



**Information for families and  
early childhood educators**

## **Component 1**

### **Creating a sense of community**

**> Welcoming cultural diversity**

### **Acknowledgement:**

KidsMatter Australian Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative has been developed in collaboration with *beyondblue*, the Australian Psychological Society, Early Childhood Australia and with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and *beyondblue*.

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While the resources are available freely for these purposes, to realise the full potential of KidsMatter Early Childhood, it is recommended that the resources be used with the appropriate training and support under the KidsMatter Initiative.

## Welcoming cultural diversity

- ▶ Diversity and children's mental health .....
- ▶ Why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing .....
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## About this resource: Information for families and educators

Contained in this booklet are information sheets about *KidsMatter Early Childhood Component 1: Creating a sense of community* and why this is important for children's mental health. These may be useful for a range of different purposes including sharing with families, educators and other interested people involved with your service. You can distribute these through your newsletter, emails, as handouts or as a display in your service.

The resource sheets contained in this booklet provide information about what families and educators can do to support children from culturally diverse backgrounds. There is also a resource sheet that includes links to websites, downloadable material and useful documents that have been chosen for their quality and practical relevance.

The information sheets in this booklet provide:

- ▶ an introduction to the topic
- ▶ further information for interested families and educators
- ▶ suggestions for families and educators
- ▶ where to go for further information and selected references.

You can photocopy sheets from this book, or download separate PDF versions of each sheet from the KidsMatter website: [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au).



## Diversity and children's mental health

Australia is home to people from many different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, bringing richness to our community.

This means that children today will form friendships, learn with and interact with people from many cultures different to their own. When children grow up to understand, appreciate and respect the cultural, racial and ethnic diversity around them, this builds a positive and accepting community. A community such as this supports children to develop skills and attitudes that will assist them in their relationships and contribute to their social and emotional wellbeing.

By working together, families and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services can create supportive environments for children from majority and minority racial and ethnic groups. This includes understanding ways to promote positive attitudes, counter negative attitudes and respond to racism if it occurs. Supportive environments like these help children from all cultural backgrounds to understand, respect and appreciate cultural differences. When adults are open and accepting, children learn to respect diversity and embrace cultural differences.

**Everybody needs to feel accepted, respected and included. Feeling welcome and at home is important for positive mental health.**



## Cultural, racial and ethnic diversity and children's mental health

Culture can mean many things and is not necessarily linked to a person's racial or ethnic background. Together, these are some of the things that shape the way children see themselves and what they think is important. Because of the diverse nature of Australia's population, many children can belong to more than one cultural, racial or ethnic group or community. This sometimes means children need to figure out how they fit in across different contexts.

Developing a sense of belonging within multiple communities can be challenging for children as there can be different expectations and priorities. However, when a child feels their family, cultural background and individual uniqueness are respected and valued, their sense of identity, belonging and self-esteem is strengthened. Children who feel respected are more likely to participate in social experiences and form strong relationships in their early childhood community.

When children who are not from the majority culture experience racism and prejudice, this can impact on their social and emotional wellbeing, learning and relationships. Young children are particularly vulnerable to this.

Helping all children understand difference encourages them to feel good about who they are, understand where they fit into the world and appreciate diversity in others. This helps children to feel like they belong and supports their mental health and wellbeing.

Understanding diversity, being from a minority culture or part of more than one culture can be complicated at times. Children and families can be faced with different values, expectations and choices. Sometimes it can be difficult for children and families to feel like they belong or know where to turn for support.



**Attitudes and behaviours towards people who are different to oneself are learnt in early childhood (Priest et al., 2012).**

### Things families can do to help children respect diversity

- ▶ Help your child to develop a strong cultural identity and sense of belonging by telling them stories that share a sense of pride in your culture.
- ▶ Talk to your child about how people are the same, as well as the differences between them. Children are curious and open to hearing and learning about new things.
- ▶ Seek support and advice from people you trust when required. Talking with relatives and friends who understand your values can help you think through the different problems you might face as a parent.
- ▶ You can contact your child's ECEC service if you have any questions about your child or their development. If it is possible, ask your ECEC service how you can become involved at the service.



