



Multicultural Advisor support guide



MacKillop
Family
Services

Mackillop Family Services

Mackillop Family Services was established in 1997, with a history that dates to the 1800s and was founded on a deep commitment to caring for the most marginalised children, young people and families in our community. Mackillop provides therapeutic and trauma-informed support to vulnerable children, young people, and families. Their services include child, youth, and family support, out-of-home care, education services, and disability support, working to heal trauma, promote stability in homes, and build resilient futures for those they serve.

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.

Acknowledgment of Country

Mackillop Family Services and the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of this continent and the islands of the Torres Strait. In doing so, we acknowledge our shared history; recognise the right to self-determination and the importance of connection to and access to Country. We acknowledge and respect distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences, beliefs, values and languages.



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Introduction

This guide has been developed as part of the Building Multicultural Practice in OoHC project (formerly Cultural Mentor Program). It aims to build a shared understanding of the Multicultural Advisor role, provide guidance on common challenges, and offer strategies and reflection prompts to support your practice.

The Building Multicultural Practice in OoHC project was established to develop a good-practice model for working with multicultural young people in out-of-home care (OoHC). Building on evidence-based good-practice and the expertise of multicultural staff and clients, the model identifies and upskills staff to become Multicultural Advisors. The role of advisors is to provide coaching, guidance and assistance to other staff to support the provision of high quality, culturally appropriate and responsive care to children and young people from multicultural backgrounds.



The role of Multicultural Advisors

Multicultural Advisors are essential partners in collaborative care teams, leveraging their expertise to ensure that a child or young person in OoHC grows up with a strong, positive sense of cultural identity and belonging. Multicultural Advisors do not work directly with children, young people or families, but provide insights, advice and coaching to staff through the process of Cultural Consultations. The role supports culturally safe practice, contributes to cultural support planning, and works collaboratively with carers, caseworkers, community partners and external stakeholders (e.g., Child Protection, NDIS) to promote inclusivity, cultural awareness, and culturally responsive practice.

Key responsibilities and contributions:

- **Providing cultural expertise and consultations:** Multicultural Advisors offer specialist knowledge on the child or young persons values, spirituality, parenting practices, history of the child or young person's cultural community, impacts of intergenerational and other forms of trauma.
- **Guiding assessment and planning** by assisting the care teams in making informed, culturally appropriate assessments and developing effective case and cultural plans that build on the strengths of the family and community.
- **Troubleshooting:** Multicultural Advisors support navigating any barriers that the care team might be facing, including supporting the completion and reviewing of the Multicultural Support Plan (MSP). Advisors can help prevent misinterpretations and ensuring that practice is respectful and effective.
- **Providing practical strategies** for how the child's cultural needs will be met e.g., opportunities to practice language, culturally appropriate food, clothing and personal care practices.
- **Ensuring culturally safe placements:** Multicultural Advisors will at times be called on to help with assessing and promoting culturally safe placements.
- **Participate in monthly advisory group meetings** to share insights, strengthen practice and contribute to the development of culturally responsive resources and practices.

- **Foster connections** with community organisations, cultural groups, and stakeholders to promote culturally safe care.
- **Provide guidance in family inclusive practice** that is culturally attuned and considered.
- **Advocacy:** Multicultural Advisors advocate for the rights and needs of multicultural children and young people, ensuring that discrimination and racism is addressed. Advisors also act as a bridge between families and the out-of-home care system, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of both are understood.

