that the newcomers can receive collegial support and guidance. There have been a number of successful mentoring programs around the country.

**Culture**

Thus far we have been talking about very practical issues in relation to communities but it is also important to recognise that entrant communities are also defined by and ‘holders’ of the culture of those within them.

When we talk about ‘culture’, we are often referring to things such as food, dress, music and dance, traditions and handicrafts etc. These are all visible and, to some extent, accessible to ‘outsiders’. Culture, however, goes far deeper than this.
Many theorists have used the analogy of an iceberg to describe culture. Just as icebergs have 10% above water (and hence visible) and 90% below the surface, so too does culture. The following is one depiction of the Cultural Iceberg.  

As the above picture shows, culture is influenced by a range of external factors and it is thus understandable that when we consider culture in the context of refugee communities, we are in fact looking at a complex mix of blended cultures derived from and influenced by:

- the culture of the country of origin - at the time they left;
- the events that led to their expulsion or departure from their country;
- the culture of the country of exile (especially if they were there for a long time);
- the specific culture within the refugee camp or settlement;
- their experiences in their country, during flight and in exile.

Topic 8 will take up the issue of cross-cultural work in more detail but there are some points worth making at this time:

- Just because refugees have been forced from their homelands does not necessarily mean that they are not proud of their cultural heritage. Preserving this in exile can be very important for some refugees.
- Other refugees – especially those who have had horrendous experiences – might have an ambivalent attitude to their country of origin and its culture. These are the people who will try to embrace ‘Australian culture’ as quickly as possible.

From www.languageandculture.com
Refugees from one country will have different ‘cultures’ because they have had different experiences. Some of these differences will be because they come from different ethnic groups, classes, regions, religions etc in their country of origin. Others result from their leaving their country at different times or from them spending time in different countries on route to Australia.

Identity

Many service providers see that the term ‘refugee’ is something to be proud of and believe that refugees are to be admired for their courage and strength. The issue is not quite that simple for the refugees themselves.

Some refugees happily define themselves as ‘refugees’ and do so for the rest of their lives. They might see this as:

- a badge of honour,
- something to be proud of,
- a symbol of their strength and resilience …

Other refugees want to discard the term as quickly as possible because they equate ‘refugee’ with:

- all the horrors they have been through,
- the deprivation and degradation of their life in exile,
- their failure to protect their life/family;
- their abandonment of the struggle in their homeland;
- negative community stereotypes;
- their past (with the present and future being defined by their status as a permanent resident or citizen of Australia) …

Both opinions are equally legitimate and should be respected. It is important when working with refugees that you enable them to define their own identity and be clear about whether they want to be known as a refugee and if not, how do they want to be identified.

It is equally important to enable refugees to define other aspects of their identity, not least:

- the name they want to give to their country of origin (e.g. Burma or Myanmar, Iran or Persia),
- whether they want to be known as a national of this country or defined according to their ethnicity or tribal affiliation (e.g. South Sudanese or Dinka, Afghan or Hazara);
- the name they want to be known as;
- how they want to be addressed, etc.

The refugee experience is, for many, dehumanising and degrading. Being able to redefine one’s identity is a critical step on the road to rebuilding their life.

References
Activities

1. What do you think are the most important things that define a community?

2. What communities do you belong to?

3. In the context of community leadership, what do you think the following attributes mean?
   - Motivation: ________________________________
   - Skills: ________________________________
   - Knowledge: ________________________________
   - Legitimacy: ________________________________

4. What are the key objectives of the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program and how does it assist emerging communities?
5. Mentoring provides valuable practical assistance for a new community by linking it to a more established community. Can you think of another useful outcome of mentoring?

6. Go to the website of the agency responsible for multicultural issues in your state/territory. What are the key programs targeting humanitarian settlement and support for communities?

7. Write down the first things that come to your mind when you hear the word ‘refugee’.

8. Do you think you might need to ‘park these thoughts one side’ when working with refugees? Explain your answer.
9. List the key qualities you think someone must have to work effectively with refugees and other forced migrants?
Topic 6: Working with Clients #1: First Steps

Preparing for a New Group of Clients

One of the most interesting aspects of working with refugees is that the origin of the caseload is constantly changing. As we explored in Topic 2, different groups have dominated the Humanitarian Program over time – Vietnamese, Lebanese, Chileans, Yugoslavs, Sudanese, Afghans … and we can be certain that in the future there will be different groups again. Also, in the recent years there has been an increasing diversification within the Program and small numbers of refugees are arriving from countries most people have never heard of like Togo and Mauritania.

In Topic 1 we spoke about ‘the refugee experience’ but it is essential that you are mindful of the fact that each refugee has his or her own story and that each group of entrants will have been through different experiences and will have needs that reflect their background and these experiences. As a result, each time you encounter a new group of entrants or an entrant from a country/group you have not worked with before, it is important you do your ‘homework’, either independently or better still, in collaboration with your workmates.

When considering sources of information it is relevant to note that:

- some sources of information are far more reputable than others;
- when engaging in web-based research, it is important to think carefully about the source and whether it might be biased;
- reputable sources of information about country situations, entrant groups and human rights include:
  - UNHCR
  - DHA
  - BBC World
  - Amnesty International
  - Human Rights Watch
  - US Committee for Refugees
- Wikipedia can provide some very useful basic information but it should not be regarded as a reputable source. This is because information can be posted (or altered) by anyone and there are no guarantees of accuracy;
- information posted by the governments of source and receiving countries can be biased or misleading, as can information posted by some political and advocacy groups;
- it is possible to deduce information about clients from their visa subclass;

- members of the entrants’ communities are an invaluable source of information but it is important to keep certain things in your mind when you are gathering information from them. These include:

  ➢ whether the people already in Australia are from the same group (religious/ethnic etc) as the entrants or from another group;

  ➢ how representative the people to whom you are speaking are: are they community leaders (hence probably older men) and might there be other opinions that are relevant to consider (e.g. those of the women, young people etc);

  ➢ whether the opinions of those to whom you are speaking be biased in any way;

  ➢ how much do they actually know about the experiences of the entrants.

### Meeting Clients for the First Time

There is an old saying: `you never get a second chance to make a first impression`. It is thus very important for you to think about the impression you make when you meet new clients for the first time.

In doing this, you must recognise that you are the one in the position of power and therefore it is up to you to make an effort to make your clients feel comfortable and able to begin building a relationship of trust with you. And if you do some homework and prepare in advance, it is not hard to do this.

When encountering clients from a particular country for the first time, it is a good idea to find out about the following:

- **Verbal greetings**: how do you say ‘hello’, ‘welcome’ and ‘thank you’ in their language?

- **Non-verbal greetings**: what is the polite way to greet someone ... and are there gender issues to consider?

- **Gestures**: what is the polite way to beckon someone to come with you, sit down etc? And are there common gestures in our culture that are considered offensive in theirs?

- **Eye Contact**: is it considered polite or impolite to look someone in the eye when you are talking to them? And are there gender differences?

- **Protocol**: is it culturally appropriate for you to address questions and instructions to the male head of the household?

- **Touch**: are there sensitivities about touching children or someone of the opposite sex?
Attire: is it important to be very modest in your attire?

Entering the home: are there conventions you should follow such as taking shoes off, asking permission to enter etc?

Home visits: are there conventions about being a guest in someone’s home e.g. accepting refreshment, commenting (or not) on the home etc?

Members of the entrants’ community can usually provide advice about such things and the information you can glean about such things is far less likely to be tainted or biased than other information.

Needs Assessment

Each person working with refugees and other forced migrants will have certain tasks prescribed by their job (be this the provision of orientation support, undertaking a health assessment, assessing entitlements etc). It is possible that you will also be given an assessment tool or guidelines to assist you with these tasks. This section is not about this part of your work because this is agency specific and you should receive guidance on this at work. What will be considered here is generic information about undertaking an initial needs assessment with a new client from a refugee background.

As with other areas discussed, the first thing you need to bear in mind is that you are in a position of power. You know more than the client and are in a position to provide (or not provide) certain services for the client. This reality has to be respected and effective workers will never abuse their position.

Undertaking an effective needs assessment also requires you to be:

- **empathetic**: it is important to try to look at the situation from the position of the client and consider what they might be feeling;

- **a reflective listener**: you need to REALLY listen to the clients and reflect on what they are saying – focusing in particular on looking for their strengths and weaknesses to help you to plan to develop their skills. Sometimes this is much easier said than done, especially if they are confused, but it does not mean it is not important;

- **observant**: in addition to listening, you need to observe and there are many things you need to look out for including but by no means limited to:
  - how the clients are responding to your presence;
  - family dynamics;
  - who the decision makers are within the family;
  - the health and general well-being of the entrants;
• their level of confidence and ability to acquire new skills/knowledge;
• physical signs of anxiety or depression such as agitation or undue flatness of affect …

• non-judgemental: working in the human services area means working with all kinds of people and refugees are often carrying more ‘baggage’ than most. This can influence their behaviour and the choices they make. You have to refrain from imposing your own value set and from making judgements about your clients based on your own view of the world;

• flexible: anyone who has worked with refugees for any length of time will talk about the importance of ‘expecting the unexpected’. Further, refugees will invariably have their own agendas and ways of viewing the world. If, as a worker, you seek to ‘follow a script’ … in much the same way that call-centre operators are required to do … chances are you will end up feeling very frustrated. If, on the other and, you are flexible and think of various ways to approach an issue, chances are you will be able to satisfy your own agenda;

• patient: many refugees come from worlds very different to our own; further, their experiences often have an impact upon their ability to absorb information and retain new facts. There will be times when you feel that all you are doing is repeating yourself and you can easily end up feeling very frustrated. Don’t do this … it will make you feel bad and not really solve the problem. Remember, you need to be patient and understanding … and remember it is improbable that your clients want to be difficult, it is just very hard for them to take everything in;

• respectful: as you will have gathered from the above, it is not always easy working with refugees, especially those who have recently arrived. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that they are ‘ignorant’ or ‘difficult’. This is rarely the case. The reality is that they are people who are in an alien environment, managing as best they know how. As discussed in Topic 3, one of the important goals of settlement is the restoration of self-respect, something the refugee experience strips from you. As a worker, you play an integral role in this process. If you treat your clients respectfully and see the restoration of their dignity as a key part of your role, chances are they will respond to you far better and this in turn will make your job much easier.

Complicating Factors

When conducting a needs assessment, you not only have to think about how you behave and react, you also have to think about the way in which your clients are behaving and why this might be the case. In Topic 4 we looked at some of the ways in which the refugee experience can affect people. Here are some other consequences that are of particular relevance when you are conducting a needs assessment.

Where refugees come from backgrounds very different to that of Australia and/or have spent protracted periods in refugee camps, they can have a very limited world view. As a result, they quite literally ‘don’t know what they don’t know’. Typically people who have grown up here will have an idea about what services are available and what their options might be. At the very least, they might suspect that there is something and ask. Refugees won’t always do this. It might not occur to them, for example, that there might be somewhere to leave their children while they attend English classes or that it is against the law to drive a car without taking out third-party insurance.

It is also essential that you don’t assume anything. As the worker, you have an idea of what support you can offer and what other services might be relevant. Take
responsibility for informing entrants of their options and ensure that you have given a clear explanation about what these entail.

Another thing you might find yourself having to contend with when undertaking a needs assessment is that refugees might (often subconsciously) have competing agendas. Many refugees grapple with the following:

- **to study English or get a job:** on the one hand they know that English is the key to participation; on the other, they have many financial obligations and getting employment is seen as the best way to meet these. They often can’t see how they can possibly juggle both of these (not to mention also meeting their obligations to their family and their community as well);

- **to pay debts or support family and friends overseas:** almost every refugee has an obligation to send money to relatives or friends overseas. If they do not do this, they will not only feel a deep sense of guilt and personal failure. They are also likely to come under considerable pressure from the would-be recipients and from community members in Australia. But if they do send money, it is unlikely they will be able to meet all their financial obligations in Australia, especially as many are already obligated to repay travel loans as well as paying rent, feeding their family and covering all costs on Centrelink benefits. Complicating this further is the fact that in many cases the only way they can be spared from the obligation to send remittances is for the recipient to be resettled in Australia ... which in turn leads to another financial impost ... securing the money for airfares and the other costs associated with proposing an entrant under the Humanitarian Program;

- **to focus on settlement or wait for their family to arrive:** a significant proportion of protection visa holders and many offshore entrants have been separated from their spouse, children and/or other significant family members. This poses additional challenges during the initial settlement period, not least because those in this situation are caught between knowing that there are certain things they must do/decide and not wanting to make any decisions until the family is reunited. Many service providers see these entrants as hard to work with because they find it difficult to make decisions and because they have a tendency to be highly mobile and will relocate without notice and seemingly on a whim;

- **to believe you or believe what others have told them:** as a worker you are not the only person from whom a humanitarian entrant receives information. It is highly likely that before they left for Australia people would have told them all sorts of things about what they should expect, some of which might be linked to reality but this is not always the case. Then when they enter the community, they will also be getting a range of messages from numerous sources of varying reliability. Human nature is such that people will want to believe the most favourable message (for example, to believe the person who told them that that they will be given a house, a car and all sorts of other things when they get here) ... but then they feel disappointed, or cheated or angry when they realise that the reality is different;

- **to race forward or tread warily:** after being forced to put their lives on hold, many refugees are keen to ‘get back to normal’ as quickly as possible. They can become very impatient when they discover that the things they must do (learn English, find a house, get employment ...) will take time and considerable effort. At the same time they can also feel uneasy about making decisions that will help them to move forward as they are more accustomed to things in their life not changing.