## Things educators can do to promote respect for diversity

- ▶ Provide opportunities for children to listen to people from a range of backgrounds and their perspectives.
- ▶ Respect individual differences and acknowledge that membership of a particular group does not mean everyone from that group has the same values, beliefs, rituals and needs.
- ▶ Promote and model inclusive behaviour, for example having notices available in a number of relevant languages for families and encouraging everyone to contribute their skills and interests to the service.
- ▶ Encourage opportunities for families and educators to develop social connections with each other. For example, notice their strengths and the ways they contribute to the service.
- ▶ Expand children's awareness of difference through social events, books, songs or play materials.
- ▶ Research biographical stories of local people and people from around the world and introduce who they are to children (bring the world to the children!).
- ▶ When families speak more than one language, learn keywords in their home language.
- ▶ Utilise the skills of educators who speak multiple languages
- ▶ Link families with appropriate local services to provide support and assistance.



## Things families and educators can both do to promote respect for diversity

- ▶ Encourage children to recognise and appreciate people for the things that make them unique and special.
- ▶ Support children to understand that just because somebody looks or sounds different, or does things in a slightly different way doesn't mean that this person is any less worthy of respect or friendship.
- ▶ Be accepting of differences yourself. Encourage children to view differences as something that makes a person interesting and unique.
- ▶ Support all children to develop the skills necessary to form positive friendships regardless of differences in practices, languages and ethnic backgrounds.



Talking about difference with children: A few tips

**Be prepared to discuss it anytime** because stereotypes are everywhere.

**Focus on empathy** and find ways to understand other perspectives.

**Make it about the child** and how they would want to be treated.

**Be a role model** because children are always watching!

From [www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-playground/](http://www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-playground/).



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# Why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing

## Contents

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**Migration has contributed to the richness in diversity of cultures, ethnicities and races in Australia.**



## Diversity in Australia

Our community in Australia is diverse. Census figures now show that 27% of the resident Australian population were born overseas (ABS, 2011). In addition, 20% of Australians have at least one parent who was born overseas (ABS, 2011), and the number of languages spoken at home by Australians is more than 400 (ABS, 2009). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Australia therefore have contact with families from many different cultural backgrounds.

Humans are cultural beings. We learn to communicate and understand our world through the context of our languages, traditions, behaviours, beliefs and values. Our cultural experiences and values shape the way we see ourselves and what we think is important. When individuals are part of a cultural group, we learn the ways of that culture (e.g., behaviour and beliefs), which enable us to feel like we belong to our community. Cultural perspectives also influence how we parent, how we understand children, how we help them grow up and how we teach them new skills.



Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2011). *Reflecting a nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013* (No. 2071.0). Canberra: Author.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2009). *Yearbook Australia, 2009–10: Characteristics of the population* (No. 1301.0). Canberra: Author.

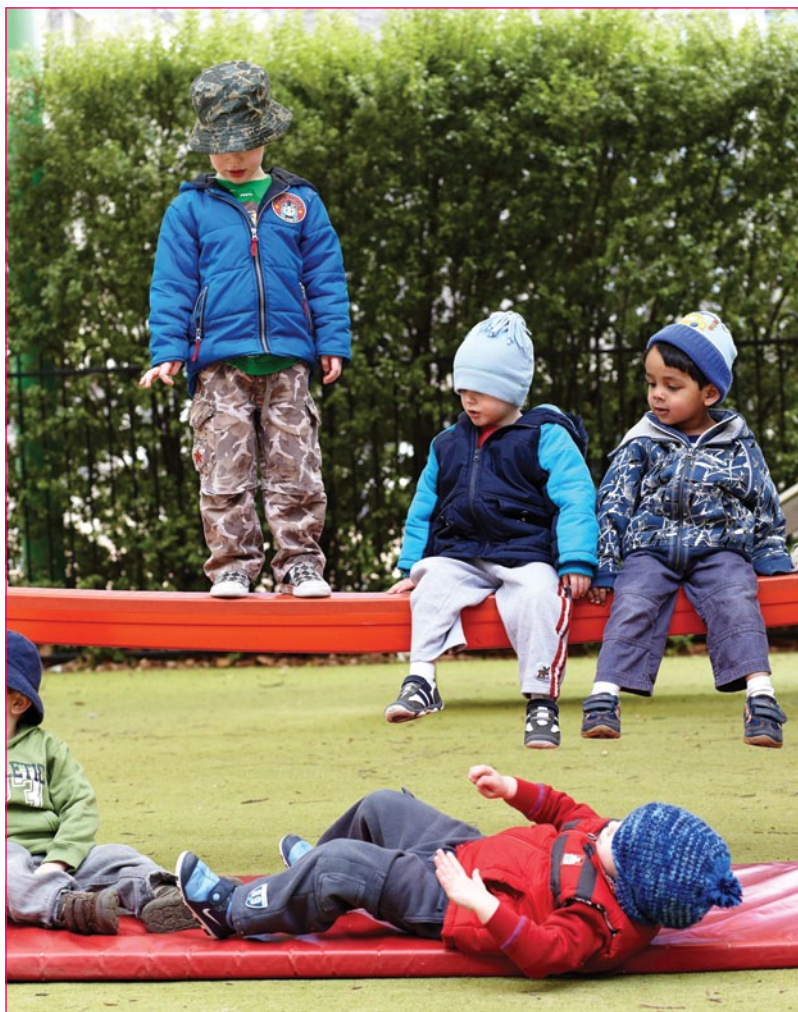
## What is cultural diversity?