Key contributions:

- **Contribute to organisational initiatives** by supporting workshops, developing organisation-wide resources, and engaging in Communities of Practice, where applicable.
- **Strengthening cultural identity and belonging:** Multicultural Advisors help children and young people to develop a strong sense of self and identity by maintaining vital connections to their culture and community, this is essential for their overall well-being and healing.
- **Guiding culturally appropriate activities:** Multicultural Advisors identify opportunities for children and young people to participate in meaningful cultural activities, such as community events, traditional arts, music, dance, and spiritual practices.
- **Informing care team practices:** Multicultural Advisors guide carers on practical strategies to support a child's cultural maintenance in daily life, such as diet, personal care practices, language use, and celebrating cultural or religious festivals.
- **Empowering the child's voice:** Multicultural Advisors ensure the child or young person's wishes and aspirations regarding their cultural journey are heard and incorporated into their Multicultural Support Plan in an age-appropriate manner.
- **Building trust in the system:** By supporting family work and adhering to cultural protocols, Multicultural Advisors help build trust between families and the whole system, a critical step given historical failures to consult adequately with these communities.

Process for supporting multicultural children and young people

An important aspect of culturally responsive planning is thoughtful consideration on how to support multicultural children, young people and their families throughout their care journey. The steps outlined below represent one recommended approach, but you are encouraged to adapt the process to align with your own context, systems, and terminology. The overarching goal is to foster meaningful cultural connections and planning that upholds the rights, identities, and lived experiences of multicultural children and young people in out-of-home care.

Immediately upon placement with your organisation

- Ensure the young person's cultural background is accurately recorded

Within 2 weeks of placement

- Book a Cultural Consultation
- Start Multicultural Support Plan (MSP)

Within 6 weeks of placement

- Book a follow-up cultural consultation
- Review and adapt Multicultural Support Plan (MSP) (if required)

Within 3 months of placement

- Multicultural Support Plan (MSP) to be endorsed

Ensure cultural planning is ongoing, not a one-time event. **Review and adapt plans regularly** to reflect changes in the child or young person's life and identity.

Multicultural Advisors play a vital role in guiding care teams to understand and respond to the cultural needs of multicultural children and young people. Your lived experience and expertise helps ensure that cultural identity, heritage, and community connections are meaningfully considered and respected throughout a child or young person's care journey. As a Multicultural Advisor you will participate in Cultural Consultations to:

- Provide insights into cultural practices, beliefs, and values relevant to the child or young person's family background.
- Help review and inform cultural planning documents to ensure they reflect the child or young person's lived experience.
- Advocate for culturally safe and inclusive practices within the care environment.

Your involvement should be ongoing and collaborative, contributing to a culturally responsive approach that centres the child or young person's identity and voice.

Multicultural Support Plans

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, centring the best interests of the child and young person. The Multicultural Support Plan is a vital tool in implementing culturally responsive practice in OoHC. It ensures that a young person's cultural identity, language, traditions, and community connections are recognised, respected and actively supported throughout their care journey.

Multicultural Advisor allocation/matching process:

Matching a care team with a Multicultural Advisor who shares the same cultural heritage as a child or young person in out-of-home care is highly important, as this shared heritage offers unique insights and support that an advisor without that connection may find difficult to provide. We also acknowledge that culturally responsive care is not the sole responsibility of Multicultural Advisors, it is a collective commitment across the entire care team.

How cultural matching supports care teams:

- **Navigating complex cultural nuances:** The Multicultural Advisor can help the care team understand and respect specific cultural practices, parenting norms (e.g., discipline styles, family functioning), and communication styles, preventing misunderstandings or conflicting expectations that could be stressful for the child or young person.
- **Providing authentic cultural information:** While a care team can be culturally responsive, a Multicultural Advisor from the same heritage brings an innate understanding of the nuances of the culture, language, and potential trauma unique to that background (e.g., settlement issues for refugees). This also ensures that the Multicultural Support Plan is meaningful and tailored to the child or young person's specific needs.
- **Improved communication:** Multicultural Advisors can help bridge communication gaps and explain practices that may otherwise be misunderstood by the care team.
- **Better support and decision-making:** Understanding the cultural context allows the care team to provide more appropriate and effective support, leading to better decision-making and care planning that respects the child and young person's cultural background.