Understanding these and the many factors that influence the way refugees might act does not necessarily solve the dilemmas you will face as a worker but it can help you to manage expectations and find ways forward.
References


DSS Community Profiles:

DSS makes available Community Profiles to assist service providers to gain a better understanding of the backgrounds and needs of Humanitarian Program arrivals. The Profiles contain information on key settlement locations, demographic characteristics of recent arrivals, likely settlement needs and cultural and country backgrounds. Development of the Community Profiles series is ongoing and further communities will be added in the future. Profiles currently available give information about entrants from:

- Afghanistan
- Bhutan
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Togo
- Uzbekistan
- Liberia
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Togo
- Uzbekistan


YouTube:

DHA and DSS have their own channels on the popular video sharing website YouTube which feature stories and reports about various aspects of the immigration story. Go to www.youtube.com/ImmiTV and www.youtube.com/userfahcsia.

Activities

1. Select a refugee-producing country you know nothing about e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Mauritania, Bhutan, Colombia … and go to the following websites:

   - DHA: www.homeaffairs.gov.au
   - UNHCR: www.unhcr.org
   - BBC: www.news.bbc.co.uk
   - Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org
   - Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org
   - US Committee for Refugees: www.refugees.org

   … to find out about
   - where it is
   - its demography
   - its politics
   - events behind the displacement
- which groups are being targeted and why
- basics about the language, religion, culture etc.

When you record the information, make sure you also record its source.

2. Do a Google search and look for other sources of information about your chosen country. Were you able to find any websites that were clearly not reliable? If so, what was this website and why did you suspect its reliability?

3. Arrange to have a chat to a person from a country very different to your own. This person might be a classmate or colleague or someone you know socially. Ask them to give you advice about polite interactions with people from their country:

   a) How do you say ‘hello’, ‘welcome’ and ‘thank you’ in their language?

   b) What is the polite non-verbal way greet someone ... and are there gender issues to consider?

   c) What is the polite way to beckon someone to come with you, sit down etc?

   d) And are there common gestures in our culture that are considered offensive in theirs?

   e) Is it considered polite or impolite to look someone in the eye when you are talking to them? And are there gender differences?

   f) Is it culturally appropriate for you to address questions and instructions to the male head of household?
g) Are there sensitivities about touching children or someone of the opposite sex, and if so, what?

h) Is it important for you as a worker with their community to be very modest in your attire?

i) Are there conventions you should follow when entering a home such as taking shoes off, asking permission to enter etc?

j) Are there conventions about being a guest in someone’s home eg accepting refreshment, commenting (or not) on the home etc?
Topic 7: Working With Clients #2 – Teaching Life Skills

In Topic 7 you will learn how to:

- conduct a respectful assessment of clients’ prior knowledge and abilities,
- create an environment where people are able to admit they don’t know,
- create a safe space in which people can try new things,
- prioritise the teaching of new skills,
- develop a training plan,
- teach people who have no conceptual constructs to which new learning can be attached,
- build clients’ confidence and independence, and
- assess clients’ acquired competencies.

Introduction

As already discussed, refugees come from an array of countries with different religious, cultural and political values. Many are from developing countries but are settling in industrialised and urbanised societies, others come from privileged backgrounds where they would have had little experience with managing ‘daily chores’. When they arrive they dream of legitimising and or reclaiming their identities but find they are once again a minority group.

They do not have knowledge of the things we take for granted – laws, routines, behaviours, common knowledge, and everyday expectations. They don’t know what is normal in Australia, and oftentimes things don’t make sense. For these reasons they end up relying heavily upon empathy from each other and sympathy from the host society to try to negotiate the pattern of life in their new host country.

Because some entrants might seem like a fish out of water, it is easy to fall into the trap of underestimating their capacities. Just because entrants lack the skills they need to cope in our world does not mean that they lack skills per se. We must not lose sight of the fact that they do have life skills (many of which ensured their survival) and they do have knowledge – the issue is that the skills and knowledge they have are not necessarily useful in Australia and at times can be a hindrance or can place them at risk.

A Framework for Teaching Life Skills

The challenges that face those working with refugees and other forced migrants when teaching life skills include:

- understanding the conceptual gaps that the particular entrant is likely to face;
- identifying his/her strengths;
• assessing the entrants’ capacity to absorb unfamiliar concepts and apply these when performing unfamiliar tasks;
• creating a safe space in which entrants can try out new things;
• giving entrants the confidence to admit when they don’t know,
• building a training plan that incorporates the above, which focuses on empowerment and is underpinned by respect for the entrant.

In all of this it is important not to lose sight of DHA’s Humanitarian Settlement Principles (as covered in Topic 3) which specify that workers should:

• promote humanitarian entrants’ competence,
• discourage dependence,
• involve entrants in making choices and decisions.

Further, it is necessary to recognise that settlement is a staged process. It is, therefore, important (for both the entrant and the host society) not to overload entrants and raise expectations too soon after arrival in Australia. People absorb information based on a ‘hierarchy of needs’, so any information that does not fit within this ‘hierarchy of need’ is unlikely to be absorbed and therefore will not be useful.

Let’s unpack these issues.

**Understanding Each Entrant’s Conceptual Gaps**

The first step to teaching life skills is assessing what the entrants know and how they view the world. This really is a skill that comes with experience but there are many things a worker can draw upon to enhance their capacity to do this, not least through:

• doing some research into the lifestyle the entrants probably had (in a camp or settlement) and in their country of origin. The sorts of things you need to consider when doing this include whether they are from an urban or rural background, how familiar they are likely to be with the things they will encounter in an Australian home etc;
• talking to the entrants, asking very practical questions about how and in what they lived (e.g. did they live in a house, flat, hut … did they have electricity, running water etc);
• observing the way they react to and interact with people and things they encounter.

And once you have done all this, you need to put yourself in their shoes and try to see the new world through their eyes. Only then can you begin to engage with entrants in a way that will truly meet their needs.

**Identifying Strengths**

Recognizing individuals’ strengths, talents, attributes and skills is more likely to inspire energy for change rather than focusing on needs and problems. Seeing the glass half-full instead of half-empty does not deny the real problems that forced migrants face but it does focus energy on how each person can participate positively in meeting their settlement needs and charting their personal development.
A good place to start exploring entrants’ strengths is by asking them about their hobbies or favourite pastimes. In their answers it is possible that you will find many strengths and interests. They may be great communicators, which could lead to bicultural or volunteer work with their communities. They may love organizing, or be good cooks, have built their own homes, maybe they are great with children, can paint or draw.... These are all useful and transferable skills that can be built upon.

It is often useful to help entrants build an inventory of their assets and encourage them to see value in resources that would otherwise have been unrealised, or dismissed. Remind them that ‘assets’ can also include relationships among people through social and informal networks, as well as more formal structures such as community-based organisations and private enterprise. These relationships fuel local associations and informal networks and can be very valuable to having skills and knowledge recognised and utilised.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

Despite the fact that most entrants will have had some exposure to how things operate in Australia through their cultural orientation training (AUSCO), the reality is that they will still face a steep learning curve when they arrive. They will frequently be in a position where they have to admit that they don’t know, don’t understand and feel at a total loss.

Being displaced from your comfort zone is distressing and disempowering, especially for people who have experienced significant loss, and who have to rebuild a future in a totally unfamiliar environment. You need to provide a safe space for people to discuss confusion, difficulties, learning new ways, integrating old and new knowledge and sharing experiences and wisdom.

Some of the things that you should be looking for when it comes to creating a ‘safe space’ in a learning context are:

- being very clear yourself about what you want to convey;
- beginning with the simplest tasks/concepts;
- ensuring that instructions are very clear;
- breaking tasks/concepts into their component parts and dealing with each in sequential order;
- thinking about other ways the entrant might perceive things and taking steps to steer the person in the right direction;
- giving lots of positive reinforcement;
- checking comprehension in a respectful way;
- reinforcing the importance of asking questions and admitting confusion;
- thinking of different ways to explain the same concept if you feel that the first way did not get through;
- eliciting the help of bicultural workers;
- being patient.

It is also good to remember that one of the best ways to create an environment where people are able to admit that they do not know is to model this behaviour yourself. When you do not know something, admit it and explain how you will find out the information.
A Competency-Based Approach to Learning

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) is a strong advocate for teaching settlement life skills using a client-focused, competency-based approach rather than employing a tick box approach to information delivery. They go on to explain that:

Whilst on the surface the two approaches may appear to deliver the same outcomes, there are significant differences between them. Using the example of teaching a newly arrived client to catch the bus, the ‘tick box’ approach might involve taking the person to buy their bus ticket, showing them the local bus stop and pointing the bus out to them, and then recording that the client now knows how to take the bus.

On the other hand, using a competency-based approach to developing settlement life skills, a worker would find out what the client already knows about catching the bus, any problems or hurdles they may face in catching the bus, assist the person to develop their skills in reading place names, timetables etc, and ensure that the person is able to replicate the experience of catching a bus on their own, to different places and so on.¹⁸

Further, using a competency-based approach to learning helps refugees recognise, use and build on their existing skills and strengths as opposed to a deficit model which treats refugees as victims and fails to recognise that, in order to have made it thus far, they have amassed a considerable range of skills and strengths which, if refocused, can be turned to their benefit in Australia.

Varying the Medium of Delivery

Just as teachers know that it is important to vary their teaching style to accommodate the various learning styles of their students, so too do those teaching life skills have to recognise that their clients will have different ways of absorbing and assimilating information and will have varying levels of literacy. It is therefore important for you to have at your disposal a variety of different learning strategies and resources, especially if it is your primary role to teach new skills or impart information.

Fortunately more and more resources are being developed to help out and this area, including but by no means limited to flash cards, multilingual information sheets, posters and DVDs. The key thing for you is to find out what resources are out there – familiarise yourself with these and then use them wisely. Rather than simply using the same training tools all the time, you should have your ‘box of tricks’ from which you can pull a resource that, upon careful consideration of who the clients are, will best meet their needs.

Assessment of Acquired Competencies

Service providers typically use their own benchmarks to assess whether clients have acquired the core competencies to build autonomy in daily routines. Assessments can be conducted using activities such as role plays, observations, simulated situations and client quizzes, but must not be conducted in a way that will intimidate clients. It is not a test. Service providers can also refer clients to other organisations to assist them to develop these competencies further.

Skills Development Programs

There are a variety of government and non-government programs that have been developed to help refugees and other forced migrants acquire the skills they need to function effectively and autonomously within Australian society. Two of the key areas targeted are orientation and English language.

Orientation:

DHA has recognised a skills and knowledge gap that should be addressed in all newly arrived refugees as part of the settlement plan, and included provision for orientation within its Humanitarian Settlement Services package. It is designed to develop the practical skills and knowledge that will build self confidence and an understanding of key information and processes in Australia.

The program focuses on developing core competencies that entrants need to become integrated and autonomous faster. Individual needs and abilities can be factored into the training. These competencies include:

- finding information and accessing services,
- making an appointment,
- using transport,
- money management,
- tenancy issues,
- employment and education, and
- Australian law.

There will also be consideration of helping entrants to develop more realistic expectations of how things happen here. Due to their limited understanding of the host culture, many refugees have unrealistic expectations, especially regarding housing and employment.

English Language

Lack of competency in English is one of the most common settlement stressors facing refugees and it is also something that can be easily measured. English language proficiency correlates directly with refugees' feelings of alienation from or connection with the wider society. Proficiency promotes good mental health by facilitating social contact, thereby enlarging the individual's repertoire of coping strategies.

All refugees are entitled to 510 hours English language tuition, and refugee youth aged between 16-24 who have had less than 7 years formal education, are entitled to an additional 400 hours of English language tuition before those 510 hours. Centrelink also
offers its clients 140 hours additional Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) classes to refugees if they recognise a needs gap.