Cultural diversity refers to people who identify with particular groups based on their birthplace, country of origin, ethnicity, language, values, beliefs or world views. This does not mean that everyone from a particular cultural group will hold exactly the same values or do things in the same way. Showing support for cultural diversity involves talking with people to build relationships, find out how best to include them and respect their cultural needs. Valuing and respecting diversity encourages people to see differences among individuals and groups as common and positive.

## Diversity and belonging

Respect for diversity is related to people's sense of belonging. When diversity is valued and respected people are more likely to develop a sense of belonging to their community and social connections to others. People who have supportive and positive relationships in their life (e.g., people to talk to, trust and depend on) are less likely to experience feelings of depression and anxiety compared to those who have fewer social connections. Feeling cared about and respected is a protective factor for mental health and wellbeing. A sense of belonging to a community and being socially connected to others acts as a buffer to stress when people are experiencing difficulties.

Children's connection to their culture develops through their experiences. In particular, warm and secure emotional connections with the adults who care for them help children connect with their cultural identity. Having a strong sense of their own cultural history and the traditions associated with it helps children build a positive cultural identity for themselves. This also supports children's sense of belonging and, by extension, their mental health and wellbeing.



**Belonging is a fundamental human need that relates to feelings of being valued, accepted, respected and cared about by others.**

## How does diversity influence children's mental health?

Babies and young children learn and develop through their early experiences and relationships. As children get older they begin to develop a sense of who they are and where they belong. For example, when children develop positive relationships with other children and educators, it helps them feel they belong to their ECEC service. This early learning about themselves and others lays the foundation for their future health and wellbeing.

Early childhood is also the time when children first become aware of differences among people and start to form opinions and attitudes about these differences (e.g., understanding the difference between a family member and a stranger or knowing the difference between males and females). This awareness also means young children are sensitive to experiences of racism and prejudice. This can impact on their social and emotional wellbeing, their learning and their social relationships.

Children's ideas about, and responses to, diversity are influenced by their age as well as what they see and hear around them. Young children are naturally curious about differences and one of the ways they make sense of their world is to sort things into different categories and focus on one thing at a time (e.g., whether another child has the same or different skin colour to them). Children do this as a way to organise their experiences. Talking with children about differences allows them to feel good about who they are and appreciate diversity in themselves and others.

## Challenges that may affect children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds

Children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds may face a range of challenges as they find their way in the broader Australian society. Some of the common challenges are described below.

### Migration and resettlement

People migrate from one country, region or place and settle in another for many reasons. Individuals may migrate because they fear they will be harmed or discriminated against based on factors such as race, religion, or political opinion; they might voluntarily leave their country of origin to live in another country; or they might leave their country and ask to be recognised as a refugee to be protected.

Settling in a new country or community can be complicated. Families need to find housing, employment, an ECEC service, develop social networks and make connections with agencies. It is important that people who have migrated have access to support to help them settle into their new community. Not knowing how things work in the new community can make resettling more challenging and stressful. Family, friends and others who would normally provide support may have been left behind in the move. There can be feelings of loneliness, isolation or worry for those left behind. These difficulties affect all members of a family.

### Language and communication

Language can sometimes be a major barrier for families new to Australia. Difficulties communicating in English can cause a lot of challenges for families trying to find their way in their new community. Language barriers can undermine people's confidence, make everyday life harder and make it harder to form social connections. Language barriers can also make communication with ECEC services more difficult for parents and carers. Families benefit from being able to communicate in the language they are most comfortable with. If they want to, families can also be supported to develop their English language skills.

