



CARING FOR CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

Foster Care Association of Victoria Position:

Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse states in Australia with almost 43.6% of its total population having either been born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. Research done in Victoria in 2012 on children living in Out-of-Home care showed that 13% are from culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) or refugee background. However, there is little research done on practices and policies on the needs of children living in out of home care.

FCAV believes that care provided to children or young person's must allow them to stay connected to their families, community and culture. Children should be encouraged and supported to have positive views of themselves and to be proud of their identity and heritage. A good foster care placement should provide, availability, sensitivity, acceptance, co-operation and family membership. All children who are looked after are vulnerable to negative impacts on their identity formation, resulting from interrupted attachments. There is need for ethically sensitive practice which can be achieved if foster cares are culturally competent.

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

Cultural competency is the awareness and knowledge of elements that describe culture which include: personal identification, communications, thoughts, language, beliefs, customs, actions, values and institutions that are particular to social, ethnic, racial and religious groups. For foster cares, these elements include beliefs and belief systems that surround family structure, upbringing, values and norms. The concept of cultural competency is a positive effect on the foster care system enabling foster carers to deliver care that is respectful and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse children who are in Out-of-Home care.

WHAT IS A CULTURAL SUPPORT PLAN?

This is a tool that is used by care teams to ensure children from diverse backgrounds remain connected to their families, community and culture. It should include information on cultural identity, community support and it also provides a good outline on how best to competently care for your foster child.

Foster carers who have a good understanding of the cultural and heritage needs of children from CALD and refugee communities are often well placed to help those children have a sense of pride and achievement.

- Do carers know the importance of maintaining a child's cultural and heritage background?
- What do carers need to do before and during having a child in placement who is from a CALD or refugee background?
- Do carers know where to get cultural appropriate information and support from?



IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A CHILD'S CULTURAL AND HERITAGE BACKGROUND

- to keep the young person engaged and connected with their culture
- To help young person understand and feel positive about their racial identity.
- To help the young person have positive views of themselves and to be proud of their heritage and identity.
- To help foster children have a sense of pride and achievement.
- Support foster children to understand and manage the discrimination and racism they may experience
- To help the young person have a sense of community.
- To build on the young person's knowledge of their particular culture around religion, dietary requirements, family life and roles among others.

QUESTIONS TO ASK PRIOR TO PLACEMENT:

- In which country were they born?
- Where were the parents born?
- When and why did they come to Australia?
- What was their previous everyday activities and routine
- What language does the child speak?
- What religion do they follow?

The above are just some of the examples. Once the carer obtains this information, they should try their best to follow and maintain it to preserve the child's culture.

Social workers/community service agencies might be a good point to start to gather such information.

WAYS TO MAINTAIN AND SUPPORT A CHILD'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Encourage and support the child to develop and maintain relationships with his/her birth parents, siblings and extended families.
- Encourage the child to talk about their family and community and support their participation in their community.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

- Your agency through phone calls and personal visits which vary from placement to placement.
- A case worker to support your placement.
- Cultural competency and training from different organisations like, VICSEG.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<p>In Victoria, many local community groups run events and festivals each year celebrating their own culture, traditions, food and language. Federation Square hosts a range of multicultural festivals and celebrations each year, please visit http://www.fedsquare.com/events/multicultural-festivals/</p>	<p>Australian Multicultural Community Services is a community based organization that provides information, advice and services to people and communities from diverse background. Suite 111, 44-56 Hampstead Rd, Maidstone, Melbourne, Vic3012 Telephone: (03) 9687 7446 http://www.amcservices.org.au/contact</p>
<p>Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria Inc Level 2, 150 Palmerston Street, Carlton, Vic 3053 Phone: (03) 9349 4122 Website: http://www.eccv.org.au/contact/</p>	<p>Melbourne Immigration Museum is also a great place to visit for someone who wishes to learn more about their community history in Victoria, for more information please go to: http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/.</p>
<p>Centre for Multicultural Youth is a community based organisation that provides services to and advocates for the needs of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Please check with website for more details and program information: http://www.cmy.net.au/Home</p>	<p>Care with Me is a not-for-profit organization that provides programs work with Muslim community in order to help them remain engaged in the community and enable them to find the help they need to provide care. For more information please go to Care with Me website: http://www.cwme.org.au/PGE_Events.aspx</p>
<p>Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG) Coburg (head office) 11 Munro Street, Coburg, Vic 3058 Phone: (03) 9383 2533 http://www.vicsegnewfutures.org.au/</p>	