**Resources**


**Activities**

1. In this topic we spoke about a ‘safe space’ for learning. Write down 5 things that make a safe learning space for you:

2. It is your responsibility to train a new entrant in using a microwave oven. How are you going to do this?

3. What sort of things might someone who has never used a microwave do in error and how are you going to minimise the chances that this might happen?
4. You are a caseworker for a jobactive provider and your client has a job interview four suburbs away. He is very anxious about getting lost on his way to the interview and/or arriving late. How will you go about using competency based instruction to prepare him for the journey by public transport to his interview?

5. Get hold of one of your household bills (telephone, electricity, gas etc). Imagine that this is the bill belonging to one of your clients and she is concerned that she cannot pay the full amount because her baby has been sick and she has big medical bills. Your task is to give her step by step advice about how she can deal with this. HINT: begin by locating the phone number to call, the account number, the name of the account holder ... and then move onto what she might say. Write down what you would say to your client:
Topic 8: Working With Clients #3 – Effective Client Engagement

In Topic 8 you will explore the importance when working with forced migrants of:

- understanding things from another person’s perspective;
- showing respect for people from different cultures and backgrounds;
- ensuring that privacy laws are adhered to and client confidences are respected;
- recognising that some people will take time to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Understanding Things from another’s Perspective

Before you can put yourself in someone else’s shoes, you have to recognise your own shoes (metaphorically speaking of course). In Topic 5 we explored the issue of ‘culture’ but did so in the context of thinking of ‘culture’ as something that the entrants have. It is true that they do, but so do we ... although we often don’t recognise it. Very simplistically, the culture in which we grew up plays a large part in defining:

- the way we view the world;
- our attitudes to others;
- the choices we make;
- our capacity to deal with change; and
- the way we respond to things and people.

And in this context, when we speak of ‘culture’ we are not just talking about the culture of Australia (or your country of origin) but also the culture of your family, friends, locality (inner city, suburban, rural ...), religion, groups to which you belong etc etc. All of these influences combine to make us the people we are ... and most significantly in this context, they also combine to shape the way we view the world and interact with others.

Understanding the influence of culture and identity on shaping the way we operate is a crucial first step to recognising that the things we do and the way we do them are not ‘right’ or ‘normal’ per se. If we think this way, it is easy to slip into being judgemental about other ways of doing things, thinking that they are ‘wrong’ or ‘abnormal’ whereas in fact they are perfectly ‘normal’ to people from another cultural background. Just think of how we unquestioningly accept the notion that the New Year begins on 1st January. Over 1.3 billion people in China would beg to differ on this score, as would millions in the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere.

Once we have begun to come to grips with who we are, we can begin to think about how our clients might perceive things. Like us, they too are influenced by their culture and their life experiences. Being able to see things through another’s eyes is a skill honed over time and assisted by exposure to people from many different cultures. There are, however, some things you can do to build these skills. These include but are by no means limited to:

- finding out as much as you can about people with a profile similar to that of your clients;
carefully observing your clients, focusing in particular on their level of confidence, the way in which they interact with you and with each other, and their reactions to the things you are saying to them;

talking to your clients, getting to know them and a little about their own personal background (as opposed to the generic information you have discovered about people from similar backgrounds);

taking time out to reflect on all of the above to create a world view from your client’s perspective.

In other words – it’s all about empathy.

Showing Respect

Everyone likes to be treated with respect and refugees are no exception. In fact for them, being treated with respect is even more important than for the rest of us because this is something that has been missing from their lives for quite some time.

Our views of the other person play a large part in shaping the way we interact with them – both verbally and non-verbally. For instance, someone you dislike can usually detect that the sweet words you utter and the smile on your face are just pretence.

There are also a number of other things that you can do to demonstrate respect. These include:

- calling clients by their preferred names and ensuring you pronounce them correctly;
- respecting power dynamics within the family;
- framing questions in a non-judgmental way;
- using verbal encouragement;
- adopting a supportive role;
- providing assistance in the form of concrete/tangible services and as quickly as possible;
- understanding and identifying your client’s critical cultural values and beliefs, especially where it concerns parenting, family relationships, child support etc;
- asking clients what their preferences are for any actions;
- being mindful of the power differential and avoiding abusing your role as the service provider - your tone and non-verbal behaviour can indicate your
perspective/feelings, which if negative or judgmental, may be detrimental to engagement.

Similarly there are a number of things that you should avoid doing, including:

- employing an interrogatory style when gathering information or asking questions, remembering that closed questions (those with yes/no answers) can often be seen as more abrupt;
- using complicated or pompous language;
- using overly simplistic ('baby') language;
- asking for any more information (especially personal information or details of past experiences) than you need;
- asking clients to repeat traumatic stories unnecessarily;
- using interview rooms with closed-in spaces and barred windows.

These things could well trigger flashbacks and adverse reactions and in so doing, will undermine any rapport you have with the client.

Before leaving this section it is important to reflect on the impact of interpreters in this process. The reality is that in many instances, you will not be interacting with your client directly but will be doing so through an interpreter or bicultural worker. This adds another dimension and there are certain things you should keep in mind:

- Be careful to select an appropriate interpreter and/or caseworker, i.e. ensuring that sensitivities related to gender, ethnicity, religion and other salient features have been considered. This will be discussed in more detail in Topic 11.

- Be vigilant for any signs that the client is uncomfortable with the interpreter or is having difficulty understanding. Even if you don't know a single word of the language, you can look out for non-verbal clues.

- Be 'present' when things are being translated, i.e. look interested and engaged and don't go rummaging in your papers, check the computer etc unless there is a good reason for you to do this.

- Focus on the client. Again as will be discussed in Topic 11, when you are speaking, look at the client, not the interpreter. Similarly, look at the client when the interpreter is telling you what the client said. This way the client can see your reactions and feel that s/he is the person you are primarily interested in, not the interpreter.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

When working with refugees and other forced migrants it is likely that you will soon discover that you are confronting two competing agendas:

- Your need to get information from the clients in order to assess their needs and provide appropriately targeted assistance.
- Your clients' suspicions about disclosing information because they don't really know you and are not sure how trustworthy you might be.

Many refugees quite literally owe their lives to their ability to keep information secret ... even from family members and close friends. They have learned from bitter experience that people have various reasons for collecting information and that disclosing too much to the wrong person can be very dangerous.
In order to break through this natural reticence it is important to:

- explain carefully why you are asking the questions you are asking;
- make sure that all of the questions you ask are relevant to your work and do not seek unrelated information;
- recognise that gaining the clients’ trust is fundamental;
- actively engage and consult with the client in the planning process;
- be aware that the client might not fully disclose in the first instance ... instead beginning by telling you a little bit of the story to test the waters and only once you have proved to be trustworthy, will more be divulged;
- explain that there are very strict privacy laws in Australia\(^\text{19}\) that govern the collection, storage and disclosure of information;
- reinforce the above by explaining that the agency for which you work also has a privacy policy;
- be aware where your support and advocacy may be necessary (even if the refugee may not sufficiently trust you to ask for help);
- most importantly of all, strictly adhere to your obligations as a worker not to disclose any personal information about a client to anyone who does not have a legitimate right to know.

This being said, it is necessary for you to be mindful of the exceptions to confidentiality. For example, if clients reveal that they are behaving in a way that is contrary to Australian law, especially concerning child protection issues, by law service providers have obligations\(^\text{20}\) to report their concerns. The impact of this on a worker will of course depend on the nature of their work. Those likely to confront such issues should be receiving workplace instruction on procedures. In addition, there are relevant courses in the National Training Framework\(^\text{21}\) and state government agencies offer courses that cover mandatory reporting guidelines.

**Rate of Acquisition of Skills and Knowledge**

If you were to gather together a group of people collected randomly from the street, you would not be at all surprised to discover that within the group there were marked differences in their capacity to absorb and apply new information. It is somewhat

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\(^{19}\) See [www.privacy.gov.au](http://www.privacy.gov.au) for more information about national and state/territory privacy laws.

\(^{20}\) States and territories have slightly different mandatory reporting obligations.

\(^{21}\) Including but not limited to:

- CHCYTH2C: Provide care and protection for young people
- CHCYTH4C: Support young people in crisis
- CHCDFV8B: Provide support to children affected by domestic and family violence
- CHCDFV7B: Provide domestic and family violence support in non-English speaking background communities.
surprising then when you encounter training programs for refugees that are ‘one size fits all’ – after all, the range of individual differences within a group of refugees is likely to be just as marked as those in the group randomly gathered on the street. There will be people who:

- have had more education than others,
- are more or less intelligent than the norm,
- are confident and outgoing,
- are fearful in unfamiliar settings,
- like challenges,
- are tired, depressed or not feeling well ...

Each of these things will have an impact on the ability of the person to learn new concepts.

In addition to the individual differences that occur within any population, the situation and experiences of refugees and other forced migrants add additional layers of complexity to their capacity to absorb and assimilate new information – not all of which are hindrances. On the one hand, these entrants:

- are operating in an unfamiliar environment and do not necessarily have the conceptual links to which new information can easily be attached;
- could be coming from highly gendered cultures where the roles of men and women, in particular in relation to dealing with outsiders, are clearly defined and women face many practical and/or conceptual constraints;
- might have been disempowered by their past experience, especially if they have spent long periods in camps where they had few opportunities to make decisions, plan for the future or make choices;
- could well be hampered by the effects of trauma (see Topic 12) which include inability to concentrate, disrupted sleep, hyper-vigilance, irritability etc.

On the other hand, we have to recognise that the refugees who come to Australia are survivors. It is a given that they have skills that have enabled them to surmount huge obstacles and depths of courage we can only imagine. They have also had to adapt to new situations and deal with uncertainty.

Then there is another dimension that must be added to all this – English proficiency. Not surprisingly, entrants who can interact (even at a basic level) in English are likely to have both the capacity and confidence to pick up new skills and knowledge faster than those who do not.

So what does all of this mean for workers? For a start there has to be recognition of individual differences. There are two key dimensions to this:

- workers have to be patient: they need to accept that some clients will take longer than others to absorb information and they must not allow their frustration to show. All this will do is to further disempower their clients and make it harder for them to learn;
- ‘one size does not fit all’: no one type of information provision will work for all clients so, as mentioned previously, workers have to have a wide repertoire of training devices on which they can draw.

In addition (and noting that there is an element of repetition in this), you need to:
• use the information you have gathered about your client to assess their capacity to learn new concepts and ways of operating in the new environment;

• be observant when teaching new skills, focusing in particular on trying to identify the things that the entrants are finding particularly challenging and on the way they respond to particular training techniques;

• present information in a staged way that builds on their strengths, confirming that a concept is understood before moving to the next;

• be flexible and ensure that what you are saying/doing is the most appropriate approach for that client rather than the easiest one for the worker.

References


DSS Settlement DVD: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS2TMGYdGgA

Activities

1. If you can, obtain and watch the film ‘White Masai’. As you are watching it, reflect on the lessons it contains about the way people from different backgrounds view the world very differently and how competency in one culture does not translate to competency in another.

2. Think of a time when you have felt ‘out of your depth’. This might have been when you were in another country or possibly at a party or event when you looked around the room and realised you did not know a sole. Or maybe there was another time. How did you feel? What did you do? Did anything happen that made things easier for you?
3. What might be some of the consequences of disclosing personal information about your client to the wrong person(s)?

4. Obtain a copy of the mandatory reporting guidelines in your state/territory. What are the key lessons for you in these?

5. Do a web search to find out:
   - which agencies in your state/territory run courses about mandatory reporting:
   - when is the next course:
Topic 9: Working With Clients #4 – Developing and Implementing a Settlement Plan

In Topic 9 you will learn the skills that will enable you to:

- develop and implement a settlement plan;
- solve problems, especially in the context of finding solutions for complex issues raised by clients;
- recognise the variables that will affect an entrant’s wellbeing.

You will also explore why it is necessary for you to be competent in the use of various computer-based applications when you are working in the settlement sector.

Settlement Plans

In Topic 3 we explored the meaning of ‘settlement’, noting that most agree that it is a process rather than a fixed point in time and its definition is neither fixed in concrete nor precise. This being said, for the purpose of this session it is useful to simplify things by focusing on the definition of settlement used by the Australian Government: 22

... a period of adjustment that migrants experience before they can participate in Australia’s culturally diverse society.

The process of adjustment explicit in this definition is not something that an entrant can achieve unassisted, in large part because of their unfamiliarity with the range of services available in Australia. Instead they are supported through this process and settlement plans provide the cornerstones of this support.