When the experiences, practices and beliefs of families from different cultural backgrounds are not recognised or valued, it can also lead to miscommunication or misunderstandings. For example, in some cultures it is fine for people to directly decline an invitation or say that they disagree with someone; but in other cultures this is not polite and people prefer to say nothing rather than to say 'no'. If these differences are not understood by both people, it can lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings on both sides.



**Talking about differences in everyday ways demonstrates respect, values individual characteristics and helps build an inclusive environment.**

## Effects of trauma

Migration prompted by particularly stressful experiences, as is often the case for refugees, can lead to additional challenges for resettlement and wellbeing. Traumatic experiences may have occurred through being exposed to violence, war or torture. Children and families may have lived under threat and in fear; they may have witnessed the deaths of relatives or friends; or experienced hardship and danger when coming to Australia. Some have received harsh treatment in immigration detention on their arrival here. Refugees may continue to have strong feelings of fear, as well as shame and guilt about past events.

These kinds of events are highly stressful and can still affect a person long after they have passed. Everyone's experience of and reaction to trauma is different, including young children. Some children experience an increase in fear and anxiety, particularly when they are away from their families or familiar surroundings. Other children sometimes re-experience the trauma, perhaps through bad dreams or nightmares. Some children also experience difficulty trusting and connecting with other people, making it difficult for them to form relationships with other adults or with their peers. Feelings of pain and anger can also be seen in the behaviour of some children who have been traumatised, in the form of tantrums, aggression or high levels of emotional reactivity (e.g., becoming very upset quite easily). Traumatized children can also have difficulty learning new skills and their development can be affected. Children may need support to understand and deal with these difficulties because they are often hard for them to talk about or describe.

## Discrimination and racism

Sometimes people may resort to harmful words and behave negatively toward others as a way of managing their fears and lack of understanding about differences. This is called discrimination. Discrimination impacts negatively on individuals and entire communities. Being subject to discrimination can be a difficulty faced by many people from diverse backgrounds. This can be especially an issue for minority groups, such as those who look different from the majority of a population. Both direct discrimination (e.g., name calling and bullying) and indirect discrimination (e.g., ignoring or excluding others from important events) can leave people feeling shut out and powerless. This can then have a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing of both children and adults.

The effects of racism and discrimination make life more difficult for families, and create undue stress and social disadvantage. Racism increases children's sense of difference and vulnerability by devaluing them and their culture and making them feel unwelcome. Valuing diversity and being inclusive also helps promote respectful relationships and reduces the likelihood of discrimination and isolation.



## Parenting across cultures

Parenting across and 'between' cultures can be sometimes be stressful. There are many differences in parenting practices between cultures, including (but not limited to) the ways children are shown affection, attitudes towards discipline and how much emphasis is placed on family responsibility compared with promoting children's independence. Some cultural practices can have very strict codes of behaviour according to a child's age or gender. Families might also be concerned about children losing their cultural identity through contact with children with different cultural backgrounds, attending ECEC services with attitudes different to theirs or through exposure to the media.

Belonging to more than one cultural group can sometimes be challenging for children too. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds often find differences in the values and expectations of them at home and at the ECEC service they attend. Sometimes this means they feel confused about what is expected of them at both places. At other times it can mean that they are faced with difficult choices when the expectations of others do not meet theirs.

One way of supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds at the ECEC service is for families and educators to discuss possible differences in parenting. If this doesn't happen, cultural differences in parenting practices can lead to tension or misunderstandings between families and educators, and confusion for children. Educators can support children better when they respect and understand that they come from diverse backgrounds and have different cultural identities (including specific expectations of behaviour and communication). Also, under these circumstances, children and their families feel more comfortable in and valued by their ECEC service.

## Developing relationships

Relationships help people understand each other and to work together. Developing relationships across cultures requires good communication and flexibility to support children's social and emotional wellbeing. When a family and an ECEC service are developing a new relationship, it can help to remember that sometimes people will understand things from a perspective that is different to your own.

Having a child attend an ECEC service may be a new experience for some families, as is the idea that families and educators can work together to support children's development and wellbeing. Developing a relationship with their child's ECEC service benefits families in many ways. For example, it can make it easier for a family to feel more comfortable about approaching educators and sharing important information and insights about their children, as well as the hopes or concerns they might hold for them. Positive relationships between families and educators also convey respect for diversity and foster children's social and emotional wellbeing.

