Workbook 2.3

**Person Centred Practice Across Cultures**

A culturally responsive person centred organisation -

Key elements

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**About National Disability Services**

**National Disability Services** is the peak body for non-government disability services. Its purpose is to promote quality service provision and life opportunities for people with disability. NDS’s Australia-wide membership includes more than 1000 non-government organisations, which support people with all forms of disability. NDS provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to state, territory and federal governments.

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Preface

This workbook is part of a series of resources for the disability services sector designed by futures Upfront for NDS with funding provided by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services; Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

**1. Individual Practices – working with people from CALD backgrounds with disability**

1.1 Empathy – a practice to connect across cultures

1.2 Active listening – unconditional positive regard across cultures

1.3 Choice making – cross-cultural differences and what can we learn from them

1.4 Reflective Practice – why different points of view matter

1.5 Working effectively with interpreters

**2. Organisational Practices – building a culturally responsive organisation**

2.1 Terminology and data – a guide to understanding cultural diversity and disability

2.2 Making the business case – why diversity is good for business

2.3 A culturally responsive person centred organisation – key elements

2.4 Leading towards cultural responsiveness – a practical guide for managers, team leaders and coaches

2.5 Building a diverse workforce – practical strategies

2.6 Valuing bilingual workers – strategies to recruit, train and retain

**3. Community Engagement – working alongside diverse communities**

3.1 1 Community @ a time – culturally responsive community engagement principles and elements

3.2 Making Links – networking with CALD Communities

3.3 Cross-cultural story-based marketing – 1 story @a time

This workbook is part of “Organisational practices - building a culturally responsive organisation” series.

How to use this workbook?

This workbook can be used in many different ways, including:

As a self-paced learning program by an individual

As a self-paced learning program for a group

* As part of formal training organised by an organisation
* As part of coaching and mentoring.

This workbook includes exercises and opportunities for reflections (when working by yourself) or discussions (when working with others).

There is plenty of room in your workbook to take notes and make comments.

What is this workbook about?

This workbook consolidates the learning from all the workbooks in this series by giving you a framework for embedding culturally responsive person centred practice across your organisation.

Outcomes:

By the end of this workbook you will be able to: Define person centred, cultural competence and culturally responsive practice and understand the basics to applying them to your own and your organisation’s work

* Understand the parallels between person centred and culturally responsive practice.
* Reflect on the foundation principles that underpin culturally competent person centred organisations
* Use the ideas outlined in this workbook as stepping stones towards building a culturally competent person centred organisation

Who is this workbook for?

* Leaders and other people in an organisation who can affect change
* People who want to influence change

How long will it take to complete?

Reading through the workbook and considering the critical questions will take you about one hour. Completing all the exercise will take much longer, especially when used as a guide for effecting organisational change.

The Workbook

Definitions

* + 1. What is ‘person centred’?

Person centred approaches are:

“ways of commissioning (funding), providing and organising services rooted in listening to what people want, to help them live in their communities as they choose. People are not simply placed in pre-existing services and expected to adjust, rather, the service strives to adjust to the person. Person centred approaches look to mainstream services and community resources for assistance and do not limit themselves to what is available within specialist services.”

The key principles that underpin person-centred practice are:

* the person is at the centre
* their wider social network is involved as full partners
* there is a partnership between the person, their family and the service provider
* the whole of life is considered
  + 1. What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is defined as:

“a set of values, behaviours, attitudes, and practices within a system, organisation, program or among individuals and which enables them to work effectively cross culturally

It refers to the ability to honour and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviours of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who are providing such services. Striving to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long term commitment”.

However, in our experience the term cultural competence can be confusing. The term ‘competence’ is used in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector to identify skills or knowledge that an individual is proficient with. It is also used as a measure for determining whether someone has passed or failed a specified unit of competency. We are often asked by individuals and organisations to rate their level of cultural competency.

Although we continue to use cultural competence to describe the work required at an organisational level, the term ‘culturally responsive practice’ better describes the work required at an individual level and is better aligned to ‘person-centred’ practice.

* + 1. Culturally responsive practice

To be ‘culturally responsive’ means being willing to consider the world through another person’s eyes. Even when we share a similar background we often think, feel and respond to things in life differently – think about age-related perspectives or gender-influenced views. Working with people means learning to work with diverse ways of seeing and being in the world. Unintentionally, we can assume that what and how we value and do things is universally applicable and/or that common traits can be applied to people with similar backgrounds. Humans do not all see or respond to the world the same way.