Not everyone working in the settlement sector will be required to develop a settlement plan – in fact this is largely the role of case managers involved in initial settlement support and, in a slightly different way, of the workers who are involved in crisis intervention. Irrespective of whether settlement plans are your ‘core business’ it is very important to know what they are, how they are developed and how those providing ancillary services are linked to them.

The agencies funded by the Department of Home Affairs (under the Humanitarian Settlement Program) to provide initial assistance to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants are required to develop settlement plans for each of their clients. Each agency will do this slightly differently but essentially will follow a process that involves:

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i. **Undertaking an Assessment of Client Needs**

To do this a range of things are considered and resources drawn upon, not least:

- the information received from DHA about the entrant(s);
- information received from AUSCO trainers about the group of which they are a part;
- the entrant’s visa category, noting in particular that:
  - entrants carrying a visa subclass 203 or 204 are likely to have complex settlement needs due to high levels of trauma, as well as a possible need for medical (especially gynaecological) intervention;
  - those with a visa subclass 866 are likely to have quite a different profile. Typically this is a highly mobile population whose priority is family reunification and who put their own settlement needs on hold until this is achieved;
- research undertaken about the background of entrants with a similar profile (as described in Topic 6);
- the post-arrival assessment of entrants’ needs and, where relevant (i.e. in the case of entrants with a visa subclass 202), the proposer’s capacity to meet these needs. As discussed in Topic 6, agencies have set procedures for conducting such assessments;
- particular consideration of the needs of individuals within a family group (i.e. the needs assessment should not only look at the adults but also at young people, children and infants), noting that their needs will differ.

ii. **Drafting a Settlement Plan**

After careful consideration of the needs of the entrants, work can begin on developing a draft settlement plan. The framework for this is defined both by the Department of Social Service’s requirements for the provision of services and each agency’s own procedures.

Key features of a settlement plan should include:

- its specificity to the needs of the individual or family group;
- a reflection of any need for gender-specific, ethnosppecific, faith-specific or other specific services;
- sufficient flexibility to accommodate changing circumstances;
- effective engagement of relevant local services to complement those provided by the HSP provider;
- clearly defined roles for the various agencies involved in its implementation;
- clear communication channels between these agencies;
- mechanisms to connect the entrant(s) to social, cultural and religious networks and community support structures;

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23 The various visa categories were explained in Topic 2.
• measurable outcomes linked to attainment of competency.

In addition, it is considered essential that a settlement plan should be:

• client focused – i.e. it should meet the needs of the entrant rather than the convenience of the agency/worker;

• developed in consultation with the entrant(s). This is an important part of the process of empowerment, allowing entrants to play an active role in decision making and planning for their future.

iii. Implementation

The settlement plan is, in effect, a plan for action. A good settlement plan will set out what needs to be done, in what order and by whom, so implementing a settlement plan should be a fairly straightforward process, not discounting however, the need for careful monitoring and revision if circumstances change.

During the implementation stage, there are some important things that should underpin the interactions between all workers who engage with the entrants (not just the principal caseworker) and the entrants. In relation to their interaction with the entrant(s), everyone in a supporting role needs to:

• be clear and transparent about their role and its boundaries;
• clearly articulate their clients’ rights/responsibilities;
• emphasise confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality;
• be consistent and predictable;
• deliver and follow through on undertakings;
• provide practical and tangible assistance;
• provide extra time for interactions with various family members;
• recognise the importance of working as part of a team.

iii. Assessing Outcomes

For quite some time the milestones used to measure settlement services related to whether the entrant was provided with certain information or given certain things. It was recognised, however, that this did little to develop the independence that seen as fundamental to settlement. For example, an entrant might be given a brochure that tells them how to catch a bus but if they can’t read or do not understand what they have read or lack the confidence to venture forth alone, the whole exercise is pointless.

 Appropriately the emphasis has shifted to an assessment of competency, with an expectation that consideration be given as to whether entrants can demonstrate that they can perform certain tasks before milestones are considered to have been met.

Each funded agency delivering initial settlement services is required to have a strategy to assess client outcomes and those working within this agency will be trained about its use.

Other Workers

So what about the myriad of people who encounter newly arrived refugees and other forced migrants but who do not work for the agencies delivering initial settlement assistance? If you are one of these people, what are the things you should know?

You should know that:
• agencies are being funded by DHA through the Humanitarian Settlement Program to assess the post-arrival needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants and develop a holistic plan to address short-term settlement needs;

• while you might not be responsible for developing settlement plans, they are probably relevant to you and your work;

• most entrants have a caseworker (supported by a case manager) and this person has the best understanding of the ‘total picture’ with respect to the entrant and an overview of the services to which they have been linked;

• if you have any concerns about an entrant, it is important to contact the case manager and discuss these with them;

• you are not the sole worker involved with the entrant. You need to see yourself as part of a team and ensure that your interventions complement rather than conflict with support provided by others working with the entrant.

Problem Solving

The problems that refugees confront can be very complex and can range from unreasonably high expectations of life in the receiving country, to gender and equality issues, relationship breakdowns, children at risk, prior trauma or basic survival problems like accommodation and health issues … and there is no one size fits all solution. Bearing in mind that a key objective of settlement services is to build your clients’ capacity to participate autonomously in Australian society, your objective should be to support entrants work through these problems in a way that not only resolves the problems but also leaves them with the skills and knowledge to respond with greater competency and capacity to future problems when they arise.

A few things to keep in mind when assisting refugees with problem solving:

• Build trust with the client so that they will be willing to open up and work with you in solution planning. There may be more to the problem than appears on the surface.

• **Elicit only enough information as is relevant to understand the issues and make the appropriate referrals, especially where trauma becomes evident.** Unless you are a trained counsellor, be wary of asking clients to elaborate on painful memories that may cause the trauma to resurface.

• Do not become the rescuer, because the final outcome must be that the client is moving closer to self-sufficiency. Instead mentor where you can and refer clients to the appropriate specialist services.

• Contact community leaders and educate the community where it is appropriate to do so. Often the best way to teach individuals is to do it through their own community members.

New entrants have little idea about what is normal and what is not and therefore their suspicions (regarding discrimination) and doubts (regarding integration) are heightened. As service providers you can help to normalize problems and link entrants to community and other support services. Collaborative working relationships with other service providers and community organisations will help achieve sustainable settlement outcomes for refugee clients. Facilitating learning opportunities is also important for new entrants. Many entrants struggle with conflicting demands, such as childcare and other responsibilities at the
expense of participating in planned activities. To encourage greater participation in programs that help refugees learn about the social, education, health and legal systems in Australia, service providers also need to consider childcare and transport needs.

Variables Impacting on Refugee Wellbeing

There are many variables that impact refugees and create obstacles to settlement. In order to identify root causes and address problems systematically, it is essential to get a holistic overview of factors influencing your client’s wellbeing. The following table provides a useful conceptual and practical framework for examining the myriad of factors that underpin a refugee’s experience and unpacking the problems s/he is facing.  

![Figure 1. Path representation of pre- and post-migration factors impacting on refugees' psychological well-being.](image)

Using Information Technology

In almost all forms of settlement-related work, there is requirement that staff use computers for a variety of functions including but not limited to:

- accessing and recording client data;
- undertaking research;
- developing a settlement plan;
- recording client interventions;
- developing budgets;
- communicating by email with other service providers;
- writing letters of support;
- reporting to supervisors;
- completing time sheets;
- requesting leave; etc.

Computer-based technology is invaluable in this type of work because it enables:

- access to an enormous array of information for research;
- client information to be stored in a clear, concise and secure manner;
- information to be shared amongst relevant workers;
- efficient collaboration and prevents duplication of effort;
- easy collation of data for reports to funding bodies;
- accessible storage of contact details;
- personal organisation through use of calendar functions;
- easy communication with colleagues and other services;
- systematic collection of the information required to ensure workers get paid.

Baseline IT skills for settlement workers are:

- word processing;
- emails;
- data entry;
- use of spreadsheets;
- undertaking web-based research (e.g. using Google, Bing etc).

A separate but related issue is competency in written English. You might have very good verbal skills but find writing, in particular when using a computer, very challenging. This has a significant impact on your ability to make effective use of the technology that is an integral part of your work.

If you do not have these skills or do not feel confident using these applications, it is very important that you look for and take courses to improve your skills. Your teacher can help you to find such courses.

References

Activities

1. What are some of the things you need to consider when developing a settlement plan for entrants with the following visa subclasses?

   Subclass 200: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclass 201: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclass 202: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclass 203: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclass 204: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclass 866: ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________

   Subclasses 785 and 790: __________________________________________________
2. What are some of the most important things to consider when developing a settlement plan for:
   a) a single woman: ________________________________
      ________________________________
   b) an unaccompanied minor ____________________________
      ________________________________
   c) a family with six children: ___________________________
      ________________________________

3. Imagine you are employed by Centrelink as a Migrant Liaison Officer. Explain the relevance of settlement plans for you.

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

4. Think carefully about your computer skills. Are there any areas in which you feel you need to improve? If so what are these?

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

5. Find a suitable course where you can learn the computer skills you need to undertake work in the settlement sector ... and enrol yourself.


**Topic 10: Effective Advocacy**

In **Topic 10** you will learn how to:

- be an effective advocate for your clients;
- empower clients to be effective advocates; and
- support communities to advocate on their own behalves.

**What is Advocacy?**

‘Advocacy’ is the act of trying to persuade another person that a particular idea has merit or that something should happen or be done. An ‘advocate’ is the person who presents the case.

Being a worker in the settlement sector involves a great deal of direct and indirect advocacy:

- **direct advocacy** is where you are the person making the representation – usually on behalf of a client;
- **indirect advocacy** is where you support someone else to do the advocacy. The two most common forms of indirect advocacy involve you as a worker:
  - empowering your clients to be effective advocates for themselves;
  - drawing concerns to the attention of a senior worker in your organisation who will then engage in advocacy.

There are many things about which you might feel the need to advocate including but by no means limited to situations where your client:

- needs a particular service from another agency;
- has not received a service to which they are entitled;
- needs something that cannot easily be obtained;
- is being adversely affected by the policy of your or another agency.

**Strategies for Effective Advocacy**

The first thing to remember about advocacy is that effective advocacy is rarely adversarial. Even when advocacy is undertaken in response to a major problem, going in with all guns blazing is unlikely to achieve the desired result. Adopting a more subtle and strategic approach can be far more effective. It is also important to remember that advocacy is not about winning or losing. Rather it should always be about securing the best possible outcome for the client(s).

How you go about this should vary depending on the situation and the strategies employed should match the circumstances. This being said, there are some underlying principles to guide common forms of settlement-related advocacy.
1. **Advocacy in relation to service access:**

The most common form of direct advocacy used by settlement workers involves trying to secure services for your clients from other agencies or programs. The principles underpinning this form of advocacy are as follows:

**WHAT:** You need to be clear about exactly what it is the client needs (and perhaps why they are not receiving it if there has been a blockage).

**WHERE:** You need to know (or find out) where you can get these services/support and establish exactly what the agency offers.

**HOW:** You need to know what you need to do to ensure your client has access to these services. This might involve making a call, filling in a form, taking the client to the service etc.

**FOLLOW UP:** Never assume that because a referral has been made that everything has fallen into place. Always check with the client and/or other agency.

2. **Advocacy in relation to service difficulties:**

Another common form of advocacy is required when the client (or sometimes you yourself) experiences problems with another agency. In such cases, a slightly different strategy is required:

**STEP 1: Identify the problem:** Sometimes this is easier said than done, especially if the person presenting with the problem is feeling upset or aggrieved. It is, however, important to spend some time getting to the bottom of the problems eg:

- establishing what happened in the lead up to there being a problem;
- finding out who said what to whom and when;
- making sure you have all relevant documentation; etc.

**STEP 2: Establish what should have happened:** Sometimes people can be upset without good cause, eg when they have been denied access to a service to which they were not entitled or where it was outside the mandate of the agency to provide the service. It is entirely different, however, if something that should have happened did not. More often than not this involves someone being given inaccurate advice or being treated inappropriately. The key to addressing such problems is knowing what should have happened and to do this you need to find out about the relevant policy of the agency concerned. This might, for example, involve looking at service entitlements and/or their client service charter.
**STEP 3: Raise your concerns:** The next thing to do is to raise your concerns with someone with sufficient authority to address them. In most instances this is someone at the manager level. There are some important things to bear in mind when doing this:

- take the approach that the matter is something you would like their help to sort out rather than suggesting or implying that they or their agency have been at fault;
- present the facts as you know them. If you are relying on what you have been told, make sure this is made clear (e.g. ‘it is my understanding that …’ or ‘my client told me that …’);
- make reference to their policy;
- respectfully suggest a way in which the matter might be addressed (if one is obvious);
- make sure you record the result of the conversation in the file notes or in your diary.