**Respecting diverse cultural backgrounds helps individuals feel valued within their community.**

When families develop connections and relationships with others, this can help them through challenging times. This helps build feelings of belonging within communities and supports everyone's mental health and wellbeing.



## The role of early childhood education and care services

The experiences of children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds are shaped by their encounters with Australian society, and have significant effects on their sense of inclusion and engagement within the wider community. ECEC services can play a central role in supporting children with diverse cultural backgrounds and their families by promoting and implementing inclusive practices and supporting them to build strong connections to community support during times of transition.

When educators are familiar with each family's particular circumstances, ECEC services are more able to meet the learning, social and wellbeing needs of children and their families. By understanding the needs and interests of children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds and building relationships of trust and understanding with parents and carers, ECEC services can make a positive difference to children's mental health and wellbeing. It can also help to address any difficulties or discrimination that may occur in an early childhood setting.

ECEC services can also support children and families from diverse backgrounds by promoting understanding of and mutual respect for diversity. Children benefit when ECEC services do this because it creates an inclusive environment where everyone can participate and feel connected. A strong sense of belonging helps children understand and appreciate differences in themselves and others, which ultimately benefits their mental health and wellbeing.

Finally, ECEC services can also help families to feel connected and develop a sense of belonging by providing them with opportunities to make contact with other families at the service. When this takes place, there are many benefits to children's and families' mental health and wellbeing, such as developing empathy and building positive relationships with others.

**ECEC services can play a critical role in supporting and engaging children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds.**



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**APS** Australian Psychological Society

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## Suggestions for families

Parenting across cultures can sometimes be challenging, especially when the values and expectations of one culture are different to those from another. This can make it difficult for families to feel a sense of belonging to any community. However, when parents and carers find a way of parenting that feels right for them, it helps the whole family to develop a cultural identity and a sense of belonging. This is particularly important for children, because a sense of belonging and a strong cultural identity supports their mental health and wellbeing. There are lots of things that can help families to develop a sense of belonging, including:

### Identifying your own culture

Developing a sense of cultural identity supports the development of your child's identity and self-esteem, as well as their feeling of belonging to their community. These are all protective factors for mental health and wellbeing in early childhood. Children's cultural identity develops through language, storytelling, relationships, and traditions and routines. You can help your children to connect with their heritage by sharing cultural stories and practices.

### Getting to know your child's ECEC service

Becoming involved in your child's ECEC service is a great way to develop connections and a sense of belonging to your community. There are often opportunities to participate in activities at the ECEC service that will help you to meet educators and other families. Forming relationships with educators at the ECEC service can also help your family to feel like you belong. Having a good relationship with educators allows you to ask them questions about the service and your child's experiences there and to share your cultural background. When families and educators develop relationships, they are more able to understand each other's perspective, talk through concerns and support children together.

### Building social networks

Friendships and social networks are important both for children and their families, because they help you to feel part of the community. Making connections with other families can help you feel welcome and that you belong. You might build connections across many different social and cultural groups. Your children's ECEC service is often a great meeting point for parents and carers that can lead to long-term friendships.

**Developing a sense of cultural identity supports the development of your child's identity and self-esteem**



### Seek support

Getting help at times of stress is important for everyone. It might be useful to have assistance in your own language when trying to manage complex issues. Sometimes it can take time to find the right person or organisation to help you and your family. Help and support is available in many places, like government agencies (e.g., parenting and family support services), community organisations (e.g., neighbourhood centres and ECEC services) and English language programs.

### Remember that it takes time to adjust

Adjusting to a new life after migration can have lots of challenges for families and children. Adults and children often need different things to help them adjust to their new community. For example, young children often need extra time and support to help them adjust to all of the changes. In this case, strong relationships and secure, caring environments at home and at an ECEC service can help to provide a sense of stability and belonging. Adults can sometimes need support themselves to help their children adjust after migration. Finding people who understand what your family is experiencing and who can support you through those changes is really important. Your ECEC service is one place that might be able to assist.

