

Newly Arrived Youth Support Service

NAYSS INFORMATION SHEET 3: INTAKE & ASSESSMENT OF NEWLY ARRIVED YOUNG PEOPLE

NAYSS Information Sheet 3 presents key issues and strategies for conducting culturally appropriate intake and assessment with newly arrived young people and their families. It should be read alongside *NAYSS Information Sheet 2 – Engaging With Newly Arrived Young People* and the *NAYSS Resource Kit*.

INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

Conducting intake and assessment in the NAYSS context will require workers to approach this key component of support work in a culturally sensitive and responsive way. Your service model must be flexible, responsive & individually tailored, where clients are active participants in case management. The complex nature of refugee experiences and their consequences means that assessment will occur over time, as trust builds and new issues emerge.

PRIOR TO INTAKE OR ASSESSMENT

Prior to intake or assessment, it is important to:

- ▶ Ensure the referring agency employs appropriate **supported referral** practices. If taking a referral from a service or worker, ascertain what they understand to be the needs and issues facing the young person/family and why they are making the referral (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues 2004);
- ▶ Seek the **client's consent** to disclose information and consent for you to make contact;
- ▶ Request that the **referring person introduce you** to the young person on your first meeting in order to reduce the client's anxiety. Be clear about the purpose of the referral. This process also provides an opportunity to clearly state your role and can minimise any future confusion that may arise with other services or workers; and
- ▶ Organise a **professional interpreter** where appropriate (*see NAYSS Information Sheet 5*).

INITIAL MEETING

At initial meetings with a young person or family:

- ▶ Conduct your intake and assessment in an **informal** and friendly way with minimal use of official or detailed forms;
- ▶ Be **transparent**, clear and predictable and give young people choices and options whenever possible – (e.g. where to meet, whether or not to close the door);
- ▶ Explain your job and **what you can offer** by giving examples. Ask if there is an equivalent role or service in their country or community;
- ▶ Use clear, **simple language** and avoid any jargon or acronyms. Some words and concepts may not have a direct equivalent in other cultures or languages;
- ▶ Explain the **purpose of intake** & assessment to your client and why you need to ask some questions. A young person may feel nervous or uncomfortable in disclosing personal information, or they may feel under pressure to say the 'right' thing. The concept of strangers asking personal questions (and not revealing anything about themselves) may be completely foreign to them;

- ▶ Explain the concept of **confidentiality** in clear, simple terms as well as the limitations of confidentiality in relation to your duty of care. This may be a new concept to your clients;
- ▶ Ask the young person if you can take **notes** and write in a way so they can see what you are saying or provide a copy of what you have written. Aim to maintain their control and reduce any anxiety about people in authority accessing their information; and
- ▶ Explain the **purpose of forms**, why you need to document information, what will be documented, where it will be kept, who will have access to it and how it may be used.

INFORMATION TO COLLECT

When collecting information for assessment, it is important to be consistent. Information should be sought in the following core areas:

- ▶ Pre and post settlement in Australia (including migration experiences, time spent in refugee camps);
- ▶ Cultural identity;
- ▶ Languages spoken and preferred language;
- ▶ Educational background (including years of disrupted learning);
- ▶ Family composition (both here and overseas); and
- ▶ Current circumstances.

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION COLLECTION

When collecting information from newly arrived young people, it is essential that culturally sensitive approaches are utilised:

- ▶ Ask the young person to **draw a family tree**. Discuss the roles, responsibilities and locations of family members;
- ▶ Explain the **reasons for seeking information**;
- ▶ Ask a young person or family if they have any questions of you;
- ▶ **Ensure questions are simple**. Direct questions can be culturally inappropriate. Alternatively, indicate you know a little about their country or about other young people and families in a similar position to prompt their response. You can then ask if their experience is similar and elicit their unique experience in a supportive way. Talk about what you do and ask less direct or personal questions to prompt conversation;
- ▶ Give your client the option of **not answering** questions. It is more important to establish safety and control. You can collect more specific information as your relationship develops;
- ▶ Ensure that you **listen sensitively** and provide your client with the space to tell their story in their own way, rather than offering advice;
- ▶ **Do not pressure a young person** to tell their story. Many young people will not wish to disclose their pre-settlement experiences for some time and certainly not until they have developed a trusting relationship with you;
- ▶ **Normalise experiences and feelings**. State that their experiences and challenges are common for many newly arrived families, and reassure them that their feelings are a normal response to loss and cultural dislocation; and
- ▶ Establish what **other services** are supporting the young person and/or their family.

CASE PLANNING

When planning your support with a young person or family:

- ▶ Identify and **prioritise goals together**, highlight their strengths or achievements;
- ▶ Give them the **opportunity to write**. If they are not comfortable or confident reading and writing in English, they may wish to write in their own language, while you write in English. Or, you can write while they talk. Explain what you have written;
- ▶ **Discuss** what needs to happen to achieve these goals, what you will work on next and who needs to do what;
- ▶ **Review the case plan** regularly, being mindful of providing a flexible and responsive support service; and
- ▶ **Seek support** for yourself to manage your own responses to working with this client group (e.g. supervision or debriefing). (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues 1994; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 1996; Drummond 1998)

REFERENCES/OTHER RESOURCES

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (1994). *Given A Chance: A Video-Training Manual on Working with Refugee Young People*. Melbourne, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2004). *CMYI Information Sheet 7: Making Successful Referrals with Refugee Young People and their Families*. Melbourne, CMYI.

Drummond, S. (1998). *The Longest Journey: Torture and Trauma & Refugee Young People*. Sydney, Youth Action and Policy Association.

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (1996). *A Guide to Working with Young People Who are Refugees*. Melbourne, VFST.

