



Multicultural Cultural Support Plan: Practice Guide



MacKillop
Family
Services



Mackillop Family Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play. We pay our deep respects to Elders past, present and future and acknowledge all Aboriginal children, young people, families and staff who are a part of Mackillop Family Services

Mackillop celebrates and draws strength from diversity and respects the dignity of all people. Every person at Mackillop has the right to be safe and to be treated justly. We value every person's ability, cultural or linguistic backgrounds, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, intersex status, relationship status, religious or spiritual beliefs, socio-economic status, and age.

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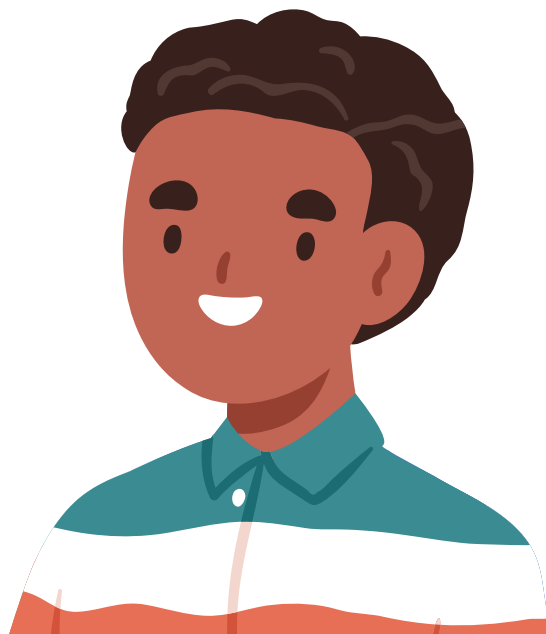
Purpose

A Multicultural Support Plan (MSP) is an individualised plan that aims to develop or maintain children and young people’s cultural identity through connection to family, community and culture while they are in care.

Multicultural Support Plans help to document and assist culturally responsive planning and decision making, centering the best interests of the child and young person.

Mackillop acknowledges the complexities of culture and the need for shared language and a culturally responsive approach to supporting multicultural children and young people in our programs and services.

This guide has been developed to help staff complete a Multicultural Support Plan for multicultural children and young people engaged with Mackillop Family Services.



Important terms

Multicultural Support Plan (MSP):

A Multicultural Support Plan is an individualised plan which helps to develop or maintain young people's cultural identity through connection to family, community, and culture.

Cultural Consultation:

This is when the planning process integrates and embeds culture in the life of a child or young person from a multicultural background. It is about the systemic process of seeking knowledge, and practice expertise to identify and embed a focus on cultural support for children and young people. Everyone plays a vital role in providing culturally responsive and relationship-based, attuned care.

Care team members:

The key group of people important to a young person's care. The care team maintains and supports a young person's care arrangement and continued connection to parents, siblings, wider family, network, community, and culture. This may include support workers, youth workers/ residential carers, case managers/workers, clinical staff, child protection workers, and other health professionals.



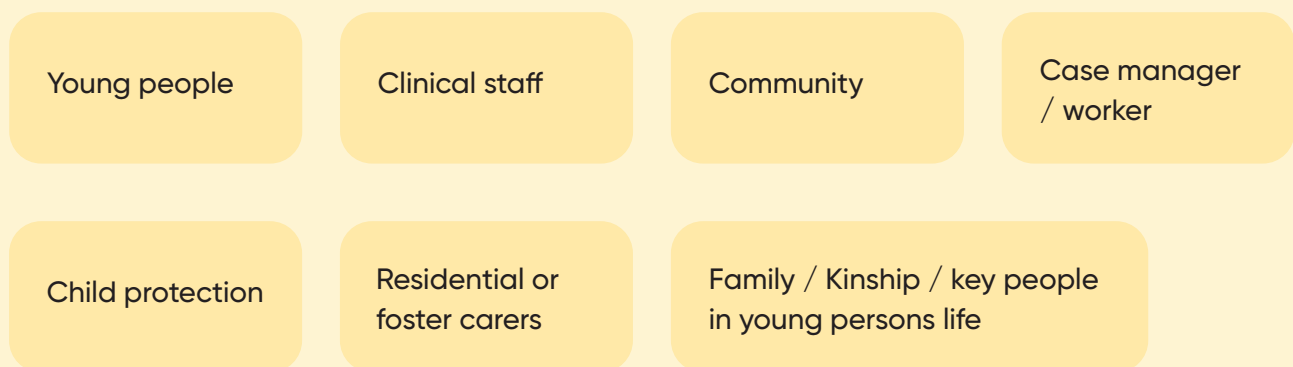
Who needs to be involved in completing a Multicultural Support Plan?