**... strong relationships and secure, caring environments at home and at an ECEC service can help to provide a sense of stability and belonging.**





## Suggestions for educators

Culture and the context of family are central to children's sense of identity, belonging and success in lifelong learning. Educators have a very significant role to play in supporting children and families from culturally diverse backgrounds. When educators are welcoming and approachable, accepting of difference and able to respect multiple ways of being, it helps children and their families to build a sense of belonging and trust. There are many ways ECEC services can support the mental health and wellbeing of children from culturally diverse backgrounds. Some ideas that might assist educators to support culturally diverse families include:

### Get to know families at your ECEC service

Every family is different. Getting to know all of the families at your ECEC service means there is less chance of assumptions being made about backgrounds, cultures or practices. Asking families about their lives and culture is the best way to get to know them and what is important to them. When educators understand the experiences of families and their cultures, they are better able to support children with their development and learning.

### Be open to different types of families

Families from culturally diverse backgrounds can also be unique in their composition. Families can be small or large, may or may not be biologically related and may include several generations. When educators are able to include all families, it helps families to feel more welcome in the ECEC service.

### Work to develop positive relationships with families

Relationships help people understand each other and work together. Coming to an ECEC service might be a new experience for some families, so developing positive relationships can help build a sense of belonging and inclusion. A positive relationship with an ECEC service also means a family is likely to be more comfortable about approaching educators. Families are an important source of information and insight about their children and the hopes or concerns they might hold for them. Educators can ask families what is important to them and invite them to participate in the ECEC service. An orientation session can assist new families develop positive relationships with their ECEC service. Positive relationships support families, convey respect for diversity and foster children's social and emotional wellbeing.

### Be thoughtful about communication

When spoken or written English is a barrier, interpreters or translated material can help educators and families communicate with one another. When working face to face with interpreters, always remember to talk to the family not to the interpreter. Ask questions to ensure families understand what has been said. It can be helpful to provide additional time to listen to families and allow them to ask questions too. Respect for diversity is also communicated by the environment and resources at an ECEC service; so it is helpful to be mindful of the messages your environment sends about diversity.

### Mutual respect for diversity

Educators can encourage a positive environment by inviting diversity into the service. For example, providing a range of opportunities for children and their families to share their personal stories creates an atmosphere of cultural respect and acknowledgement of diversity. Mutual respect across cultures involves being open to different ideas and approaches and appreciating the enrichment this provides. When educators are aware of cultural differences in parenting, sensitive to the issues faced by families and conscious of power differences, this supports good relationships with families.

**When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners.<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>(Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 13).

## Create community connections

Being safe and feeling safe can take time to achieve. Some families may have experienced significant trauma and disruption in the process of moving to or settling in Australia. These experiences can have ongoing effects on families. It can be helpful for families to have opportunities to talk about their experiences and to receive sensitive support when required. Families are better able to support their children when they are informed about and are connected to their community (e.g., support services and social networks). Specialist services are available in different states to provide assistance to families from culturally diverse backgrounds.

## Counter racism and discrimination

Race-based discrimination is any behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair disadvantage for minority racial/ethnic/cultural groups and privilege majority groups. It can occur at both individual and organisational levels. Racism can be countered by promoting positive attitudes and practices regarding diversity among individuals and organisations. This includes identifying and challenging the kinds of practices that disadvantage or discriminate against those of different racial or cultural backgrounds and promoting inclusive practices in their place.

Steps educators and ECEC services can take to support families who have experienced racism include:

- ▶ engaging in thoughtful conversations
- ▶ demonstrating empathy and support
- ▶ challenging prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour
- ▶ reviewing policies and practices to promote inclusion
- ▶ increasing knowledge of accurate information to counter or dispel false beliefs regarding minority groups
- ▶ providing information about support services.



**Families are better able to support their children when they are informed about and are connected to their community ...**

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## Where can I go for further information?

**beyondblue** is a national, independent, non-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance-use disorders in Australia. Their mission is to provide a national focus and community leadership to increase the capacity of the broader Australian community to prevent depression and respond effectively. Information on mental health topics is available at [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) in the 'Get information' tab. **beyondblue** has partnered with **Multicultural Mental Health Australia** to provide information about depression in a number of languages. This information has been translated by accredited translators with input from mental health professionals and consumers. See [www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link\\_id=102](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=102).

**The Australian Psychological Society** is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to people's lives, through improving their health and wellbeing and increasing scientific knowledge. Tip sheets on a range of topics related to diversity and children's mental health are available at [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au). See *Tip Sheets in the Publications and Products* tab for details. Examples of tip sheets that are relevant include 'Moving beyond racism' and 'Talking with children about violence and injustice'.