Alternative matching scenarios

While a perfect cultural match for the care team may not always be possible, you may still offer valuable insight even if you do not share the child or young person's cultural background—such as through your own migration journey, prior work within that community, or close connections to that cultural heritage. These relationships can provide an understanding that supports culturally responsive planning. Similarly, Multicultural Advisors from the same cultural background but different tribes or religions have successfully supported care teams by offering tailored perspectives. Your ability to navigate these differences and highlight cultural subtleties is a strength. When there isn't a Multicultural Advisor available, the Multicultural Practice Lead may step in to support the process. However, your role remains vital in ensuring that cultural identity is respected and upheld.

Considerations for your role in practice

- Share your cultural knowledge with humility, curiosity and openness.
- Use your encounter conversation¹ as a reflection tool to explore your readiness and appropriateness for the match and cultural consultation participation.
- Be transparent about your lived experience and how it informs your perspective.
- Support care teams in identifying what to be curious about and how to engage the child or young person and their family members respectfully.
- Advocate for culturally safe practices and planning that reflects the child or young person's identity.
- Be comfortable and feel empowered to speak up when you are unsure of something and offer to consult with community elders. You are not expected to know everything about your culture as there are differences within the same culture.

¹ An encounter conversation, which can also be described as a 'cultural interview', is used in the process of recruiting Multicultural Advisors. Using story telling and reflections, the encounter conversation provides insight into an individual's cultural lens and worldview.

Use these questions to reflect on your role, strengths, and opportunities for growth in culturally responsive practice:

1. Cultural alignment

- In what ways does my cultural background and lived experience align with the children and young people I advise on in consultations?

2. Lived experience

- What aspects of my lived experience do I draw on when offering cultural advice?

3. Navigating differences

- What strategies do I use to respectfully acknowledge and navigate differences? (e.g., in the case where you might share the same cultural background but come from a different tribe or practice different religions)

4. Indirect cultural connections

- Have I ever supported a child or young person whose culture I connect to through a partner or close relationship? How did I ensure my advice was respectful and informed?

5. Building cultural safety

- How do I support curiosity and openness in care teams when exploring cultural identity?

6. Continuous learning

- What areas of cultural knowledge or practice would I like to deepen? What active steps can I take to ensure that I am evolving and deepening my knowledge and practice?

Matching should be informed by insights gathered through encounter conversations, including similarities in migration stories, cultural heritage, and - where relevant - religious and/or tribal affiliations.

Recommended practice

- **Match based on cultural alignment:** Wherever possible, match Multicultural Advisors with care teams based on shared or similar cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and capacity to participate in the planning process.