A case manager, in collaboration with a clinical staff member, if appropriate.

The case manager/worker should take the lead in ensuring that the plan always has accurate information about a child or young person and their cultural journey. Plans should be developed in collaboration with the care team.

As we know, culture is not static and the plan should reflect the young person's evolving cultural journey, whether they are strongly connected, struggling or ambivalent with being connected to their culture.

People who can contribute to the development of a Multicultural Support Plan



For community input, as a first step, please [book a consult](#) with our Multicultural Practice Lead - National.

Initial assessments and interim Multicultural Support Plans

The interim Multicultural Support Plan (MSP) should be included in the handover process and is essential for integrating culturally responsive practices into the care of multicultural children and young people once they are placed.

This plan must be completed within the first four weeks of placement.

Engaging in discussions with child protection, other agencies, and stakeholders, or having conversations during the early stages of our involvement with any child or young person, can help inform the interim Multicultural Support Plans. It is important and considered good practice to ask questions and gather information about culture throughout our time working with children, young people and families. The interim Multicultural Support Plan allows time for a more comprehensive Multicultural Support Plan to be developed within the two months of the interim plan being endorsed.

Multicultural Support Plan or My Cultural Support Plan

The Interim Support Plan should be built upon to inform the development of the 'Multicultural Support Plan' (VIC and WA) or 'My Cultural Care Plan (Multicultural)' (NSW and ACT).

The Cultural Support Plan must be completed and endorsed within the first three months of a young person's placement.

It is important for the Cultural Support Plan to be reviewed and updated annually.



Frequently asked questions

Does the Multicultural Support Plan need endorsement from an appropriate member of the care team?

Yes, each individual Cultural Support Plan must be endorsed for quality assurance, compliance, and accountability. The endorsement of the Cultural Support Plan is dependent on your state, program, and region. The Cultural Support Plan can be endorsed by an Area Manager, General or Statewide Manager, Principal Practitioner, or Director.

Does family, kinship and community need to be involved in developing the Multicultural Support Plan?

Yes. Family, kinship, and the community must be involved in creating and implementing the cultural support plan.

Should children or young people be involved in the completion of their own Multicultural Support Plan?

A child or young person's voice (where appropriate) must be embedded throughout their Cultural Support Plan. Allowing young people to have direct input into their Cultural Support Plan will help them identify what is important to them and likely increase their engagement with any cultural activities planned. Once the plan has been finalised and endorsed, a copy must be provided to the child or young person.

Who should the Multicultural Support Plan be shared with?

It is important that everyone around the young person is culturally responsive and that culture is integrated and embedded in every aspect of their care and support. A copy of the plan should be provided to a foster carer. If the child or young person is in residential care, all staff working in the home should read the plan so that they can support the child or young person in their connection to their culture. In Victoria, a copy of the Cultural Support Plan must be given to Child Protection. The case manager, in consultation with the care team, is responsible for identifying the individuals and organisations that the plan can be shared with in a manner that is consistent with privacy and confidentiality obligations.

Can the development of a Multicultural Support Plan be outsourced?

Only in the ACT and NSW with approval from the Regional Manager, as government funding is received. Only the first full plan can be outsourced, all future reviews must be completed by a MacKillop caseworker.



Culturally responsive considerations

Multicultural Support Plans must be guided by culturally responsive considerations. The following considerations will assist you in working with children, young people and families when developing Multicultural Support Plans:

Learn about culture through curiosity and awareness: Be open and nonjudgmental. Be aware that children and young people may have bicultural or multicultural experiences, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to effective, cross-cultural work. Educate yourself: Have you completed the Working Effectively with Multicultural Young People and Families training. This training is available to all MacKillop staff.