**STEP 4: Follow Up:** If the resolution of the matter was that something would be done, it is a good idea to check that this in fact happened. If not, or if you were unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion in Step 3, it is wise to bring the matter to the attention of your supervisor. If this is not possible, it is best to write a letter addressed to the person to whom the person you have been dealing with reports. This letter should clearly, succinctly and non-judgementally set out everything that has occurred and request their intervention. If the matter is not resolved at this stage, you might wish to consider referring the matter to a relevant complaints body (see below).

### 3. Policy advocacy

There are times when you might think that the position taken by your or another organisation is disadvantaging your client(s) and when you investigate the matter, you discover that the obstruction is not specific to your client but is linked to government policy, especially if embedded in legislation or regulations. When this is the case, it tends to be much harder to find a resolution – but not impossible – and it is rarely something a single worker can (or should try to) do by him/herself.

Generally speaking, when you identify a systemic problem, the best thing to do is to bring the problem to your supervisor or manager (be this another member of staff or the chairman of the management committee) who will then be responsible for what happens next. This being said, there are certain things you can do to help the process along. These include:

- be clear about what the problem involves;
- find out what policy/regulation/legislation is involved and exactly what it says;
- think carefully about why it says this. Is the problem linked to a broader policy objective or maybe it is an unintended consequence of an effort to do something else;
- consider whether there are any other ways that the objectives of the agency concerned can be addressed without disadvantaging your clients;
- document your findings in relation to the above.
Presenting this information to your supervisor helps that person think about what to do next. Depending on what the issue is, there are certain things that person might consider doing. These include:

- raising the matter at an interagency meeting and seeking support from other agencies;
- raising the matter with a peak agency (for example the Settlement Council of Australia or the Refugee Council of Australia) and asking for their support to address the matter;
- writing to or asking to meet with the local Member of Parliament, the relevant Minister or head of the agency concerned;
- initiating a campaign.

When looking at systemic problems it is important to remember that it is often quite difficult to bring about change and, especially if it involves trying to change legislation, the process can be time consuming ... even if all players agree that change is needed.

**Complaints Mechanisms**

There are times when expert assistance is required to deal with a serious problem. Depending on the nature of the problem, it might be relevant to seek assistance from one of the agencies that have responsibility for investigating complaints. The main agencies that do this are listed below.

**The Office of the Ombudsman**

Advocates who want to make complaints about Government agencies can do so to the relevant Ombudsman. There is a Commonwealth Ombudsman that deals with complaints against Commonwealth departments and their services and there are also state Ombudsmen that perform a similar role in relation to state agencies.

The role of each Ombudsman’s Office is to undertake an impartial investigation of complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by a government department or agency. If complaints are found to be valid, the Ombudsman’s Office will then assist in the resolution of disputes and seek to address defective administration.


**The Australian Human Rights Commission**

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) was established in 1986 as an independent statutory organisation that works to protect and promote the human rights of all people in Australia.

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25 The Australian Human Rights Commission was formerly the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).
Complaints may be made to the Human Rights Commission if it is perceived that there has been an abuse as defined by one or more of the following Acts:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Specific grounds for complaint include race, sex, pregnancy, marital status and disability in specific areas of public life such as employment, education and in the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs. The Commission also investigates allegations of breaches of human rights by the Commonwealth government or its agencies.

More information about AHRC and how to make a complaint can be found at www.humanrights.gov.au.

**State Government Complaints Bodies**

In addition to the Ombudsman’s Offices, most state governments have also established bodies that are responsible for addressing concerns related to services for which they have responsibility such as health, housing and education. Information about these can be found on the relevant state government website.

**The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission**

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is an independent statutory authority responsible for administering the Trade Practices Act 1974. ACCC’s goal is to enhance the welfare of Australians through the promotion of competition and fair-trading and provision of consumer protection. It is intended that the ACCC complement the state and territory consumer affairs agencies which administer consumer protection legislation in their jurisdictions.

For more information about the ACCC go to www.accc.gov.au.

**Empowering Clients to be Effective Advocates**

A worker who believes they must resolve every issue for their clients will be a very busy person … and will have very dependent clients. They are also losing sight of the most important objective of settlement services – giving clients the skills to be able to operate independently in Australia. Key to this must therefore be helping clients understand how to be effective advocates.

Anyone who works with refugees and forced migrants will quickly tell you that, more often than not, they are exceptionally enterprising. This being said, they do have to learn to operate in an environment that can be very different to that to which they have been accustomed.

Refugees and other forced migrants bring with them a range of strategies that they have used in the past to try to get what they want. These tend to be a mixture of strategies that they used in their home country and others picked up while they were living in camps and settlements. Some translate well but, as discussed in Topic 4, others can be counterproductive in Australia.
It is not uncommon to find entrants who believe that in order to get what they want from a service provider they must:

- pay a bribe;
- be very forceful and demanding;
- hide the fact that they have any other form of support; etc.

In Australia we look unfavorably at such behaviour but for many entrants, this was the norm in their home country and/or what they had to do in order to survive their time in exile.

It is not necessarily an easy task getting people to change their behaviour, especially when they have been doing things for many years and believe them to be effective. It takes time and patience. The following strategies can, however, help you to do this:

- explain how certain behaviours might be perceived e.g. ‘in Australia, if someone does ..., the other person will think/feel ...’;
- explain that some behaviours, especially offering bribes, can have highly detrimental consequences;
- avoid saying things that could be perceived as judgmental such as ‘it is wrong to ...’ or ‘you must not ...’;
- model constructive behaviour, for example role play with a client what they will say when they go to seek the support of another agency.

If you are on the receiving end of behavior you consider inappropriate, there are also some strategies you can use to help you deal with the situation:

- try not to be judgmental – the client might not be aware of how inappropriate their behavior is;
- try not to lose your temper or respond in kind;
- try not to lose sight of the fact that the client might have a genuine entitlement to your service;
- try to explain what you can and cannot do for the client;
- if you feel you are not making headway, call in a senior person. Many entrants respect authority;
- if you know (or can find out) whether the person has a caseworker, try to contact this person to see if you can get further insight into how you can help the client.

Supporting Communities to be Effective Advocates

Just as empowerment of an individual entrant is a fundamental part of the settlement process, so too is empowerment of refugee communities. An important part of becoming contributory members of the Australian community is for communities to learn how to be effective advocates for the things that are important to them.
Much of the advice given about advocacy in the various sections above is equally relevant for communities but there are some additional dimensions that have to be considered because in a community organisation there is a possibility or even probability that there will be:

- lots of different people who will not necessarily share the same priorities;
- people who are more vocal and will try to influence the agenda;
- influential people who do not have a good grasp of how to operate strategically in the new environment.

The challenge for workers is to give community members the skill and confidence to opt for a community engagement model in which:

- community members are consulted about their needs;
- these needs are prioritised in a transparent and strategic manner;
- there is consultation with other key players;
- research is undertaken to ensure that the issues are fully understood;
- an advocacy strategy is developed and roles assigned;
- alliances are formed and mentors sought;
- the advocacy strategy plan is implemented;
- there is a process of reflective evaluation that enables modification of strategy when required;
- the community members are informed about what action has been taken and what results have been achieved.

Also important is helping entrant communities to understand that:

- their concerns are relevant;
- they have a right to express their concerns;
- there are people who will be interested in hearing about them.

Many refugees and other forced migrants came from situations where they had no voice or where the expression of opinions could be very dangerous. It is also possible that they came from countries where it is improbable that they would ever have had any dealings with politicians and/or senior bureaucrats – such people being seen as hugely important and totally inaccessible. This is not the case in Australia.

Local, state and federal politicians are usually keen to talk to people from their local community and to listen to their concerns. Similarly, government departments run consultations and invite community members to come along to raise issues of concern. Then there are the peak bodies such as the Settlement Council of Australia and the Refugee Council of Australia that need to listen to the views of community members in order to perform their roles efficiently. Workers need to explain how entrants can go about making good use of the opportunities that exist.

Many emerging community organisations believe that the best way to get what they want is to hold a demonstration - and they have every right to do this so long as it is done in accordance with the law and peacefully – but holding a protest does not always achieve the desired results.

Community leaders need to be made aware that deciding to hold a demonstration brings with it risks and there could be unintended consequences. They also need to be advised that if they choose to stage a peaceful protest, the police MUST be informed in advance and their plans cleared.

Another strategy that many mistakenly believe is a sure fire way to raise issues is use of the media. Like demonstrations and protests, this can be a double-edged sword.
Many media outlets look for sensation and will try to distort things to suit their own agendas. A story about a particular community not having access to something they want could very easily be twisted into a story about ‘foreigners coming to this country and demanding things that local battlers don’t have’.

Those working with community leaders should help them understand the pitfalls of certain types of action and refer them to agencies experienced in advocacy, such as the Settlement Council of Australia and the Refugee Council of Australia that can provide advice on the most effective ways to bring their concerns to the attention of those with the capacity to address them.

References

Complaints Bodies:


Peak Agencies:

Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia: www.fecca.org.au.
Forum of Services for the Treatment of Torture and Trauma: www.fastt.org.au
Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association: www.mdaa.org.au

Other Resources:


Activities

1. Think of a time when you had to deal with a problem with an organisation (a bank, your phone provider, a utility company ...) and it did not go well. What went wrong?
2. With hindsight, how could you have handled it better?

3. Is there government policy you do not agree with? Try to find out more about it:
   - Is it linked to legislation or regulations?
   - What is the government’s rationale for this policy?
   - What are your main objections to this policy?
   - How would you advocate to change the policy?

4. Can you think of an example where people held a demonstration and the message conveyed to the public through the press was very different to that which the demonstrators wished to convey?
**Topic 11: Effective Work Practices**

**Topic 11** you will enable you to:

- know when and how to engage interpreters and make efficient use of them in your interactions with clients;
- understand the importance of NOT giving migration advice;
- understand the importance of reporting within the settlement sector and your responsibilities in relation to reporting;
- recognise the importance of meeting workplace deadlines;
- have an appreciation of how to operate in a multicultural workplace;
- recognise the importance of individual responsibility in relation to workplace safety.

The issues covered in this section might seem diverse – working with interpreters, meeting reporting requirements and deadlines, working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and safe work practices – but they are all an integral part of working in the settlement sector and involve essential skills you need to learn.

**Working with Interpreters**

Unless you have been employed to work only with entrants who speak your first language, you will be required to use interpreters at some stage ... and sometimes you will find yourself interacting through interpreters in almost all of your interactions with clients. And if you are one of those people who work with your own language group, you will need to understand when and when it is not appropriate to use your language skills. Further, you might ‘graduate’ at some stage to more mainstream settlement work which will bring you into contact with clients from many different backgrounds. Understanding when and how to use interpreters is therefore essential knowledge for all workers in the settlement sector.

**Role of Interpreters**

If you were to ask someone what an interpreter does, most people would think the answer would be self evident – ‘translate from one language to another’ – and in essence this is correct. Not surprisingly, however, there is a little more to it than this.

The first thing to be clear about is the distinction between interpreters and translators. It is customary in Australia that the terms are distinguished as follows:

- The primary role of an **interpreter** is to transfer messages **verbally** from one language to another.
- The primary role of a **translator** is to transfer **written** material from one language to another.
Interpreters (and translators to a lesser but no less important extent) play a vital role in Australia because of the existence of Access and Equity Policy (as discussed in Topic 3). This gives all residents, irrespective of ethnic background and first language preference, the right to access the services freely available to English speaking Australians.

As will be discussed below, interpreters can be present in the room or, more commonly, at the end of a telephone.

There are a number of important things to bear in mind about the role of interpreters:

- their sole purpose it to provide an accurate interpretation of what was said by the parties to the conversation;
- they should not:
  - add or subtract to that which was said,
  - insert their own opinions,
  - seek to explain anything;
- they are not an advocate for or counsellor to the client;
- they are bound by a strict code of professional ethics not to disclose anything that was said during the session.

**When Should Interpreters Be Used?**

There is a common trap that some service providers fall into. They think that interpreters are only required when their clients speak no English and if they speak a little, they can muddle through with simple words, lots of gestures and the occasional scribbled drawing. Not only is this position wrong, it can also be very dangerous ... for the client and the service provider.

In addition to their use for clients with little or no English, interpreters should be routinely engaged:

- for clients who have basic English;
- for clients who indicate that they are more comfortable in their own language;
- in instances where there is important or complex information to convey;
- where the client is under stress or is likely to be placed under stress by the conversation.