‘Culturally responsive practice’ is about appreciating this tendency in ourselves, and each other, and being willing to learn about and consider each person’s perspective. People are unique regardless of what may at first appear to be similarities. This way of working allows us to get to the real heart of each person’s needs. Essentially, it is about listening and developing a respectful curiosity about who people are, what motivates and influences them, and how this impacts the ways they like to be, and feel best supported, in the world.

The term ‘responsive’ is important here. It acknowledges that ‘culturally responsive practice’ requires a commitment to an ever unfolding process of learning. Each person will see and experience the world through their own cultural lens, and what makes up that cultural lens is going to be different for each individual. So the process is always evolving, and our abilities to remain curious and consider people’s needs from their unique cultural perspective, which itself can change and grow, is the key.

What are the parallels between person centred and culturally responsive practices?

**Table 1:** Parallels between person centeredness and cultural responsiveness   
at the individual level:

| Person-centred | Culturally responsive |
| --- | --- |
| Understand self | Understand self in the context of culture |
| Understand personal lens | Understand different, culturally diverse lenses |
| Understand personal values, beliefs and their impact | Understand personal values &beliefs in the context of culture  Understand impact of culture on the ‘making of’ personal values and beliefs |
| Explore the impact of conscious and unconscious prejudice | Accept existence of conscious and unconscious prejudices and continually challenge oneself and others |

Table 1 outlines some of the important parallels between practices that are ‘person centred’ and ‘culturally responsive’. The common link is the need to start with understanding ‘self’. This requires an honest curiosity about what our own beliefs and values are i.e. getting to know our own cultural lens. From there we can begin to appreciate the impact of factors such as how we’ve been raised, where we live, who we spend time with, where we’ve been to school or work, and our personality on how we think and act in the world, what we value, and how these can change over time. The next step is to gain awareness of how our views and beliefs are not necessarily shared by other people. We do not all see the world the same way even if we appear to have similar backgrounds.

When working with people from CALD backgrounds with disability we are likely to encounter a wide range of views and beliefs that do not necessarily match our own. Each person will be different. Person centred culturally responsive practice requires us to be aware of and respond to this, and appreciate the role culture plays in shaping each of us, often unconsciously. The starting point is always understanding ourselves. We can then approach each person aware of how our own culturally derived perspectives and preferences might influence how we see the other person, and, therefore, interpret, define and respond to their needs.

Individuals, professions and organisations all have cultures, and each are important to acknowledge and understand. Doing this enables us to appreciate how culture influences the way the world is structured, what societies value, and how individuals behave. If this remains unconscious we are not able to see and appreciate the differences that are important to living our lives in ways we value and enjoy.

It is the combination of being able to focus on each person, who is the product of their unique cultural experiences and views, and understanding how our own cultural perspectives impact our ability to do this, that is the strength of person centred cultural responsive practice. Understanding that culture is not uniform, perspectives are deeply personal, and our way of seeing the world is just that, our way, and may not be the same as another person’s, is central to being able to work with this practice.

A culturally responsive person centred organisation

Figure 1: Culturally responsive person centred organisation: A model

Three key elements are required for building a culturally responsive person centred organisation. These include:

* Person is at the centre
* Ways of working
* Foundation principles

The **person is at the centre** of everything we do: Each of us is the expert in our own lives. When working alongside a person from CALD background with disability we need to start from a position of respect for their cultural world view and resist applying our own.

The person at the centre influences all of our **ways of working.** A culturally responsive person centred organisation critically reflects on every aspect of how it does its work and is committed to effecting change throughout the whole organisation. It applies a **critical reflective lens** to the following three areas:

* **organisational practices and systems:** how does our organisational culture, governance, leadership and workforce influence impact on how we do our work?
* **individual practices:** becoming aware of ‘self’ and the role of culture in our own and the lives of persons from CALD backgrounds. How do we support our workers to develop cultural self-awareness and are able to apply it when work alongside a person from CALD backgrounds with disability.
* **community engagement:** focuses on how we connect, engage and network with the people we support, their families, and communities.
* These areas of our work are not mutually exclusive but overlap, symbolising the connections and relationships between them. For example, it is hard to separate when critically reflecting on organisational values, the influence our own personal values have on organisational practice.