Working within the family and community context: Learn about the young person's family and community connections, acknowledging that each person's experience will differ. Where appropriate, involve family, kin and community and use interpreting services where needed.

Trauma-informed: Be aware that young people in care may have experiences of trauma; this may be compounded by refugee or migration experiences. This may mean the young person isn't interested in discussing their culture. Go slow, and don't force the young person to share.

Self-reflection and awareness: Reflect on your own experiences of culture and assumptions that you may have when getting to know the young person. Remember that we all have culture, and we need to engage in self-reflective practice to identify our assumptions and let the young person lead conversations about their culture.

Considerations prior to engaging the young person

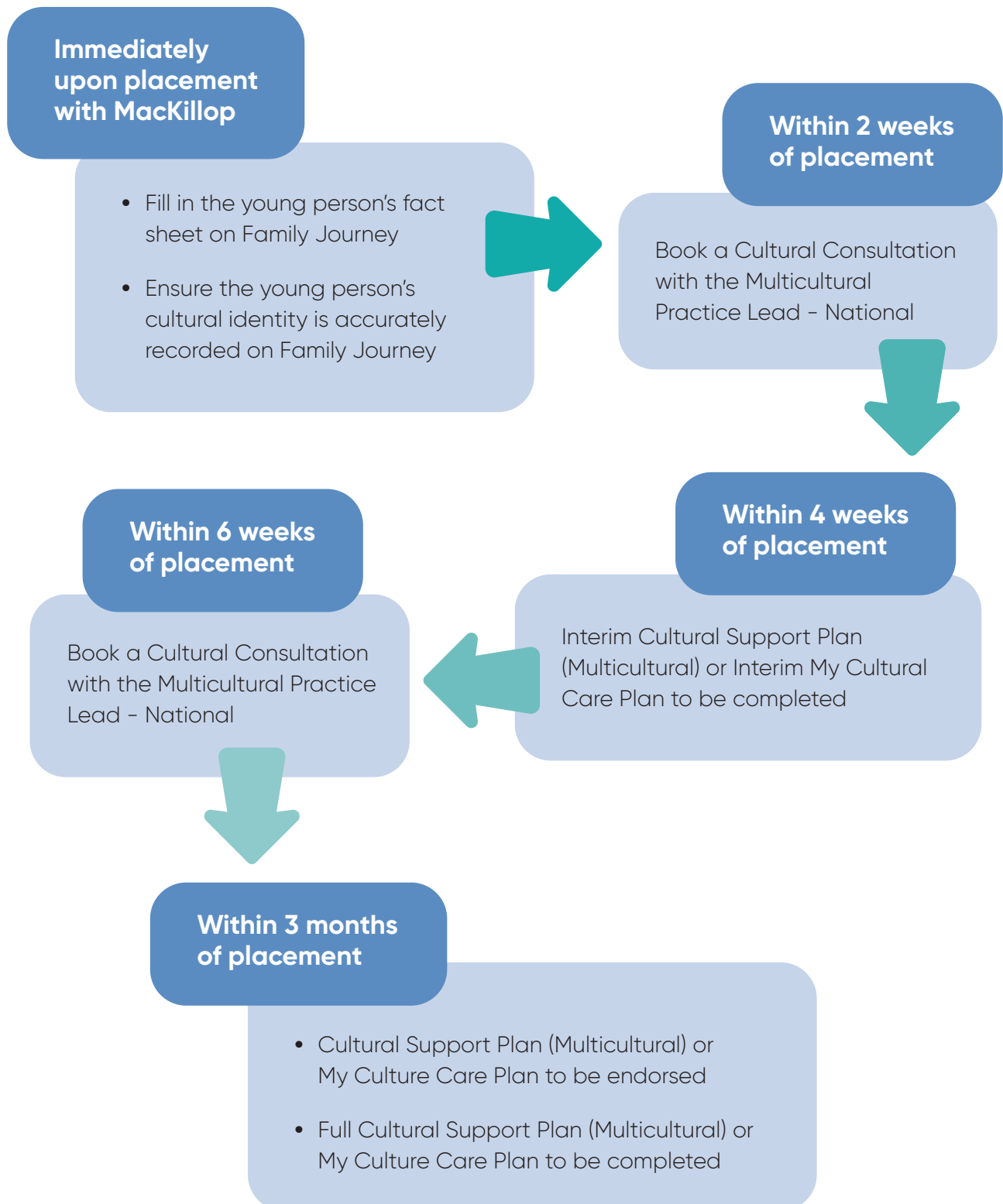
- Consider the young person's age and developmental stage and adjust your approach accordingly.
- This is a living document that can be revisited and adapted over time. Maintaining a record of each iteration of the plan is essential so that the child or young person can see how the plans were adapted over time.
- Some sections of the plan ask for specific information about the child and young person's parents, family or community. In some cases, they may have a history of abuse/violence or harm by their parent(s) or family members – this could be very triggering to collect this information. If you are unsure how to navigate this, please consult your manager or book a Cultural Consultation. It may be more appropriate to explore these connections through the Therapeutic Life Story Work process.
- Before beginning these conversations, ensure that the young person feels emotionally safe discussing their history.
- There is no right or wrong way to complete this plan; we must be trauma—and culturally—informed throughout the process.