**Selecting an Interpreter**

As tempting as it might be to ask a friend or relative to interpret or to grab a member of staff who speaks the same language, this should be avoided for anything other than the most simple, practical conversations (e.g. arranging a meeting time). For all substantive interactions, the services of a professional, accredited interpreter\(^{26}\) should be engaged. Such interpreters:

- have undergone specialised training;
- have been determined to be competent in the language they are interpreting in and English;

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\(^{26}\) Accreditation is through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).
are bound by the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics which, as mentioned above, includes confidentiality provisions; have been cleared by Australian Federal Police checks; are covered by professional indemnity, public liability and workers compensation insurance.

There are many sound reasons why relatives and friends (especially children) should not be used to interpret, including but not limited to:

- lack of the technical skills required to provide an accurate interpretation, especially of specialised (e.g. medical) terminology;
- client reservations about disclosing sensitive information in front of someone known to them;
- the risk that there might be breaches of confidentiality;
- lack of impartiality;
- damage to the family hierarchy;
- potential filtering of or editorialising upon what the client is saying;
- the possibility that information obtained might be used for private advantage or gain;
- possible legal consequences of inaccurate translation.

It is also unwise to use a relative or friend who is an accredited interpreter to interpret. While they might have the skills and are bound by confidentiality etc, they are not impartial.

Bicultural workers should also not be asked by other service providers to act as interpreters, no matter how tempting it might be to do so. Bicultural workers have a particular role to play … most significantly in this context as an advocate for their client. Asking them to act as an interpreter might, amongst other things, require them to undertake work outside their job description and might place them in a situation of potential conflict of interest.

Further, when requesting an interpreter it is vital that careful thought be given to any relevant characteristics of the entrant that should be considered, such as:

- gender,
- ethnicity,
- trauma profile.

Workers need to be aware of these sensitivities and ensure that requests for interpreters specify requirements. Failure to recognise such issues will invariably have a negative impact on the communication between the worker and the client … and consequently on the quality of the service and the entrant’s settlement outcomes.

**Interpreter Cards**

Settlement services providers typically provide special wallet-sized cards to their clients (I Need an Interpreter cards) that:

- identify their need for an interpreter;
- specify the language they speak;
- give the phone number to contact the national Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) or its state-based equivalent.
It is intended that entrants with little or no English can present these cards when seeking to engage with services and that the service providers will then take the initiative to contact the interpreting service.

Interpreter cards can be obtained free of charge from the Department of Home Affairs.

**Translating and Interpreting Service**

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is one of a number of user-pays interpreting services provider for people who do not speak English and for the English speakers who need to communicate with them. TIS National has access to over 2,400 contracted interpreters across Australia, speaking more than 160 languages and dialects. Its service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services on a user-pays basis.

TIS National assigns interpreting tasks to contracted interpreters based on their accreditation standard, geographical location and availability. Priority is given to interpreters with National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) professional accreditation or recognition when allocating assignments. Requests can be made for male and female interpreters in sensitive or gender–specific interpreting assignments.

Before progressing it is relevant to note that there are times when it is not possible to find a suitable accredited interpreter in the client’s first language. This is especially the case where the client is from a small and emerging community in which no one has yet become a NAATI accredited or recognised interpreter. In such cases it is sometimes possible to use an interpreter in the entrant’s second language (e.g. many African entrants speak French, Arabic or Swahili as a second language) or other people with the required language skills, such as bilingual workers or volunteers. Where matters relate to legal, medical, torture and trauma or other mental health issues, a professional interpreter with NAATI accreditation should be used. Alternative arrangements should only be made where all options for professional interpreting services (including telephone interpreting) have been exhausted.

DHA also funds a free translation service for people settling permanently in Australia. The service is provided to enable permanent residents and Australian citizens to participate in the community by having personal documents translated free of charge into English during their initial two-year settlement period. Some temporary and provisional visa holders may also be eligible for the service. Applications for this can be lodged at any Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) office.

Booking an Interpreter

Requests for interpreters should be made in advance where possible to ensure that an appropriate interpreter is available.

When booking an interpreter, it is important that you provide the following information:

✓ language and/or dialect required,
✓ name of your client,
✓ gender of your client,
✓ date, time and anticipated duration of the job,
✓ type of assignment (e.g. casework session, group information session, court hearing, medical appointment etc),
✓ whether there are any particular sensitivities (gender, ethnicity, religion etc) that you wish taken into consideration in the selection of an interpreter,
✓ your name, agency and contact number.

If you are seeking to book an on-site interpreter, you should also provide details of:

✓ the name of the person the interpreter should report to upon arrival,
✓ the time you expect the interpreter to arrive,
✓ the correct address for the assignment, including specific instructions if the address, or location, is difficult to find.

Working With an On-site Interpreter

By far the preferred way of using an interpreter is to have the interpreter present in the room with you. This is referred to as ‘on-site’ or ‘face to face’ interpreting.

As a general rule when working with an on-site interpreter you should:

• be clear in your mind that you are in charge of the interview, not the interpreter;
• ensure that you have a quiet place free from interruptions to conduct the interview
• arrange seating in a triangle if possible. This will help your client to feel comfortable and not intimidated and will facilitate communication;
• avoid leaving the interpreter alone with the client as this can place the interpreter in a compromising and awkward situation.

Begin the interview by:

• introducing yourself and the interpreter to your client;
• explaining the purpose of the interview;
• explaining the role of the interpreter to your client.

During the interview you should:

• speak directly to your client and look at your client, not the interpreter;
• discourage the interpreter from chatting to yourself or the client;
• speak clearly and not too fast;
• use plain English, avoid jargon or slang;
• give only two or three ideas at a time;
• do not rush. Make sure you allow adequate time for interpreting;
• be vigilant for any signs that the client (or the interpreter) are not communicating well or are uncomfortable in each other's presence;
be prepared to terminate the interview if you feel that it is not working for the client or if there are messages which you feel are not being conveyed correctly.

After the interview:

- ask your client if everything was clearly understood;
- find out if there are any questions or concerns.

If the session has covered traumatic issues, it is good practice to spend a few moments with the interpreter to check that s/he is OK and/or to answer any questions s/he might have. Don’t forget – interpreting can be very traumatic for an interpreter, especially if the session mirrors some past experiences.

**Working With a Telephone Interpreter**

It is often not possible to secure the services of an on-site interpreter, especially in less common languages, or if you want to ensure the client and interpreter are not known to each other, or if you are from a regional centre. In such cases, telephone interpreters are used. You can use a telephone interpreter in one of two ways:

- where you and the client are in the same room and the interpreter is on speaker or conference phone;
- where all parties are on the phone. This is the least preferred method for anything other than simple communication (e.g. organising an appointment) as it is very difficult to establish any form of rapport with the client and you are unable to benefit from picking up non-verbal cues.

Once connected you will need to provide your agency’s name, client code and location. You will also need to provide your name and telephone number. Depending on how long the wait will be to connect to an interpreter, you may be asked to wait on line or they may call you back.

When your session with your client commences:

- take charge of the interview;
- introduce yourself and the interpreter to the client;
• let the interpreter know what type of equipment you are using, i.e. speaker phone, a conference call facility or whether you and the client are on separate phones;
• give a short explanation of what you are going to discuss and explain the role of the interpreter;
• speak directly to the client, using the first person;
• conduct the interview using clear language;
• use short simple sentences;
• be vigilant for signs that the interpretation is not working and terminate the interview if necessary;
• at the end let the interpreter and the client know that they are finished.

Telephone interpreting is best suited for discussions over the telephone that will take less than 15 minutes. Interviews that are complex or will take longer than 15 minutes should ideally be conducted with an on-site interpreter (though in rural or regional areas, this might not be possible).

**Migration Advice**

As was discussed in Topics 4 and 6, separation from family and friends is a heavy burden for most forced migrants and they have a strong desire to be reunited with them as soon as possible. It is thus understandable that they will turn to the people they know in Australia and see as sources of information and advice in the hope that they might be able to assist them with this. The significant issue here is that, unlike other areas in which a worker might give advice, the law in Australia is very strict about who can – and cannot – give migration advice.

In Australia you have to be a registered migration agent to give advice about a migration matter. Registered migration agents are required to:

• have a sound knowledge of migration law and practice;
• act professionally and in a timely manner;
• abide by the migration agent’s Code of Conduct;
• have appropriate insurance;
• pass character tests (including criminal history checks).

This law has been introduced to protect people because those without the specialist knowledge required to give migration advice might:

• be unaware of current legislation and procedures;
• provide incorrect advice;
• mislead people about their chances of success.

Sometimes it can be hard to tell whether what you are saying to a client constitutes ‘advice’. It is not advice if you help someone to fill in a form but if that person asks you about how they should answer any of the questions, this is advice. The best way to deal with cases where your clients ask you for help with migration matters is to explain that you are not allowed to help them and that if you do, you can get into serious trouble. After all, it is against the law for an unregistered person to give migration advice and penalties of up to 10 years jail can apply.

Migration agents operating in Australia must be registered with the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA). To find a registered migration agent,

For further information about migration advice, go to the Department of Home Affairs’ website: www.homeaffairs.gov.au.

**Meeting Reporting Requirements**

Most workers at some stage complain about ‘paperwork’ and say that they would much rather ‘be doing their job’. Those in the settlement sector are no exception. The key thing to remember, however, is that no matter how tedious it might seem at the time, ‘paperwork’ is an integral part of work in this sector ... for a number of very good reasons.

When we talk about ‘paperwork’ these days, the reality is that more often than not we actually mean filling in forms, spreadsheets and data bases on the computer rather than dealing with pieces of paper as such, though this varies from office to office. Irrespective of the medium, most of this work is linked directly or indirectly to reporting, which in turn is linked to **accountability** which is crucial when you are supporting vulnerable clients ... and in most instances using government funds to do so.

The reporting obligations of agencies will vary considerably depending on the nature of the work undertaken and the body to whom they are accountable. Most community-based agencies delivering settlement services receive funding from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and many also receive funding from other sources including:

- other Federal government departments;
- state government departments;
- local government;
- philanthropic bodies (trusts and foundations);
- members of the general public.

Each one of these funders, except the last, require that reports be submitted, documenting the activities undertaken and the expenditure of funds.

In addition, community-based agencies are also required to report on an annual basis to the body with whom they are registered or under whose umbrella they come. Auspiced bodies have to report to the auspicing agency, incorporated associations are required to report to the relevant state department and companies are obliged to report to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC).

While it is tempting to think that reporting is the sole domain of managers and other senior staff, the reality is that every single person with the agency has an important part to play. If case notes are not completed, instances of service not recorded, time sheets not submitted ... those who have direct responsibility for reporting will not be able to prepare the reports that are required in order to keep the agency open.

Working for a government agency does not take you off the reporting bandwagon ... it just imposes different kinds of reporting obligations. Each layer of bureaucracy has reporting obligations to the next layer up until you get to the point at which the agency is required to report to the relevant Minister and to parliament. At the Federal level this is through a process called ‘Senate Estimates’ and similar processes exist at the state and local levels.
Each agency will have its own reporting requirements. There is an expectation that staff members will take personal responsibility for:

- learning about the systems and procedures within their agency;
- acquiring any additional skills (in particular IT skills) they need to use these systems;
- learning about and employing the terminology the agency wishes staff to use when recording information and reporting;
- seeking assistance if they are unclear about any aspect of their work;
- ensuring case notes, reports and other documentation is completed in a timely fashion;
- ensuring that all information recorded is accurate and comprehensive.

**Meeting Deadlines**

The aim of settlement services is to provide services in a timely manner that facilitate and promote autonomy as quickly and effectively as possible. It is not an open ended contract. As with reporting requirements, every organisation will usually have established timeframes and procedures about what services will be delivered, and funding will be based around these specific outcomes. There may be a checklist, or case management plan mapping the various outcomes and milestones you aim to achieve with each client.

Deadlines are particularly important for providing initial settlement services. The Humanitarian Settlement Services contract has inbuilt time frames for the delivery of particular services. Some things need to be delivered immediately, such as if a refugee arrives with a health alert. This requires that the entrant be seen by a doctor within a specified period. If this does not occur, it is considered a breach of the contract. Similarly there are built in timeframes for registration with Centrelink and Medicare and opening bank accounts and for the provision of other services such as accommodation.

Just as in the context of reporting discussed above, you must take responsibility for meeting the timeframes that govern your work. Failure to do so has negative ramifications for your client, your colleagues and your agency.