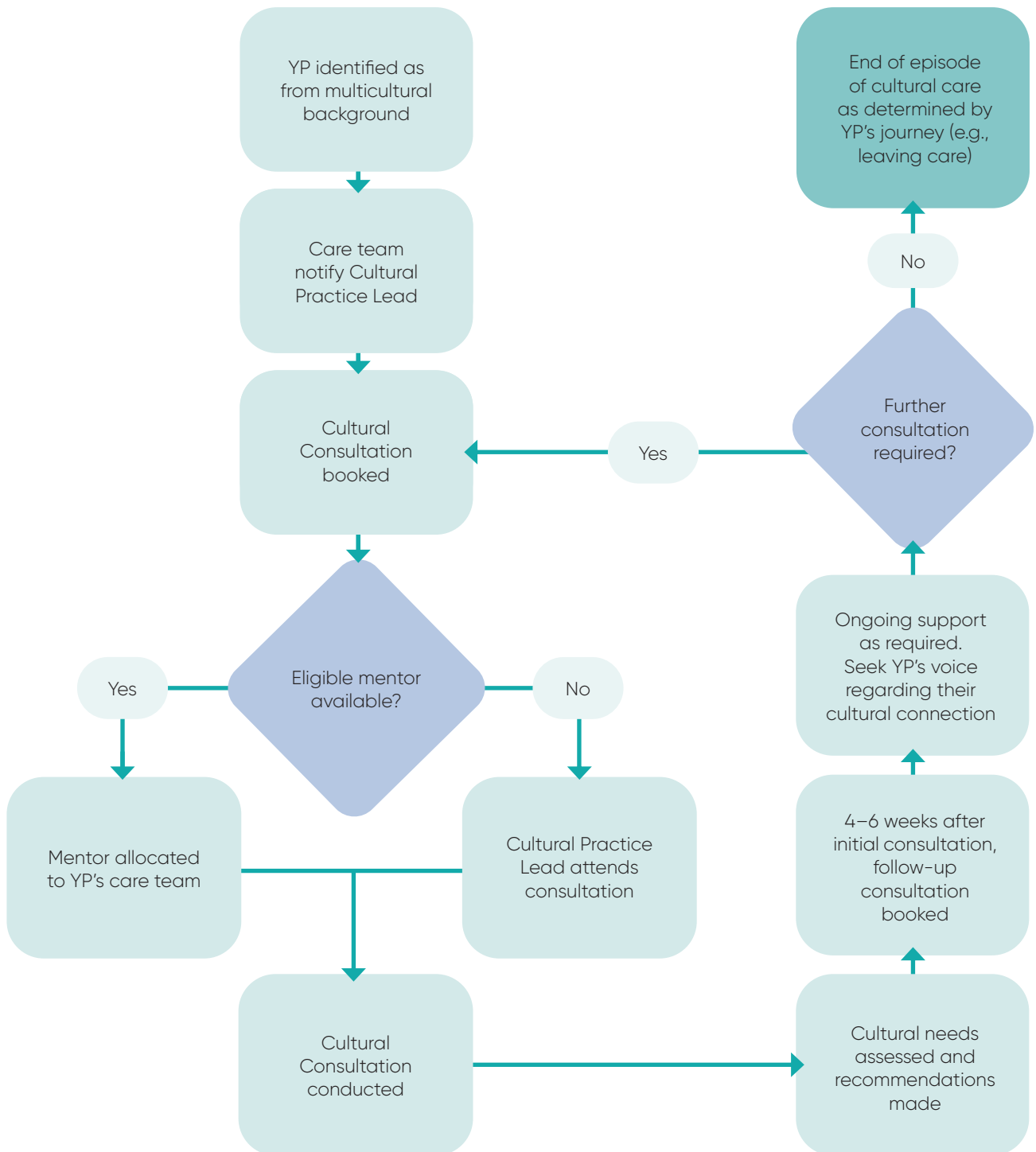
- **Use encounter conversations²:** Gather insights through encounter conversations to inform matching. Consider similarities in:
 - Migration stories
 - Cultural heritage
 - Religion
 - Tribal affiliations
 - Work experience
 - Strong connection to own culture and openness to other cultures.
- **Recognise the power of lived experience:** Matching Multicultural Advisors with similar backgrounds to the child or young person can provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of cultural identity. This lived experience brings authenticity and authority to the guidance offered.
- **Include advisors with indirect cultural connections:** In cases where a direct match is not available, consider Multicultural Advisors who have close cultural connections, e.g., through their partner's heritage. These individuals may still offer valuable cultural insight and support.
- **Utilise Multicultural Practice Leads:** When no suitable match is available, the Multicultural Practice Lead should attend to ensure culturally responsive support is maintained. Where appropriate, the Practice Lead or leadership staff may access culturally specific support and consultation through migrant resource centres or other cultural community services.
- **Remain flexible:** Recognise that perfect matches may not always be possible. Focus on creating a culturally safe and informed environment through collaboration and respectful engagement.

Implementation tips

- Maintain a diverse pool of Multicultural Advisors.
- Build relationships with community organisations to expand cultural expertise.
- Provide training to all staff, including Multicultural Advisors, on culturally responsive practice and trauma-informed care.
- Document matching rationale and outcomes to support improvement.