As you work through this guide, you will find prompting questions and considerations listed throughout to further support practitioners in developing Multicultural Support Plans.

To access additional resources and support for Culturally Responsive Practice, you can access the Multicultural Communities site on the MacKillop intranet. MacKillop staff can also access Working Effectively with Multicultural Young People and Families Training through the MacKillop Learning and Training website.



Process for supporting multicultural children and young people



Staff are encouraged to complete the following training to support their work in supporting multicultural children and young people:

- Working Effectively with Multicultural Young People and Families (mandatory)
- How to Develop a Multicultural Support Plan - webinar
- Multicultural Support Plan Practice Guide (VIC) or My Cultural Care Plan (Multicultural) Practice Guide (NSW, WA & ACT)



Working through a Multicultural Support Plan example

Culturally responsive considerations

Take time to introduce the Multicultural Support Plan. For example: “This is a story of your culture , and I’d like to help create it with you.” The child or young person may wish to include a photograph that relates to their culture, family, or identity. For example, this might include photos of their home country, photos of them wearing cultural clothing (obtained from family or through an internet search), or an image representing what they love most about their culture.



Example

This example is meant to be a guide only on how to complete the plan. The cultural facts and information in this example are inaccurate. It is the responsibility of practitioners to ensure they have accurate information.



My Cultural Support Plan

Shamiso Sha

This is my cultural support plan, which tells a story about my cultural journey and identity.

Culturally responsive considerations

- Some children or young people from a refugee background may not know or have identification documents, such as a birth certificate, so their DOB may be incorrect. The reasons for this are complex; it might be unknown or an estimate. Any child with a birth date of 01/01/(year) is likely younger.
- Asking about the meaning or story of the child or young person's name can be triggering, depending on their connection to family and culture. Be sensitive and be guided by the child or young person.

Helpful prompts

Take time to check in with the child or young person and ensure that the name you call them is their preferred name, and that you are pronouncing and spelling it correctly.

For example, you could say: "I want to make sure I'm saying your name correctly. Can you tell me how to pronounce it?"

Practitioner self-reflection

Am I using non-judgmental language such as open-ended questions to ask about the person's gender and using the correct pronouns?



About me

A little about me

My name is:	Shamiso
I would like to be known as:	Sha
My name is pronounced:	Shy-mi-saw
The meaning or story behind my name is: (If applicable)	My name means a wonder; I was given my name by maternal grandmother, and I was told that she would tell stories about how special she thought I was.
Age:	14years old
Date of birth:	1/12/2010

My pronouns

If preference is not to disclose, please put 'prefer not to answer'.

My pronouns are:	They/them
My gender identity is:	Prefer not to say
My sexual orientation is:	Prefer not to say for now.



Culturally responsive considerations

- Be reflective and aware of your own cultural assumptions about nationality (country of origin, citizenship, or nation someone identifies with) and ethnicity (ancestry or descent), although these are related. Never assume the young person's cultural background based on their country of birth, name, language, or appearance.
- Through a trauma-informed approach, keep in mind that asking about nationality and ethnicity can be painful for some children, young people and families, particularly those with a refugee or complex migration history.
- Nationality represents the country we legally belong to, e.g., citizenship (birthright or naturalised).
- Ethnicity is the cultural characteristics that define a person as being a member of a specific group, e.g., language, religion, customs, cultural practices.
- Learning about the young person's culture and gathering information on the child, young person's or family's interpretation of their culture helps paint a more complete picture of their context.
- A child or young person's heritage may be multicultural, and focusing on one cultural element may limit the capacity to meet their cultural needs. This is particularly important if a child or young person has a mixed heritage. Be open-ended in your prompts and guided by the child or young person.