**Working with Colleagues from Diverse Backgrounds**

Working with people from different backgrounds can be like travelling the world every day, with different languages, different foods at lunch time, different customs, values, religions. It is the world at your doorstep and it can be both enriching and enlightening. But to build effective relationships and appreciate and acknowledge the best of these differences, you need to show your colleagues that you are genuinely interested in them and their culture. Identify and be aware of guidelines for showing good manners in your colleagues’ different cultures. Listen, learn and observe without making premature judgements. This interest will breed a respectful two-way communication that will be both personally and professionally rewarding. Try to be inclusive of everyone. What you learn from your colleagues, and they from exchanges with you, can be used to engage more effectively with your refugee clients.
Following are some general principles that should underpin a multicultural workplace:

- Openness, tolerance and flexibility are critical.
- Wherever possible, work practices should be negotiated to find a model with which all team members can be comfortable.
- Talking directly about differences helps build trust, facilitates decision-making and opens the way, where appropriate, to compromise and ultimately build a better way of working together.

In saying this, it is important to recognise that there are key cultural differences surrounding expectations of the workforce. Whereas compromise agreements may seem acceptable to Australian born workers, in the more hierarchical structure of some Asian and African cultures there is an expectation that senior managers will make decisions and take the lead. A manager going to workers to seek their advice or input can make some workers feel nervous and lead to a mistaken belief that the manager cannot do his/her job. It is thus very important:

- for managers to ‘contextualise’ consultation in the workplace, taking time to explain why it is being done and what is expected of the workers;
- for Australian-born workers not assume that the way they do things is necessarily the ‘right’ way or that the way they view things is the ‘only’ way they will be perceived;
- for workers from other backgrounds to be careful not to make assumptions. If things seem strange or out of place – ask someone. Do not automatically take offence or assume the worst of others.

Another key lesson to learn in the multicultural workplace is that related to saving face. Australians are known for teasing (‘knocking’) each other and for using irony and deprecating language in workplace conversations. There is also the famous ‘tall poppy syndrome’ which sees individual achievements played down. Those not familiar with such interactions can easily interpret well-intentioned comments as direct or indirect criticism and this will cause them considerable pain as they believe that they have failed or been shamed in front of their colleagues.

Non-verbal communication differences may also cause friction. You need to understand and respect important socio-religious differences and be prepared to consider (or even
reconsider) how these affect workplace relationships. For example some things that may cause offence include:

- a woman putting out her hand for a man to shake,
- having direct eye contact,
- pointing at someone,
- using a single finger to beckon someone to come to you,
- revealing attire,
- being too close during conversations,
- pointing someone’s head (the most holy body part in some cultures),
- pointing the feet at someone (the least holy body part in some cultures).

Cultural differences should be addressed and viewed as what they are: potentially different values, assumptions, expectations and behaviour as a result of differing collective experiences. It should be understood that members of a team are not there to represent a culture or particular ethnic group: they represent themselves. However, their cultural background will influence behaviour. An understanding of cultural differences encourages the tolerance and flexibility required for the team to work well together. Further, understanding and being able to adapt to the other culture - whether international or interdepartmental - will make your work more enjoyable and less frustrating.

**Safe Work Practices**

Employers have an obligation to protect workers from risks in the tasks that they carry out and/or the equipment used to carry out that task. Safe work procedures also ensure that workers are aware of the risks in their work tasks, and outline how to avoid injury or illness while doing these tasks. Safe work procedures document the risks associated with a work task and incorporating the appropriate risk control measures into a sequence of steps for doing the task safely. Every organisation is required by law to a Work Health and Safety Policy and to ensure their employees are familiar with this.

When working with refugees and other forced migrants, caseworkers and other service providers will often be in situations where they are alone with the client and are therefore more vulnerable. If clients are traumatised or frustrated, anger may be directed towards caseworker. Service providers need to be aware of potential risk and follow safe working practices to minimise the risk.

When visiting a client’s home, you should be sure to follow agency guidelines. These are likely to include the following precautions:

- Make sure that your mobile phone is working and has coverage.
- If you feel uneasy about the client, do not visit alone. If you are a female, ask a male colleague to accompany you.
- If your client is aggressive, avoid arguing, ensure that you are out of reach of the client and depart as quickly and unprovocatively as possible.
- If you observe any suspicious behaviour, or are unsure of what to do, report this to your case manager without delay.
- Record any incidents on an Incident Report Form.
- In case of an emergency call 000.
- Carry a first aid kit with you, but in an emergency only respond with first aid if you are fully trained or are acting under the instruction of the 000 operator.
- If using a car ensure it has comprehensive insurance.
- Secure children in suitable child restraints and never allow a child under 8 to sit in the front seat of the car.
**References**


**Activities**

1. If it is possible through your workplace or through other contacts, set up an opportunity to have a face to face conversation with someone through an interpreter. Better still if you can have a trained worker observing you during this time as there are often things we do subconsciously that are not helpful to the communication.

2. Imagine you are a caseworker trying to set up a doctor’s appointment for your client. The doctor’s receptionist is very reluctant to book an interpreter, saying it is too expensive and too complicated, and besides which, your client always comes with her son and his English isn’t too bad. What arguments are you going to use to try to convince her to change her mind?

3. Your client is a Rohingya woman from Myanmar who arrived on a 204 visa. What issues are you going to take into consideration when booking an interpreter?

4. As explained, deadlines are very important. Try to think of three things you can commit to doing to help you meet workplace deadlines:

   i. 

   ii. 

   iii. 

   iv. 

   v. 

   vi.
iii. 

5. You are a female Home Tutor, providing an English lesson to a refugee woman in her home. Her two small children are asleep in a bedroom. While you are there, her husband returns unexpectedly. He is clearly intoxicated and angry that you are there. He picks up a knife and starts to threaten you and your client. What should you do?

6. Think through your answer to the above. Have you forgotten anyone? Is there something else you should do?
**Topic 12: Self Awareness and Support**

In **Topic 12** you will have an opportunity to reflect on your interactions with clients and self-care within the workplace and to learn the skills and strategies that will assist you to deal with these issues.

**Factors Influencing Interactions with Clients**

In Topic 5 we touched upon the entrants’ culture but when working in a cross-cultural environment, it is equally important to be aware of how our own culture will affect the work we do.

‘Culture’ is a strange thing in the Australian context. Some countries have a very strong sense of a national cultural identity but not so Australia. Amongst those born in Australia, there are various identifiable subcultures in which people identify with their ancestry (e.g. Aboriginal, Greek, Scottish etc) or interests (e.g. the ‘beach culture’) but many Australian born people would be inclined to think that culture is ‘something that foreigners have’ and the way they think and act is ‘normal’ rather than being culturally defined.

One of the main consequences of ignorance of how culture has shaped your own sense of who you are and how things work in the world is that it is easy to be judgemental of others. It is easy to think that the way we do things is the ‘right way’ and it therefore follows that other ways are ‘the wrong way’ rather than just being different.

An important part of working cross-culturally is having an understanding of who you are and how this will influence the way others perceive you. The sorts of things that are relevant include but are definitely not limited to your:

- gender,
- age,
- ethnicity,
- class,
- religion,
- level of education,
- confidence in dealing with new people,
- preferred mode of dress,
- adornment (e.g. tattoos and body piercing),
- attitudes to people from particular backgrounds/religions etc

**Managing Perceptions**

Some things can be easily changed in order to make clients feel more comfortable ... the way one dresses is an example ... but other things ... such as age, gender and religion ... cannot be changed. It is therefore important that you are aware that your clients will
perceive you in a particular way that is shaped by their own culture and experiences and that it is your role to manage the situation in the best interests of the client. There are two main ways you might consider doing this:

- **Naming the issue**: it is often possible to deflate any possible concerns a client might have by addressing the issue up front with the client.

- **Changing the case worker**: if a newly arrived entrant has come from a situation where they have been persecuted on the basis of their ethnicity or religion, it is inappropriate for either the worker or the interpreter to be a member of the group associated with the persecution. Similarly, the gender of the worker and the entrant must also be considered.

### Understanding and Managing Boundaries

Most of the people who work with refugees and forced migrants have chosen to do this because they want to help people and/or make a contribution ... which is as it should be ... but it is essential that this be kept in perspective.

One of the challenges that faces every worker is finding the balance between connecting sufficiently with the clients in order for a constructive bond to be formed and becoming too involved and losing all sense of objectivity. The following diagram from Foundation House\(^\text{27}\) provides some useful guidance about boundaries.

![The Over-involvement – Under-involvement Continuum](image)

Every worker has to be aware that there are boundaries that should not be crossed and these are there to protect both the worker and the client. Such boundaries exist in all areas but they are particularly important in this field because of the vulnerability of the clients and their own lack of understanding of how things operate in Australia.

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As important as being caring and empathetic are, there are limits to how these play out. There are certain things that are considered unprofessional. These include:

- inviting clients into your own home;
- discussing your personal life with clients in anything but a superficial way;
- going to a client’s home for reasons unrelated to your work;
- seeing clients for purely social reasons unrelated to your work;
- embarking on a romantic or sexual relationship with a client.

It is acknowledged that in all but the last example – which is unambiguously unacceptable - there are some grey areas, in particular for workers who are also members of their clients’ community and for workers in country towns where work-life boundaries are often more blurred. If this is you – make sure you speak to your supervisor about your circumstances and agree on what is acceptable and unacceptable.

### Vicarious Traumatisation

*Those of us who work with victims have seen or heard some of the worst that human beings do to other human beings. We have lost the luxury of innocence.*

‘Vicarious trauma’ is the term used to describe a common phenomenon in the helping professions that comes about because the empathy that workers need in order to engage effectively with their clients leads them to internalise their clients’ trauma and in so doing, become traumatised themselves.

While the symptoms of trauma need to be recognised as culturally diverse and specific, trauma reactions are generally divided into three categories:

- **intrusive reactions:** dreams/nightmares, flashbacks, obsessive thoughts, physiological reactions and other persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event;
- **avoidant reactions:** general numbing in responsiveness and avoidance (particularly of things related to the traumatic material); and
- **hyper-arousal reactions:** hyper-vigilance and difficulty concentrating.

Workers may also experience the following:

- anxiety;
- depression;
- sleeping problems;
- de-personalisation;
- feeling overwhelmed by emotions such as anger and fear, grief, despair, shame, guilt;
- increased irritability;
- feeling of reduced personal accomplishment;
- procrastination;

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• low self-esteem;
• having no time or energy for self or others;
• increased feelings of cynicism, sadness or seriousness;
• an increased sensitivity to violence and other forms of abuse, for example when watching television or a film;
• avoiding situations perceived as potentially dangerous;
• feeling profoundly distrustful of other people and the world in general;
• disruptions in interpersonal relationships; and
• substance abuse.

Connected to these experiences, vicarious traumatisation may also involve a change in a person’s beliefs about themselves, the world, and other people within it. This is known in the psychological field as changes in their ‘cognitive schema’, and may involve:

• feeling that the world is no longer a ‘safe place’ (for themselves and/or others);
• feeling helpless in regard to taking care of themselves or others;
• feeling their personal freedom is limited; and
• feelings of alienation (that their work sets them apart from others).

It is important not to ‘pathologise’ these reactions (in other words to view them as medically or psychologically abnormal). All research on this subject points out that these reactions are normal human reactions to repeated exposure to distressing events. If left unaddressed, vicarious traumatisation can have a negative impact on your:

• ability to interact constructively with clients;
• colleagues and the workplace environment;
• personal relationships.

It is often hard to recognise when you are suffering from ... or slipping into ... vicarious traumatisation. That is why it is very important to:

• know what to look out for;
• take some time to engage in self-reflection;
• consciously take steps to avoid vicarious traumatisation (see below);
• recognise how beneficial supervision can be;
• ask for help when you first recognise signs of vicarious traumatisation – don’t leave it too late;
• watch out for signs of traumatisation in those with whom you work ... and if you are worried about them ... don’t ignore it, do something (see below).

**Self-Care Strategies**

While some degree of vicarious traumatisation is pretty much an inevitable part of working with refugees and other forced migrants, suffering as a result of it should not be. There are many things you can do to avoid its worst effects and if it does creep up on you, there are other things that can be done to reclaim your equanimity.

An important thing to remember if you are working in any kind of helping profession is that you should regard your work as a marathon, not a sprint. Your mind and body have to be there for the long haul and therefore you must do things to take care of both.

Understanding and responding to your own needs is the essence of an effective self-care strategy and learning to balance work and play is an important place to begin. People who work in stressful helping environments often find it difficult to:
• leave the office: you never feel you have done enough so there is the tendency to stay back and try to do more;
• leave work at work: when you do get home you replay situations or conversations in your head, continue to think about ‘work things’ feel guilty about relaxing when there is a pile of work in your table.

Setting boundaries around ‘work time’ and ‘my time’ is the essential first step to regaining control over your life.