² An encounter conversation, which can also be described as a 'cultural interview', is used in the process of recruiting Multicultural Advisors. Using story telling and reflections, the encounter conversation provides insight into an individual's cultural lens and worldview.

Cultural Consultation process





Cultural Consultations

Cultural Consultations form a key part of the Multicultural Advisor role. The Cultural Consultation is a structured meeting that brings together key stakeholders across a care team to consider the importance of culture in the planning, decision-making and practice in relation to the care of a multicultural child, young person and their family. The role of the Multicultural Advisor is to guide the consult by providing cultural insights, support, and practical suggestions to encourage culturally responsive, relationship-based and attuned care.

Who is involved?

The care team is 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. For the Cultural Consultations to be effective and meaningful, the participation of key stakeholders is essential.



Preparing for Cultural Consultations

Before participating in a Cultural Consultation, Multicultural Advisors are encouraged to review any key information provided and reflect on how or if culture is currently considered and/or embedded into a young person's care. This might include:

- Background information: age, cultural background, protective concerns, length of time in care
- Migration journey (if applicable)
- Family interactions and observations
- Family dynamics and structure
- Community connections
- Any previous work that has already been undertaken to support cultural identity or cultural connection (this may be found in an existing Multicultural Support Plan)
- Language and communication
- Family involvement
- How connected the young person is to their culture
- Customs, routines and rituals.

Note: Multicultural Advisors may occasionally encounter situations where the listed cultural background of a child or young person is inaccurate or incomplete. This can occur due to limited initial information, assumptions, or administrative errors.

Recommended approach:

- **Sensitivity and curiosity**

If you suspect the listed cultural background may be incorrect, raise the concern gently and respectfully. Use curiosity to explore the child or young person's identity further, allowing space for clarification or correction.

- **Document observations thoughtfully**

If relevant, include notes in your advisory feedback that highlight potential discrepancies and suggest further exploration. This helps ensure cultural planning remains accurate and respectful.

- **Support cultural safety**

Emphasise the importance of cultural safety. Inaccurate cultural information can impact the child or young person's care experience, identity, sense of belonging and connection, so it's essential to ensure records are correct to support culturally informed care.

Family inclusive practice as a core feature of Cultural Consultations

Wherever possible, family inclusive practice should be embedded throughout the cultural consultation process to ensure that the voices, values, and lived experiences of families are central to planning and decision-making. It is important to understand and incorporate family perspectives, recognising that culture is carried and expressed through familial relationships, traditions, and community connections. This approach supports culturally safe and responsive care by:

- **Engaging families as cultural knowledge holders**, acknowledging their irreplaceable role in shaping the child or young person's identity and sense of belonging.
- **Facilitating culturally appropriate communication**, ensuring that families feel heard, respected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully.
- **Collaborating with families and communities** to include family and cultural perspectives that reflect cultural strengths and uphold the rights of children and young people to know and be connected to their culture.

Please note: It is important to find out about the case plan and appropriateness of family contact from the house supervisor or case manager before involving family members.



During Cultural Consultations

Multicultural Advisors guide reflective conversation, facilitate critical thinking and coaching to the care team to:

- Recognise cultural strengths, wealth and sacredness
- Identify opportunities to strengthen cultural safety and connection, guided by the young person
- Navigate any misunderstandings, challenges or gaps in understanding
- Support bridging the gap between the system and families
- Offer new ways of working with the families.

Common themes that may arise in Cultural Consults include: cultural identity, language, migration experience, family dynamics, grief and loss, rituals, taboos, or community connection. Young people will often have different levels of connectedness to their culture. Some will want to learn more and explore what culture means to them, while others may not.

Key steps in the consultation process

Preparation (before the meeting)

Read any information provided by the Cultural Practice Lead and/or the care team. This may include: identity factors, language needs, migration history, family/kin network, existing cultural practices/rituals, education and health considerations.