Helpful prompts

Is there anything you want to learn about your culture? How should we do that together? We can figure out who can help.

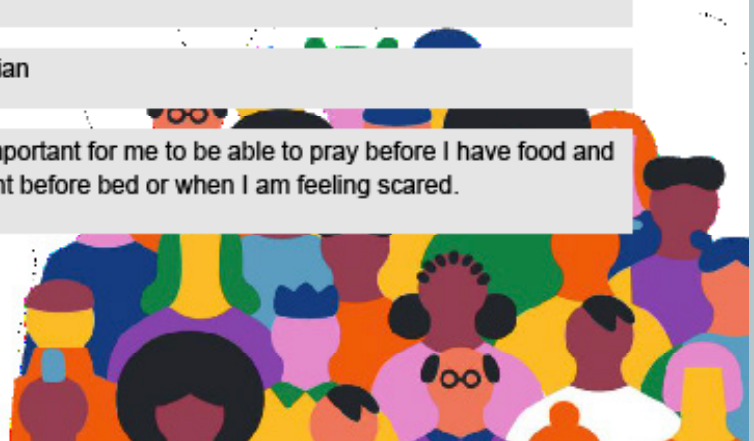
Practitioner self-reflection

Is there anything I'm not understanding about what the child or young person is sharing with me about their culture? Am I being honest about this with them? How could I clarify and/or find out more?



My Cultural Identity

Nationality:	Australian
Ethnicity:	Fijian
Tribes / Villages / Religion:	Village 8 in Chiredzi Eagle(bird) tribe Christian. This information was proudly provided by my maternal grandmother, who has always emphasised the importance of me staying connected to my culture and religion through prayer.
Totem / Clan name:	Hungwe , matapatira , maoko mavi, are some of my totem & clan names used by my people, these are used for praise and acknowledging ancestors. These can only be used by those of the same tribe or with permission from a clan member.
Preferred languages / Languages I can speak:	I speak English and can also hold basic conversations in Fijian, it is important to me, to continue to preserve my heritage and connection to my people's language, during family time, everyone speaks Fijian, however family times does not happen often, and it is difficult for me to strengthen my language. I would like for this to be fostered and facilitated by my care team through language school.
Languages I would like to speak:	Fijian
Religion:	Christian
Customs or events that are important to me:	It is important for me to be able to pray before I have food and at night before bed or when I am feeling scared.



Culturally responsive considerations

- Be mindful that the child or young person may not have information or a connection to culture, so this page should be approached through a trauma-informed lens. Use open-ended questions and don't feel the need to fill out every section; they are prompts for organic conversations about cultural connection.
- Work within the family context, the child or young person's family may not be a nuclear family. Family can include: People who the child/young person has a connection to, family we make/choose, and/or extended family, community, kin.
- When asking about a child or young person's cultural journey, they may tell you, or you may want to ask about their migration journey—these are sometimes overlapping for children or young people born overseas or with intergenerational migration in their family history.

Helpful prompts

- What have you learnt about your family and culture?
- What are you most proud of?
- Would you like to be more connected to your culture? If so, what would you want that to look like?





My Cultural Connection

Who are the important people in your life?

My mother, grandparents and some of my aunts, my Sunday school teacher, my friend and my key worker Nari

Story of our / my people:

Fun fact: In medieval times this region was ruled by the kingdom of Alodia, a Christian, multi-ethnic empire in Nubia.

