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Appropriate use of Language Services

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Purpose of Tool

This tool is designed to encourage organisations to think broadly about cross cultural communication – its meaning and the resources required to support cross cultural communication. You will consider different approaches to providing support, services and programs to CALD communities (appropriate to circumstances); and the risks/benefits of these approaches.

Thinking about Cross Cultural Communication

In order to frame the discussion within your organisation about cross cultural communication it is important to first establish your understanding of what cross cultural communication means.

Effectively communicating with people from CALD backgrounds involve **universal skills** which can be applied to any individuals you might be working with day to day. CALD people, carers and families should not be viewed as 'special case' where you apply a very specific set of communication skills. Rather, they should be subject to the strong, positive communication skills that your staff should possess when working with **any** group of clients, CALD or otherwise.

The benefit of having universal communication strategies in place can help you and your service comply with legislation and accreditation standards relating to access and fairness.

Developing a Risk Approach to considering multilingual communications support

Think about the type of language and communications support you know about or have used to help interact with a client who does not speak English in your day-to-day work.

The following is a list of common language support options, and the associated risk/benefits. Can you add any other language support options commonly used in your organisation? What are the risks and benefits involved in each of these?

Type of Language Support	Benefits	Risks
Family acting as interpreter (excluding children) (children should not be used as interpreters under any circumstances)	Trustworthy Have rapport with client Free	Child being exposed to adult concepts Potentially biased interpreting Quality of interpreting suffers
BYO interpreters where a client brings their own bilingual support other than family	Trustworthy Have rapport with client Free	Confidentiality issues Potentially biased interpreting Quality of interpreting suffers
Bilingual staff	Value for money approach Often, a quicker option than accredited interpreters	Staff competency in language may be less than is required Important information not properly conveyed
Interpreter (face to face)	High quality option Helps ensure no information is missed	May not exist in newly arrived/small communities Time lag / need to be organised Cost Potential confidentiality issues (in small communities)
Interpreter (phone)	High quality option Fairly quick compared with face to face option	Inability for interpreter to read non-verbal cues of client May not exist in newly arrived communities

	Can access interpreters from interstate for added confidentiality	Cost
Interpreter (video-conferencing)	High quality option Cost effective alternative to face to face interpreting	May not exist in newly arrived communities Requires appropriate technological infrastructure to be set up Requires certain level of organisation / cannot be accessed immediately
Translated materials (e.g. printed brochure, document available online)	Easy to access Cost effective Can provide detailed information	Assumes literacy in-language Lack of availability in certain language groups
Translation app on smart phone	Cost effective Immediate	Poor ability to assess quality of translation Inappropriate in certain situations (e.g. sensitive situations)
Glossaries / dictionaries	Cost effective Easy to communicate key words	Assumes literacy of client Assumes language is easy to read for a non-speaker
Aural materials (e.g. DVDs, CDs).	Easy to get simple messages across	Requires infrastructure Materials such as these are rare Not tailored to situation at hand
Diagrams/symbols	Easy to use Effective for simple instructions	Simplistic Not able to communicate complex messages

Applying a risk framework to language support

Here are three scenarios where external language supports are needed because the English language proficiency of the client is poor. Please work through:

- Whether you think they're low, medium or high-risk situations

- What kinds of language support/s should be made available (from most urgent, to least urgent)

The types of resource considerations you would have.

Scenarios

A. The local Migrant Resource Centre has recently held a disability service expo for the local area and invited local services provider to attend. You have been sent to speak on the range of services that your organisation provides. An Arabic speaking community worker approaches you and is keen to get you to do a more formal presentation to her older Arabic Women's Network as well as wanting to refer a specific case to you which involves one of the worker's Carer Support Program participants who has expressed concern about finding services to meet her child with a developmental disability needs.

B. You have been asked to perform an in-home assessment for family with a child called Hoa with a high level of disability support needs who needs a range of home care services. There is no notation on file about any specific language supports required, and the notes from the initial contact indicate that the family could communicate in English. During the interview you become concerned that while Hoa and her mother seems to be agreeing with the things you are saying, they do not engage in any questioning and are quite passive through the assessment. Sensing that this is an issue for the assessment process you ask Hoa's mother to express a preference between two types of service providers and find that she struggles to provide a clear answer.

C. Benjamin Tang is a 50-year-old man who has an acquired brain injury. He has been assessed as needing a high level of occupational therapy. When the assessment team comes to Benjamin Tang's house they are met by Benjamin, his wife Lucy, adult daughter Alice and adult cousin Sam. The interview and assessment is quite problematic. There are obvious issues between the daughter and cousin. Both Benjamin and Lucy remain silent in the interaction. Alice's English is more developed that her cousin's but Sam appears to have greater authority and overrides Lucy in the discussions. (Source for this example: 'CALD Carer Issues in Person Centred Care' fact sheet http://www.diversityindisability.org/engaging-cald-carers-communities/)

Resources/Handouts

What is an interpreter?

Interpreters are professionally qualified persons who take information from an oral or sign language and convert it accurately and objectively into another language to enable communication between two parties who do not share a common language.

This is different to a translator, who does the same with written material.

Australia has a National Accreditation Authority for Interpreters and Translators (NAATI) which sets and monitors standards in Australia by accrediting both interpreters and translators at different levels of competence. All NAATI accredited interpreters are bound by a code of ethics in accordance with the Australian Institute for Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) code of ethics. This means they should not add, modify or delete information, and remain impartial at all times, nor act as an advocate for the client.

Language Services Policy and Guidelines in QLD

QLD Government Languages Policy

Multicultural Affairs QLD Language Services Guidelines

How to identify if an interpreter is needed?

In some instances, you will be required to determine whether an interpreter is required. These are the types of cues you will need to look out for to do so:

* the client, their family or carer demonstrates no understanding of English when asked basic questions that relate to the context of the discussion. (e.g. can't respond in English when asked their address, date of birth).

* the client their family or carer responds in English in a limited capacity or presents with English that's hard for you to understand

* the client their family or carer nods or says 'yes' to all comments and questions. This might indicate a lack of understanding

* the client their family or carer relies on family / friends to communicate on their behalf

- the client their family or carer does speak English as a second language but is in a stressful situation, or an unfamiliar environment.

A Note on Family Carers as Interpreters

(Source: Text sourced from CALD Carer Issues in Person Centred Care' - http://www.diversityindisability.org/engaging-cald-carers-communities/

The carer relationships being described in this tool are important and enduring ones. Clearly part of the family carer's role as information broker is to act as an interpreter. It is important to understand the limits of this role and the need to ensure that both the service provider and the client are confident with and well served by the interpreting being rendered.

The following considerations need to be kept in mind when a family member presents as an interpreter:

- A family member as an interpreter may be a valuable resource in ensuring that the client is comfortable in interacting with a service provider from another language or culture;

- A family member as interpreter should not reassure you that the client both fully understands and is actively participating in determining the care plan;

- Service providers need to practice good cross-cultural skills to determine the nature of the information relationship and to assess whether the client is allowed to participate in the interaction to a satisfactory level;

- Family carers need to be informed about their responsibilities when acting as the information channel. These responsibilities would include:

    - Ensuring that they have the adequate skills in both languages to convey all necessary information;

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- Understanding their role as information broker even if they are part of the decision-making process;
- Ensuring that the client is kept aware and involved in the communication; and,
- Understanding the service providers responsibility to be confident that the client understands the interaction and in this may use professional interpreters either on the phone or face-to-face.

- Where there is any suggestion that the client is being excluded or in situations where the service provider needs assurance that the client understands and supports the care decisions, **professional interpreters should be used**.