**The Inclusion and Professional Support Program** provides high-quality professional development and inclusion support to Australian Government-approved childcare service providers, regardless of geographic location.

**Inclusion Support** helps childcare services to include children with additional needs, especially: children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including children from a refugee or humanitarian intervention background, children with ongoing high support needs, including children with a disability and Indigenous children.

**Professional Support** provides professional development and support to providers to enable them to build the skills of their staff to improve the quality of care provided. This includes building the skills and knowledge of educators, supporting the implementation of the *National Quality Framework* and providing professional development. Information is available at [www.deewr.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program](http://www.deewr.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program).

**The Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities** provides support and information for children and people with disabilities and their families from culturally diverse communities. The organisation provides a lot of information and resources in many different languages. For more information see [www.adec.org.au](http://www.adec.org.au).

**The Australian Childhood Foundation** offers parenting information in a range of community languages. Both text and audio versions are available from [www.kidscount.com.au](http://www.kidscount.com.au).

**Foundation House** develops publications and resources to enhance the understanding of the needs of people from refugee backgrounds among health and other professionals, government and the wider community. For more information see [www.foundationhouse.org.au](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au).

**The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship** provides information about settling in Australia. *Beginning a life in Australia* is a comprehensive booklet that explains the types of settlement services available. It is available for each state and territory in 24 community languages. Available from [www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/beginning-life/index.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/beginning-life/index.htm).

**The Australian Human Rights Commission** (formerly known as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) is an independent statutory organisation and reports to the Federal Parliament through the Attorney-General. It aims to promote and protect human rights and responsibilities in Australia that include education and public awareness, discrimination and human rights complaints, human rights compliance and policy and legislative development. See [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au).



**Charles Sturt University** in partnership with the **Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE)** have developed a suite of resources for early childhood educators to build capacity in working with Indigenous families and remote communities. Links to these resources are available at [www.csu.edu.au/special/teach-ec/RESOURCES/html/Perspective.html](http://www.csu.edu.au/special/teach-ec/RESOURCES/html/Perspective.html).

**The Diversity in Programming** factsheet provides information regarding the benefits of creating culturally inclusive environments and outlines strategies for creating these. To access the factsheet see [nac.accecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/factsheet4.pdf](http://nac.accecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/factsheet4.pdf).

**The Family Worker Training and Development Programme** trains professionals to enhance their work with families. For information on cultural diversity see [www.fwtdp.org.au/index.php/resources/diversity-in-practice](http://www.fwtdp.org.au/index.php/resources/diversity-in-practice).

**Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT)** is a network of agencies in each state of Australia that provide services and resources for survivors of trauma and torture and their families. The contact information for the service centres in each state can be found on the website [www.fasstt.org.au](http://www.fasstt.org.au).

**The Mental Health in Multicultural Australia Project (MHIMA)** project is focused on providing mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention for individuals and communities with culturally diverse backgrounds. It supports professionals and mental health services to respond effectively to communities and individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds living with mental health problems. See [www.mmha.org.au/](http://www.mmha.org.au/) for more information.

**The Marymead Child and Family Centre** in association with the **University of Canberra** have developed a program **Parenting Between Cultures (Bending like a river)** that aims to strengthen the ability of culturally and linguistically diverse families to parent confidently in the Australian context.

The program focuses on identifying strengths and solutions and aims to help address concerns at an early age. Links to these resources are available at [www.marymead.org.au/publications](http://www.marymead.org.au/publications) and click on the research tab.

**The NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre** has produced an excellent multilingual resource on children's mental health called: *Healthy kids: A parent's guide*. This resource is available in several languages, both in print and as audio files, from [www.chw.edu.au/healthykids](http://www.chw.edu.au/healthykids).

**The Immigration Museum, Victoria** has extensive information to assist adults develop children's understanding of culture, diversity, belonging and identity. There are also a number of links to specific resources for educators. See [www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-playground/](http://www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-playground/) for more information.

## The following articles and books also contain further information on supporting children from culturally diverse backgrounds and their families:

- ▶ Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008). *Diversity in early care and education; honouring differences*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- ▶ Priest, N., Walton, J., White, F., Kowal, E., Baker, A., & Paradies, Y. (2012). *Understanding the complexities of ethnic-racial socialization processes for both minority and majority groups: A 30-year review*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- ▶ Small, M. S. (2001). *Kids: How biology and culture shape the way we raise our children*. New York: Doubleday.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au). The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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