My Cultural Journey so far:

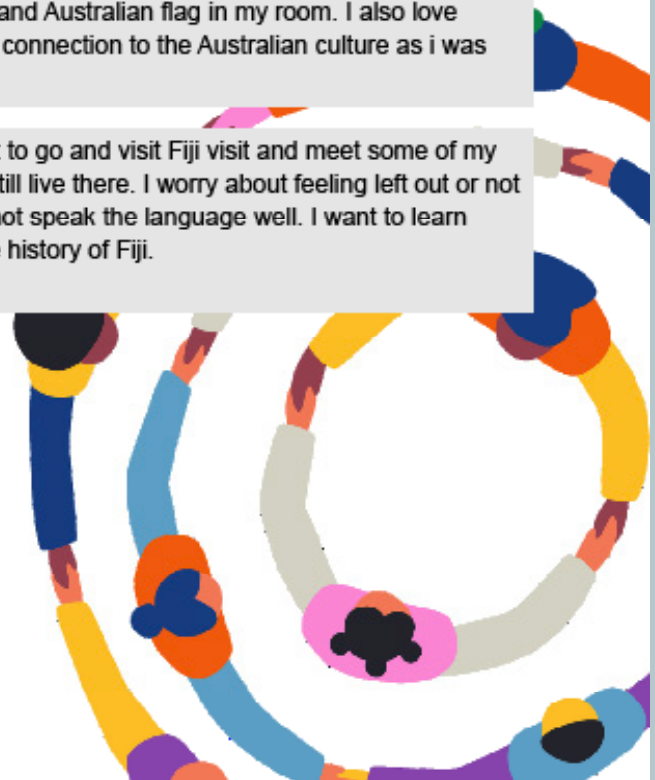
I was born in Australia; however, both my parents were born in Fiji. They have strong ties to Fiji and the culture, something that they instilled in me before I left home. When I lived at home I enjoyed the food, story time, the traditions, festivals and community time. I miss being with my family and community and this makes me sad at times.

What would you like to share or tell us more about your culture?

I want to know more about my ancestors and where I come from. I would like to find other ways to connect with my culture while I am in care, traditional clothes, necklaces, jewellery and both the Fijian and Australian flag in my room. I also love celebrating my connection to the Australian culture as I was born here.

**How would you want to connect with your culture in the future?
(cultural aspirations)**

One day I want to go and visit Fiji visit and meet some of my relatives who still live there. I worry about feeling left out or not fitting, as I do not speak the language well. I want to learn more about the history of Fiji.



Culturally responsive considerations

- Working within the family and community context: Explore arrangements for activities and experiences that will support and preserve the child's cultural identity and connection to the community in which they live.
- Include tasks specific to cultural support that relate to promoting the child or young person's health.
- Acknowledge the cultural preferences around medical interventions.

Helpful prompts

- When you are feeling sick or distressed, are there any cultural remedies that you would like to be included in your support plan?
- Are there certain people in your life you'd like us to contact if you're feeling unwell?
- When you're not feeling well, what makes you feel better?

Practitioner self-reflection

Are my own cultural concepts of health impacting my discussion with the young person? Do I have any preconceived ideas about what being well and healing looks like that are influencing my interactions with the child or young person?



Health

Acknowledging the cultural preferences around medical interventions.

If I am unwell or distressed, can you please tell my grandmother, particularly when I have a cold. She has some concoctions she used to make for me.

I would also like to see the same Doctor who I have seen since I was a child, she is also from Fiji, and I have always felt safe with her.

Prayer and other cultural rituals are important to me, my grandmother has always told me that this helps with getting well.

It is important that any issues around sexual health, be raised or addressed after speaking to my mother or grandmother as this is part of cultural ritual (information provided by mother)



Direct Cultural Connection

Events, important dates, celebrations, and important things that help me feel connected and strengthens my cultural identity and journey.

Activity	Who do I want to help me with this	Timing / Frequency	Notes and comments
Church on Sundays	Carers and family	Every Sunday	If carers can drop me a few blocks from church, I can walk there by myself
Fijian Festival	Family	Twice a year	I would like to go with my friends from church.
My birthday	Family and Carers	Once a year	It is important to go and see my grandmother as she has always celebrated my birthday with me.
Christmas	Family and Church	10am Christmas service	Important to attend the carols
Easter	Church	Easter and Sunday	I cannot eat pork on Easter Friday.

Culturally responsive considerations

- Some children or young people may not have their cultural needs identified or met at school. Consider what you've already discussed with the child or young person in your conversations about culture that might also relate to education i.e., addressing language barriers, needing a place to pray at school, dietary requirements for school events or lunch time
- Asking children or young people about food is a great segue to discuss connection to family and culture. If there are cultural foods that the child or young person shares with you, explore ways to provide opportunities for them to access these while in care.