With the support of the Cultural Practice Lead, confirm roles, decision rights and psychological and cultural safety arrangements (e.g., how to raise concerns about bias).

It is important to review the information again during the Cultural Consultation. Having key members of the care team present is critical, as each member often holds unique and valuable insights based on how long they have worked with the family and the nature of their relationship with them.

During the consult:

Begin with an Acknowledgment of Country; outline the consultation purpose and ground rules.

Cultural Consultation template

This template is designed to guide reflective discussions during consultations. It helps Multicultural Advisors work collaboratively with care teams to identify, plan, and implement strategies that maintain and strengthen a child or young person's cultural identity, belonging, and connection. Adapt it as needed to suit individual circumstances.

Child or young person's details

Begin by gathering or confirming key information about the child or young person. This ensures cultural planning is tailored to their unique identity and background.

- Name:
- Date of Birth:
- Cultural/Ethnic Background(s):
- Primary Language(s) Spoken:
- Religious/Spiritual Affiliation (if any):

Family and community connections

Explore the child's family relationships and community links. Understanding these connections helps maintain cultural continuity and strengthens identity.

- **Birth family details:** Names, contact information, and the child's relationship with parents, siblings, extended family, and kinship networks.
- **Community links:** Details of relevant community groups, cultural associations, or local leaders who can support the child's cultural connection.
- **Country of origin/heritage:** Understanding of their family's migration or settlement experiences, including any trauma related to war, persecution, or the settlement process.

Cultural identity and practice

Identify specific cultural needs and practices that should be respected and supported in care planning.

Cultural needs assessment: Identification of specific cultural needs, including:

- **Language maintenance:** Plans for the child to speak, learn, or maintain their birth language.
- **Dietary requirements:** Culturally appropriate food preferences and restrictions.
- **Dress and grooming:** Customs regarding clothing, hair care, and personal presentation.
- **Religious/spiritual practices:** Arrangements for attending religious services or participating in spiritual traditions.

Significant events: Plans for celebrating important cultural holidays, festivals, or life events (e.g., coming of age).

Goals and action plan

Use this section to set specific goals and actions that support the child or young person's cultural identity and connections. These goals will support care teams to implement meaningful, culturally informed plans.

- **Goals:** Identify age-appropriate goals that strengthen the child or young person's cultural identity and connection, and outline the steps needed to achieve them.
- **Activities/programs:** Recommend cultural activities, events, and programs (e.g., language classes, religious or spiritual gatherings).
- **Resource identification:** Suggest culturally relevant books, music, and resources for the child and their carers.
- **Carer support:** Ensure carers have the information and tools they need to implement the plan, including access to interpreters and culturally responsive practice training.
- **Responsibilities:** Clearly assign tasks to the appropriate person (e.g., caseworker, carer, family member, community contact).

- **Time frames:** Set deadlines for actions and schedule review dates to keep the plan relevant and responsive to the child or young person's evolving needs.
- **Review date:** Agree on a follow-up consultation and update the plan as needed.

After Cultural Consultations: Debriefing and reflection for Multicultural Advisors

Cultural Consultations can surface complex, sensitive, and emotionally charged issues. After each consultation, it is important that you take intentional time to debrief and reflect. This supports wellbeing and strengthens practice.

Recommended actions

1. Schedule a debrief

Arrange a debrief with the Multicultural Practice Lead to discuss key themes, challenges, and any follow-up actions. This is an opportunity to reflect on your role, clarify uncertainties, and receive guidance.

2. Seek peer or organisation support

If the consultation raised difficult or emotionally taxing issues, discuss with your supervisor/manager, consider connecting with a trusted peer or accessing your organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential support.

3. Engage in reflective practice

Use reflective questions to review the consultation process, assess the impact of your advice, and plan for future engagement. Reflection helps build cultural humility, deepen insight, and improve practice over time.

4. Plan for follow-up

It is recommended that a follow-up consultation is scheduled approximately 4-6 weeks after the initial consult. This allows time for care teams to implement the recommendations/action plan and for advisors to revisit cultural planning with a fresh perspective.

