

FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA POSITION:

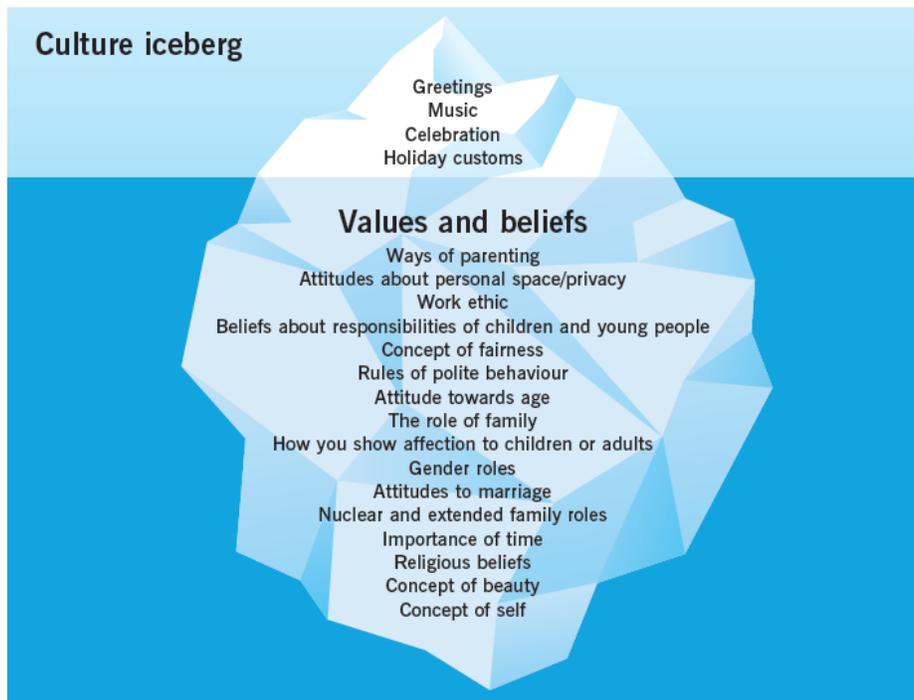
Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse states in Australia with almost 43.6% of its total population having either been born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas. Victorian Research in 2012 on children living in Out-of-Home Care showed that 13% are from Culturally and Linguistically 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 CALD children in care should be supported to maintain links with their culture, religion and language. This in turn will foster a more positive sense of self, identity and pride of their heritage.

All members of the Care Team should be familiar with the child or young person’s cultural needs, and establish a clear strategy to meet these.

FEATURES OF CULTURE: THE ICEBERG METAPHOR

Culture is very similar to an iceberg. Only about one-eighth of an iceberg is visible above the water. The rest is below. It has some aspects that are visible ie can be seen, heard, touched and felt, and many others that can only be suspected, guessed or learned as understanding of the culture grows. Like an iceberg, the visible part of culture is only a small part of a much larger whole.



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WHAT IS CULTURAL AWARENESS?

Cultural Awareness is when:

- We understand how our cultural background influences our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours
- We understand our feelings, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards people from the child/young person's cultural or religious background
- We are aware of stereotypes and preconceptions that we have about people from the child/young person's cultural/religious background and address these biases
- We respect the cultural, linguistic and religious heritage of the child/young person
- We understand the unique needs of the child/young person in relation to his/her cultural, linguistic and/or religious heritage
- We recognise that the child/young person may be experiencing cultural confusion, conflict and/or change, and may require ongoing support
- We understand that the child/young person may be exposed to discrimination, prejudice or racism by virtue of being placed in a non-CALD family
(NSW DOCS Practice Guide)

MAINTAINING CULTURE

Carers involved in a cross-cultural placement are not expected to know everything about a child's culture. However, the following strategies provide ways of supporting children in such placements:

- Establish regular contact with people of other cultural backgrounds and encourage contact for the child
- Learn about the child/young person's cultural, linguistic, religious background and cultural community, and support the child/young person to do the same
- Talk with and discuss information about the child/young person's family history, and cultural and religious heritage: this is very important for children in care who, through going into care, lose the 'sources' of their cultural identity ie parents, extended family, cultural communities.
- Purchase books, toys and other entertainment material: provides a source of cultural information and role models.
- Include traditions and celebrations in your lives: keeps the child connected to their cultural community and gives a sense of belonging.
- Opportunities for the child (and the carer's family) to learn their birth language: language strongly informs cultural identity and also enables the child or young person to communicate and stay connected to the cultural community and birth family. Community language classes are just one way of doing this.
- Seek services and supports in the community: there may be ethnic specific services that can provide specialised care or service providers that specialise in migrant and refugee issues.

- Involve religious leaders in the life of the child: where the carer's family is not familiar with the child's religion, it will be important to involve people who can provide guidance. Make contact with the relevant church, temple or mosque in your area.
- Recognise and support the role of birth parents and families: while birth families may not be able to provide an ongoing safe environment for the child at the moment, there is still a significant role they may be able to play in cultural maintenance, whether it be direct contact with the child or indirectly through consultation with the carer or caseworker.

(Adapted from work by Elizabeth Vonk in Cultural Competence for Trans-racial Adoptive Parents 2001)

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION FOR CARERS IN CROSS-CULTURAL PLACEMENTS

- **The child or young person:** be curious, and ask the child/young person about their needs
- **Child's caseworker and your carer support caseworker:** caseworkers have access to information about services available in the area and may also be able to assist linking you with those. Their role in case management also means they have an understanding of the child's needs.
- **Birth parents and families:** they can assist you to identify and meet the child's cultural needs. They are a critical link between the child and their heritage.
- **Migrant welfare services and ethnic community associations and clubs:** these can be used to link the child to cultural activities and groups and the child's community. They also provide formal services that may be culturally appropriate.
- **Religious organisations** eg churches, mosques, temples: these can be used to link the child to religious guidance and activities. They can also guide the carer on aspects of the child's faith.
- **Services for children with refugee needs:** children from a refugee background have specific needs related to their torture and trauma experiences. Services such as Foundation House provide support for such needs.
- **Interpreters:** this is important when there is a language difference.
- **FCAV:** Cultural Support Worker can provide telephone support, information, resources, and referrals.

(Mulroney,L Maintaining Culture: Helping a child retain their cultural connections and identity)

Also See:

FCAV Information Sheet *Cultural Life Story Work*

<http://www.jkdiversityconsultants.com.au/PracticeGuide/Culturally-Sensitive-Practice-in-Out-of-Home-Care-Practice-Guide-KaurJ-2014.pdf>

<http://www.fcav.org.au/carers-resources/information-sheets>

RESOURCES

<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>	<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: https://www.facebook.com/carewithme/</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/</p>	<p>Foundation House provides a range of services to people from refugee backgrounds that have survived torture or war related trauma. It supports a number of projects that work to improve responses to the needs of young people from refugee background in education and service provision, to assist with access to employment, and to support making connections within and across cultures. http://www.foundationhouse.org.au</p>
<p>Victorian Multicultural Commission is the voice of Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and is the main link between them and the government. Their website contains information and resources, including a guide to local community associations. http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/ http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/resources/community-directory</p>	<p>FKACS provides support, information and resources to CALD families with pre-school children. Some of these include: the bicultural support program; an onsite library; online borrowing facilities and a Mobile Resource Service (MRS). The onsite bookshop has a range of culturally diverse resources and materials in English and community languages. http://www.fka.com.au/</p>
<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</p>	