Helpful prompts

- Education: Are there any parts of school or study that you could use some support with?
- Religion/faith/spirituality: Do you have any religious or spiritual practice or traditions that you follow? i.e., going to church, praying, connecting with nature?
- Food: What's your favorite food/dish? Are there any recipes that you would like to make at home?





Education

Include any goals and tasks specific to cultural support that relate to the child or young person's education.

Examples:

Some other things that I would like my school and care team to consider that make me feel cultural safe and included are having a diverse cultural representation in texts, inclusive narratives, celebration of cultural learning and cultural festival and being able to attend language school



Food

Recognition of food preferences including preparation and eating (e.g. Vegetarian, Halal or Kosher). Preferred way of eating (cutlery, hands).

This is my favourite meal that my mum and grandmother used to make for me on Sunday evening and we would sit on the floor and eat with our hands, while listening to my grandmother telling us stories. This ritual is important to me, can you please help me by taking me to my family on Sundays and bringing leftovers for me.



Religion / Faith / Spirituality

Acknowledgement and respect of religious and spiritual practices, rites or cultural ceremonies.

I grew up in a Christian home where both my mother and maternal grandmother often talked about their faith, would read the bible to me and would take me to church.

Praying is very important to me it keeps me connected to my faith and my family traditions and customs. I would like to stay connected to my faith.

I was taught that it was important to pray before food, when something is important to me or when I am scared and want to feel calmer, better and relaxed.

I would like to have a bible in my room.

Culturally responsive considerations

- It's important we are trauma- and culturally-informed throughout the process.
- Ask the child or young person what things they would like to use to complete the process and offer them options if they cannot identify what it is they want to use. This could be through using figurines, cutting up a magazine, drawing etc. Be as creative as you can be.
- As you are working through the activity jot down the narrative/story from a child or young person's view e.g., what they choose to represent a place or a person, this information is important as it helps tell a story.
- This activity may raise questions that we don't have answers to. We can ask the child or young person if they would like us to find out more information. This is an opportunity to do life story work.
- The family tree can be updated, reviewed at any time, this is not set in stone.

Practitioner self-reflection

- Are there any assumptions I'm making about who is considered family?
- How is my own experience and understanding of family and community impacting how I work through the family tree with the young person?





Family tree

A family tree, forest, or flower to show you the people, places and things that are important to me. please see examples of family tree below for guidance purposes. Please be creative.



Culturally responsive considerations

You can access additional supports to assist you with addressing the cultural needs of the children or young people you're working with.

Cultural Consultations are available through the Cultural Mentoring Program for residential services in metropolitan Melbourne. Staff from all other programs can book a Cultural Consultation with the Multicultural Practice Lead - National.





Who are the people involved that helped me make this Cultural Plan?

Young person:	Shamiso
Family / Kin:	Maternal grandmother, Sunday school teacher, Mum, uncle, paternal uncle
Carers:	Raymond and Michelle
Case worker / Case manager:	Alison MFS
Cultural Mentor:	Susan through cultural consults

Who are the people that are going to help me to work on the things in this plan?

Young person:	Shamiso
Family / Kin:	My family, church, school and friends
Carers:	Raymond and Michelle
Case manager:	Alison MFS and Kate from CP
Cultural Mentor:	Susan

About the cultural mentoring program

What is a Cultural Consultation?

A Cultural Consultation is when the system integrates and embeds culture in the planning, decision-making and care model of a young person and their family who are from a multicultural background. It is about the coming together of key people who form part of the team around a child or young person and their family. Everyone plays a vital role in providing culturally responsive and relationship based, attuned care. The Cultural Consultant's role is to provide support, guidance and coaching to support this work.

Steps to book a consultation

Anyone who is part of caring for a young person can book Cultural Consultation. To book a consult, click [here](#) or email culturalconsultation@mackillop.org.au.

Who should I invite?

Anyone who plays a role in the care, decision making and planning of a child or young person.

External stakeholders can also be invited if appropriate/feasible.

A gentle reminder to please forward the calendar invite to everyone you are inviting to the consultation, to ensure that they get a Team's invite sent to their email address.

