



A guide for health practitioners: working with women from CaLD backgrounds who have experienced family and domestic violence

The term culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) refers to people who have a cultural heritage different from the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. CaLD groups are ethnic communities consist of migrants, asylum seekers or refugees.

CaLD women may not want to report FDV because:

- They perceive domestic violence differently. For example, some women may fail to recognise violence as criminal behaviour especially non-physical violence.
- They may hold the view that their body belongs to their husband or it is their role to tolerate their husband's behaviour.
- Their country of origin may not hold the perpetrator accountable. They have no confidence in authority and fear that a report of violence will not be believed.
- They fear escalating further violence if speaking out especially for those women who came from countries that practise honour killings.
- They worry about their children's welfare and safety.
- Some women are living in Australia on temporary, provisional or spouse visas. They fear reporting violence may compromise their residency in Australia.
- They fear being judged by the people in their community if disclosing violence.
- Some women are refugees who may have endured sexual and physical assault in refugee camps prior to their arrival to Australia. The previous experience for trauma could be a compounding factor for not reporting violence.

CaLD women may be reluctant to leave a violent relationship because:

- There could be cultural and social pressure for them to stay in a marriage.
- They may associate leaving the marriage as bringing dishonour and shame onto the family.
- They may be socially isolated and dependent on the person who is carrying out the violence.
- The issues of finance may become paramount especially if a woman is on a visa that limits her to access to income support, health care or working potential.

CaLD women are less likely to access support services because:

- They lack knowledge regarding their rights and the law in Australia.
- Some women may experience language and cultural barriers in accessing legal services.
- They are not aware of services such as welfare and health services, social support services and legal services that are designed to help women who experience violence.

When working with CaLD women who have experienced FDV, ensure that you:

- Engage with the woman in a culturally appropriate manner.
 - Be patient while waiting for her to respond to your questions.
 - Be sensitive to individual differences in cultural values and social norms.
 - Be open minded and listen attentively to build rapport.
 - Be respectful and avoid using words that may associate with shaming or disempowering.
 - Be mindful of your own worldview and values.
 - Refrain from making assumptions and judgemental.
- Check that she understands the words that you used.
 - When there is communication barrier always use a professional interpreter.
 - Do not ask her partner, children or other family members to interpret.
 - Be mindful that some interpreters may belong to the same community as the victim; hence, to ensure confidentiality request an interstate interpreter by phone.
 - Reflect and clarify with her to ensure understanding.
- Collaborate with other agencies that specialise in supporting CaLD women who experienced FDV.

References:

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