Equally important is caring for yourself. There’s lots of advice about this floating around but essentially it boils down to three key components:

• **Physical Self Care**: make sure you have enough sleep, eat well, engage in regular exercise and take time off work when sick.

• **Psychological Self Care**: do things unrelated to your work to provide some balance. Also take some time out to reflect upon how you are feeling about things … and do something if you think you are feeling stressed (see below).

• **Emotional Self Care**: spend time with friends, do fun things and allow others to give you affirmation. It is also important to remind yourself that while you might be dealing with sad things, the world is not falling apart everywhere and not everyone is mad. Remember that, although bad things happen and people are affected, there is a lot of good that goes on as well. Work to look for the good in people and situations. Remember the good you are doing.

Many workplaces offer staff ‘supervision’ or some other form of activity that provides an opportunity for you (individually or in a group), to reflect upon the work you have been doing.

Some people are wary about this, thinking that it is ‘all too touchy-feely for their liking’ or that it implies they are not doing their job well. Nothing can be further from the truth. Workplace supervision provides an opportunity for you to:

• reflect on your work in a safe, non-judgemental environment;
• talk through problems you are having with clients, other staff members, your boss and try to find constructive ways to resolve these;
• identify areas in which you would benefit from professional development;
• think about how you are coping with their workload and identify coping strategies;
• ask for help if required.

**References**


Fostering a Sense of Professional Resilience: Six Simple Strategies. Ellen Fink-Samnick. The New Social Worker Online. [http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Professional_Development_%26_Advancement/Fostering_a_Sense_of_Professional_Resilience%3A_Six_Simple_Strategies/](http://www.socialworker.com/home/Feature_Articles/Professional_Development_%26_Advancement/Fostering_a_Sense_of_Professional_Resilience%3A_Six_Simple_Strategies/)

Activities

1. In the light of the reflection in class about the way others perceive you, how will you manage this with clients?

2. What do you think will be the most challenging ‘boundary’ issue you will need to manage in your work? Why is this the case and what can you do about it?

3. Have you ever been traumatised (eg by a car accident, witnessing a violent crime)? How did this make you feel? How did you work through these feelings?

4. How do you recognise when you are stressed? Does your body tell you?
5. Do you have any self-care strategy, and if so, what are they?

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6. Make a list of the things you pledge to do to ensure you take care of yourself in the workplace:

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Appendix 1

WORKING DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Government of Western Australia: Office of Multicultural Interests

Acculturation
The process whereby the attitudes and/or behaviours of people from one culture are modified as a result of contact with a different culture. Acculturation implies a mutual influence in which elements of two cultures mingle and merge.

Ancestry
Describes the ethnic or cultural heritage of a person, that is, the ethnic or cultural groups to which a person’s forebears are or were attached. In practice, Ancestry is the ethnic or cultural groups which the person identifies as being his or her ancestry.

Anglo-Saxon
The collective term commonly used to describe people whose ancestry originates from the country of England in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Anglo-Celtic
The collective term commonly used to describe people whose ancestry originates from England and/or Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Assimilation
The process whereby members of an ethnic group shed their traditions and culture and adopt the customs and attitudes of the mainstream culture. In Australia, assimilation policy was the Government's response to the influx of refugees and immigrants from war-torn Europe from 1945 to the early 1960s. Although this was officially replaced by a policy of ‘integration’, until the early 1970s, assimilation remained the final goal and reflected the values embedded in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (known as the White Australia Policy).

Asylum seekers
People who have applied for recognition as refugees under the United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, but whose cases have yet to be determined.

Caucasian
A term based on the now discredited method of racial classification. The term is used by some Australian agencies, for people of fair complexion and usually of European origin. It is also a definition for a ‘broad division of humankind covering peoples of Europe, Western Asia, South Asia, and parts of North Africa.’ The Office of Multicultural Interests does not encourage the use of this or similar racial descriptors, such as ‘mongoloid’ or ‘negroid’.

Celtic
The collective term commonly used to describe people whose ancestry originates from the countries of Ireland Scotland, Wales, the county of Cornwall and the Isle of Man in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It is noted that this glossary includes some Western Australian specific information but it is felt that the contents are of sufficient general relevance to include in an unedited form.
Citizenship
Citizenship traditionally signifies legal, political and national identity. It brings with it certain rights and responsibilities. **Active citizenship** refers to individuals working towards the betterment of their community through economic participation, public service, volunteer work and other such efforts. Active citizens may not have formal/legal citizenship status. **Democratic citizenship** reflects sensitivity to different needs, claims and interests within the accepted principles, practices and legal norms of the broader political community.

Cross-Cultural Training
A process aimed at developing the awareness, knowledge and skills need to interact appropriately and effectively with culturally diverse customers and co-workers.

Cultural Competence
A set of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that individuals, professions, organisations and systems use to work effectively in culturally diverse situations. The ability of systems, organisations, professions and individuals to work effectively in culturally diverse environments and situations.

Cultural Competencies
A set of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that individuals, professions, organisations and systems use to work effectively in culturally diverse situations. The ability of systems, organisations, professions and individuals to work effectively in culturally diverse environments and situations.

Two subsets of cultural competency are:
- **Cultural awareness:** the understanding that there is difference. Also an understanding of the social, economic and political context in which people exist.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** legitimising this difference: a process of self-exploration that enables us to see how our own life experiences impact upon others.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD)
Culturally and linguistically diverse refers to the wide range of cultural groups and individuals that make up the Australian population. It includes groups and individuals who differ according to religion, race, language and ethnicity except those whose ancestry is Anglo-Saxon, Anglo Celtic, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. For ease, CaLD is commonly used as an abbreviation for culturally and linguistically diverse.

Cultural Diversity
A description of a society composed of people from many cultural and linguistic groups. This term is frequently used to mean multiethnic, multi-faith or multilingual in the Australian context.

Cultural Pluralism
A term used to describe a society in which ethnic groups are encouraged to maintain and promote their culture, language and heritage within society.

Culture
Culture comprises four elements – values, norms, institutions and artifacts – that are passed on from one generation to another. Cultures are dynamic and constantly evolving.

Democratic Pluralism
A term used to describe a society in which the rights of all groups to participate as full and equal members of society are safeguarded and protected within a framework of citizenship. It is different from cultural pluralism, which focuses only on cultural difference, because it recognises the range of differences that exist between individuals.
and within communities, such as age, physical and intellectual ability, gender, and socio-economic background.

**Discrimination**
Discrimination occurs when a person, or a group of people, are treated less favourably than another person or group because of age; race; colour; national or ethnic origin; sex; pregnancy or marital status; disability; religion; sexual orientation; or some other central characteristic.
Discrimination happens when a person is denied the opportunity to participate freely and fully in normal day-to-day activities. It might include harassment or victimisation in the workplace; being unable to gain physical access to a building or facility; being denied goods and services; difficulty in obtaining appropriate accommodation and housing; or not being able to join a trade union.

Discrimination is characterised into two forms:
- **Direct (overt) discrimination** occurs when one person or group of people receive less favourable treatment than another person or group in the same position would have received on the grounds of their age, race, colour, national or ethnic origin; sex, pregnancy or marital status; disability; religion; sexual orientation; or some other central characteristic.
- **Indirect (covert) discrimination** includes practices and policies that appear to be 'neutral' or 'fair' because they treat everyone in the same way but adversely affect a higher proportion of people of a group of people characterised by age, race, colour, national or ethnic origin; sex; pregnancy or marital status; disability; religion; sexual orientation; or some other central characteristic. It can occur even when there is no intention to discriminate.

**Equality**
- **Formal Equality** - prescribes equal treatment of all people regardless of circumstances, on the understanding that all have the same rights and entitlements. Its underlying logic is that by extending equal rights to all, inequality has been eliminated. Sameness of treatment is equated with fairness of treatment. Formal Equality does not take into account the accumulated disadvantage of generations of discrimination or the disadvantage faced by groups by a system that fails to recognise different needs.
- **Substantive Equality** - involves achieving equitable outcomes as well as equal opportunity. It takes into account the effects of past discrimination. It recognises that rights, entitlements, opportunities and access are not equally distributed throughout society. Substantive Equality recognises that equal or the same application of rules to unequal groups can have unequal results.
Where service delivery agencies cater to the dominant, majority group, then people who are different may miss out on essential services. Hence, it is necessary to treat people differently because people have different needs.

**Equity**
Equity refers to the quality of being fair and just. **Social Equity** refers to policies, programs and services that meet the needs of all individuals and groups and enable all to participate as full and equal members in all aspects of society.

**Ethnic**
An adjective used to describe a population of human beings whose members identify with each other, usually on the basis of a presumed common ancestry; recognition by others as a distinct group; or by common cultural, linguistic, religious or territorial traits.
Ethnicity
Membership of a particular cultural group. It is defined by shared cultural practices including but not limited to holidays, food, language and customs. People can share the same nationality but have different ethnic groups, while people who share an ethnic identity can be of different nationalities.

Ethnic Group/Community
A group/community established based on ethnicity (see above).

Ethnocentrism
The tendency to judge all other cultures by the norms and standards of one's own culture, especially with regard to language, behaviour, customs and religions, as a way of making sense of the world.

First Generation Australian
A first generation of a family to live in Australia.

Immigrant
A person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another. In Australia the following terms are used to differentiate between immigrants who arrive in Australia through two immigration programs.
- The term ‘migrants’ is used when referring to people who enter through Australia’s Migration Programs which are the Skilled Stream and the Family Stream.
- The term ‘refugees’ is used when referring to people who enter through Australia’s Humanitarian Program.

Integration
Generally describes the process of developing a society that respects, values and draws on the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of the population. Unlike the process of assimilation, integration does not involve the shedding of traditions and cultures by ethnic groups and adopting the customs and attitudes of the mainstream. Rather it involves the development of a dynamic culture that draws on the diversity of the traditions of the variety of ethnic groups.

Mainstream
Refers to the prevalent attitudes, values, and practices of the majority group in a society.

Minority Communities
Everyone belongs to an ‘ethnic group’ of one sort or another. However, non-dominant ethnic groups are often referred to as ‘minorities’. Minority groups can include ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Multiculturalism
A term used to describe the recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity. It means all Australians are entitled to exercise their rights and participate fully in society, regardless of their different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds.

New and emerging communities
A term used to describe ethnic communities that are small in number, have recently settled in Australia and often lack established family networks, support systems, community structures and resources, relative to more established communities.

Prejudice
Unfounded opinions or attitudes relating to an individual or group that represents them unfavourably or negatively. Prejudice may be directed at a person the basis of race, skin colour, language, religion or culture.
**Race**
The term 'race' is an artificial construct used to classify people on the basis of supposed physical and cultural similarities deriving from their ancestry. Although there is no scientific evidence to support the existence of human races, people tend to assume that there are racial categories.
Under the Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* race includes colour, descent, ethnic or national origin or nationality and may comprise two or more distinct races.

**Racism**
A belief or ideology that creates artificial social divisions on the basis of characteristics or abilities specific to a particular ‘race’ which distinguishes it as being either superior or inferior to another ‘race’ or ‘races’.

**Refugee**
Any person who has left their own country of nationality due to an established fear of being persecuted on the basis of ethnicity, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable to, or is unwilling to return to it.

**Second Generation Australian**
A person born in Australia who has at least one parent born overseas.

**Social Capital**
Generally refers to the quality of social interactions, trust and networks between individuals, families, communities and governments for mutual benefit. The core idea of social capital is that social networks have value.

**Social Cohesion**
A process that involves a complex set of social relations. It is constructed on the foundations of institutional, political and social structures that ensure the wellbeing of all citizens. Social Cohesion takes in four aspects of welfare: equity in access to rights, the dignity and recognition of each person, autonomy and personal fulfilment, and the possibility of participating as a full member of society.

**Social Exclusion**
Relates to the sense of isolation and estrangement that certain people experience within a society, and the discriminatory practices of individuals and institutions that limit, or prevent, the exercising of rights, such as democratic participation, and access to opportunities and resources such as housing, employment and healthcare. The sense of exclusion may be based on characteristics such as culture, ethnicity, nationality, religion, perceived ‘race’, sexuality and physical or intellectual ability.

**Social Inclusion**
Suggests that members of society, irrespective of age, ethnicity, social background etc, have a sense of belonging to and a stake in the social, economic, political and cultural systems of their society.

**Tolerance**
Willingness to recognise and respect the beliefs or practices of others. The Office of Multicultural Interests avoids the use of the word in the context of multiculturalism due to its association with the act of enduring something that is troublesome or of which one does not approve.

**Youth/Young People**
In Australia, the terms ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are used interchangeably and refer to people between the ages of 12 and 25 (inclusive).