Why are so many people invited?

It is important that everyone around the young person is culturally responsive, and that culture is integrated and embedded in everything we do.

Having everyone in the consultation means that this work is echoed and consistent across all aspects of a young person's care, and we develop a shared understanding of their story and shaping of their identity.

What should I prepare ahead of the consultation?

It is ideal if the person who has booked the consultation can provide a summary of the young person ahead of the meeting. We understand that it is not always possible to have this information handy. If you have any information, please send this through to the Multicultural Practice Lead – National who will pass this onto the Consultant. Having this information prior to the consultation means it will flow better and avoids us spending a lot of time on information gathering.

Please email any information to culturalconsultation@mackillop.org.au.

What to expect at the consultation

- The Cultural Consultation is a space and opportunity to take a deep dive into the importance of culture and map out the work around cultural identity and culturally responsive practice.
- The Consultant's role is to provide the care team with cultural knowledge, guidance and consultation to support the work. Consultants are not there to provide direct work to the young person or family, e.g., interpreting services etc.
- Some examples of what may come up in the sessions include: Cultural connection, activities, rituals, significant dates, customs, taboos, migration journey, Multicultural Support Plans, cultural considerations, sharing of resources, family dynamics or roles, effective ways to engage with a young person or family, cultural sacredness, cultural safety within the home, cultural identity for young people whose identity is bi-cultural, differences in cultural beliefs, cultural trauma and cultural wealth.
- Not all consultations are about issues or challenges, they can also be about how we strengthen our practice.
- At the conclusion of an initial consultation, recommendations will be made and an action plan developed.
- It is highly recommended that a follow-up consult is scheduled 6 weeks after the initial consultation.

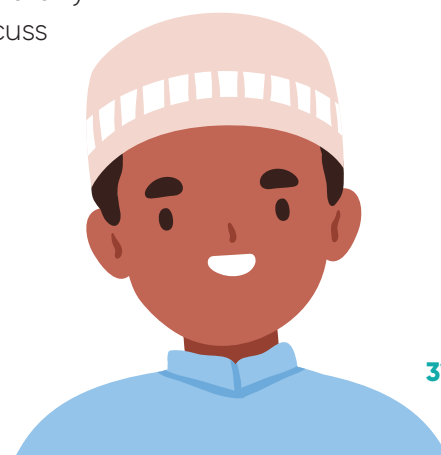
Booking a follow up consultation

It is highly recommended that a follow-up consult is scheduled 6 weeks after the initial consultation. Six weeks provides us with enough time to ensure that the recommendations have been implemented.

Whilst a follow-up consultation is highly recommended, we also acknowledge that the residential space can be transient, and the young person may not be in our care by the time we get to 6 weeks. If this occurs, the recommendation is to move the follow-up consultation forward (e.g., book in 4 weeks' time) so this forms part of their transition planning and handover.

It is important that the follow-up consultations take place, so we can come together again and review the recommendations and action plans from the previous consultation. It is also about holding each other accountable, ensuring that the cultural work doesn't stop, and that we continue to embed culture in our everyday practice.

The follow-up consultations allow us to reflect on the work that has taken place and identify what has worked and any challenges and discuss a way forward.



Acknowledgements and Contributions

Contributors

Multicultural Practice Lead – National, MacKillop Family Services
Project Implementation Adviser, MacKillop Family Services
Centre for Multicultural Youth

Cultural Mentoring Advisory Group

We thank the cultural mentors for creating the Multicultural Support Plan and for their generosity throughout the process.

Centre for Multicultural Youth

MacKillop Family Services would like to acknowledge the expertise and contributions of Centre for Multicultural Youth, who have partnered with us to develop this resource.



Cultural Mentoring Steering Committee

We thank members of the Cultural Mentoring Steering Committee for reviewing a draft of this Practice Guide.

Suggested:

Multicultural Communities – [Multicultural Communities at MacKillop](#)

References

Centre for Multicultural Youth, 'Working Effectively with Multicultural young people and families', Internal Training Resource, CRP Training, 2024

<https://refugeehealthguide.org.au/incorrect-birth-date>

Multicultural Communities at MacKillop – Multicultural Communities at MacKillop



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