Reflective practice questions

Use these questions to guide your post-consultation reflection with the Multicultural Practice Lead or in supervision with your supervisor/manager:

1. Consultation experience

- a. What went well during the consultation?
- b. Were there moments that felt challenging or unclear?
- c. How did I feel during and after the consultation?

2. Cultural advice

- a. Was my advice culturally informed and relevant to the child or young person's identity?
- b. Did I feel confident in the cultural connections I drew upon?
- c. Were there areas where I needed more information or support?

3. Engagement with care teams

- a. How did the care team respond to my advice?
- b. Did I notice any shifts in their understanding or curiosity about culture?
- c. What could I do differently to strengthen collaboration?

4. Personal impact

- a. Did any part of the consultation resonate with my own lived experience?
- b. What emotions or thoughts did the consultation bring up for me?
- c. How am I caring for my own wellbeing in this work?

5. Planning ahead

- a. What follow-up actions are needed?
- b. What would I like to explore further in the next consultation?
- c. Are there resources or supports I need before the next consultation?
- d. Do I need to consult with a community leader or service?



Applying culturally responsive practice to working with care teams

As a Multicultural Advisor, your lived experience is a powerful strength that can build trust, deepen cultural insights, and support authentic engagement with care teams. You may have relevant cultural knowledge or experience to draw upon, particularly if you share a similar cultural background to the child or young person being discussed.

However, sharing your lived experience is entirely your choice. It is personal, diverse, and not a requirement of your role. You are encouraged to share only what feels right for you. Instead, your practice can be guided by culturally responsive practice strategies that support reflection, respectful dialogue, and meaningful cultural planning. These strategies can also be used to facilitate conversations about culture with care teams, helping them build cultural awareness and confidence in cross-cultural work.

1. Self-reflection and awareness

Reflect on your own experiences of culture and any assumptions you hold. As a Multicultural Advisor encourage the care teams to do the same. Remind them that *everyone has culture*, and that culturally responsive practice begins with self-awareness. Let the child or young person lead conversations about their culture and support care teams to follow their lead.

What this could sound like: *"We all bring our own cultural lens to this work. Let's take a moment to reflect on how our assumptions might be shaping our approach."*

2. Learn through curiosity and openness

Approach cultural conversations with curiosity, humility, and a nonjudgmental attitude. Recognise that children and young people may have bicultural or multicultural identities, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to cultural planning.

What this could sound like: *"That's a really complex situation, I am not from that cultural background, but I would suggest asking the young person how they would like to proceed."*

3. Shared responsibility for learning

Encourage care teams to take responsibility for their own cultural learning. Recommend culturally responsive practice training and

relevant resources. Emphasise that cultural learning is lifelong and ongoing - even after formal training.

What this could sound like: *"I encourage all of us to keep learning about the cultures of the young people we work with. It's not about getting it perfect—it's about staying open, curious, and committed to learning together."*

4. Working within family and community contexts

Support care teams to consider the child or young person's family, kin and community connections. Encourage them to explore ways to engage with families and communities respectfully and create opportunities for the families of children and young people to contribute to their cultural stories and traditions. Use interpreting services³ when needed.

What this could sound like: *"I'm not familiar with that cultural practice, but it sounds like a great opportunity to engage with the family and find out more about their culture."*

5. Trauma-informed cultural practice

Keep trauma-informed principles present throughout consultations. Recognise that children and young people in care may have experienced trauma, including through migration or displacement. Cultural connection may take time, and some young people may not be ready to engage in cultural conversations. Remind the team to go slow, and don't force the young person to share or connect with culture.

What this could sound like: *"It's important we don't rush them into any discussions about their background—they might not be ready to talk, and that's okay. Let's be patient, let them set the pace, and show them that we're here to support them however they need."*

There is a list of recommended resources at the end of this guide to help you build your understanding of specific cultures. These can be shared with the care team when appropriate. However, it's important to remember that not everyone has the same connection to or experience of their culture. Any research should be used as background information - not as a definitive representation of the child or young person's identity.