You will note that these three areas represented in the diagram align with the areas we have focused on in this workbook series. The critical questions contained in them will facilitate discussion and provide you with a starting point to explore your journey towards a culturally responsive person centred organisation.

Finally, a culturally responsive person centred organisation is founded on the **principles of human rights, a social model of disability, social justice, cultural competence and person centred practice**. These underpin a culturally responsive person centred organisation.

**Workbook Exercise:**

Choose one of the topics you have already completed (eg Workbook 2.6 – Valuing bilingual workers). How would you apply the foundation principles outlined in 2.3 above to this area of work?

* Human rights Social model of disability
* Social justice
* Person centred practice
* **Cultural competence**  **Getting started:**

The starting point for building a culturally competent person centred organisation is a whole of organisation commitment to effecting change at all levels of the organisation and applying a process to guide and support that change.

“(We need to) …stop creating cultures of “them” and “us”.  Before we – and our organizations - can become advocates or agents of change we must first see ourselves as change targets. Starting with oneself can be seen not only as a precondition for authenticity but also as one of the strongest quality indicators of person-centred work. As Smull, Bourne and Sanderson (2009) note using a small set of person-centred value based skills and tools throughout all levels will drive change throughout the whole system.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Step 1:** Undertake an audit of every aspect of your organisation’s practices to critically evaluate your current business and to develop a systemic process for guiding and oversighting cultural change. A whole of organisation audit should:

1. Determine the degree to which your organisation is effectively responding to each person it supports as well as the CALD communities it works alongside.
2. Establish partnerships that involve the persons from CALD backgrounds with disability you support, their families, and communities in a meaningful way.
3. Identify the skills, training and resources needed to build the organisation’s culturally responsive person centred practice.
4. Plan strategically for the systematic incorporation of cornerstone principles and values across all policy, structures and practices.
5. Review policies and work practices to identify the gaps and barriers in the provision and delivery of services and programs to people from CALD backgrounds with disability.
6. Identify strategies to redress the gaps and prioritise them in accordance with your organisation’s resources.
7. Identify the resources (human, time, physical, financial) and skills needed to implement the strategies by the organisation.

**Step 2: Build audit outcomes into strategic plan**

Culturally responsive person centred practice needs to be incorporated into every aspect of an organisation’s operations, policies and programs. Building the audit outcomes into the strategic plan increases the likelihood of its implementation and effecting organisational change at organisational cultural level.

**Step 3: Develop a culturally responsive person centred workforce**

* Actively recruit for culturally responsive person centred workers
* Build the requirement to work in cultural responsive person centred ways into job advertisements, job descriptions and performance appraisals
* Actively recruit for bilingual/bicultural skills and for people from diverse backgrounds
* Diversify your recruitment strategies
* Build reflective practice into team meetings and professional development opportunities
* Encourage staff to explore the impact of their personal values on their work practice
* Identify skills development and training needs of all workers regarding culturally responsive person centred practice and develop a skills development plan of action.

**Workbook Exercise:**

Organisational culture is influenced by the values, leadership and the people of an organisation. How will you engage people at all levels of the organisation (persons with CALD backgrounds with disability, their families, CALD communities, workers, governance board, leaders?)

What are three barriers and three enablers of culturally responsive person centred practice in your organisation?

How do you know that these are enablers/inhibitors?

What changes can you or your organisation make now to strengthen the enablers?

What changes can you or your organisation make now to minimise the inhibitors?

Who will be responsible for making sure these changes happen?

Reflection/ Comments:

Conclusion

Building a cultural competent person centred organisation requires embracing our own and the many other diverse ways of seeing, being in, and understanding the world. We bring our values, often unconsciously, to the work we do. Knowing this is the important starting point for successfully moving towards a more inclusive and respectful practice with the people we support.

Being curious about what makes us who we each are, and having a willingness to take the time to explore that, will enable us to get to know both ourselves and our clients better. We are then in a much better position to understand and respond to their core needs in ways that make sense to them, and in ways our clients value.

This is a continuous process that will enrich our work the more we step into it. It takes time to find comfort with this way of working and requires our patience. Above all, person centred culturally responsive practice is about recognising that we all have different ways of being in the world, that each person’s point of view deserves equal respect and consideration, and that we must understand ourselves before we can meaningfully identify and assist others with their needs.

Be prepared to be challenged and enjoy the learning along the way.

**Reflection:  
  
What are some of the take away messages from this workbook? Are there things you disagree with? Was there something that surprised you?**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)