³ TIS National provides phone, video and on-site services, including a Free Interpreting Service for eligible providers.

Reflective practice questions

Use these questions to reflect on your role and approach as a Multicultural Advisor:

1. What aspects of my lived experience do I feel comfortable sharing in my advisory role?
2. How do I ensure my cultural advice is respectful and relevant to the child/young person's experience, and not based on assumptions?
3. In what ways do I support care teams to reflect on their own cultural lens?
4. How do I respond when I'm unfamiliar with a cultural practice or background?
5. What strategies do I use to stay open and curious in cross-cultural conversations?
6. How do I balance cultural advice with trauma-informed practice?
7. What resources or supports help me continue growing in my role?
8. Am I consciously taking steps to challenge my own assumptions and consider information from different perspectives?





Sustaining culturally responsive practice and wellbeing

Culturally responsive practice requires Multicultural Advisors to navigate complex situations with care and self-awareness. This includes maintaining clear role boundaries, understanding what aspects of cultural guidance can be shared, and recognising when to defer to the child or young person, their family or community for insight.

Clarifying your role and boundaries

Multicultural Advisors often hold multiple responsibilities across personal and professional contexts. Clarifying your role with the care team helps set expectations, builds confidence and protects your wellbeing. If you're unsure about your boundaries, refer to your position description or seek guidance from the Multicultural Practice Lead and your supervisor/manager. Using strength-based language to describe your scope of practice can help others to understand how to work with you respectfully and collaboratively.

What this could sound like:

"Just to clarify my role as a Multicultural Support Advisor, I'm here to provide guidance on cultural considerations and support the team in thinking about how culture may influence care. I'm curious about how we could find out more from the young person or their family's perspective."

Strategies for sustaining practice:

- Discuss your role with your supervisor/manager and team regularly.
- Reflect on your personal values and capacity, especially when navigating emotionally complex consultations.
- Consider how you can communicate your capacity to wider care teams and define your role in a way that feels clear and respectful.
- Access support structures to maintain wellbeing and strengthen practice.

Support structures

- **Regular supervision:** Use supervision with your Multicultural Practice Lead and supervisor/manager to debrief consultations, reflect on how your advice was received, and explore ways to centre the child or young person's perspective in your practice.
- **Advisory Group meetings:** Meeting regularly as a group of Multicultural Advisors is beneficial to share your experiences, reflect on your practice and contributes to collaborative learning. Advisory Group meetings offer a space for deep listening, shared reflection and collective support, where you can draw on the knowledge of the group and the Multicultural Practice Lead – particularly in the case where there are challenges or knowledge gaps. Collective learning occurs through sharing good news stories and practice that led to positive outcomes. Your participation will help strengthen your culturally responsive practice and build a peer support network.
- **Ongoing training:** Participate in Culturally Responsive Practice Training and other professional development opportunities to continue growing your skills and confidence.
- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** Access confidential support through your organisation's EAP when needed, especially after emotionally challenging consultations.

These structures help you reflect on your experiences, manage the emotional and professional demands of your role, and continue guiding care teams in culturally responsive ways without compromising your own wellbeing.



Responding to resistance and discrimination

Advocating for culturally safe practice may sometimes be met with resistance or discrimination. This can be difficult to navigate, but it's important to know that there is no tolerance for discriminatory behaviour in any context.

Recommended actions:

- Seek support from your supervisor and relevant HR department. Most organisations have clear policies and procedures (e.g., anti-bullying, anti-racism, complaints processes) to address these issues.
- Use Advisory Group meetings to discuss strategies for responding to resistance and navigating difficult conversations with care teams.
- Access EAP support if the experience has impacted your wellbeing.





Cultural load in Multicultural Advisor roles

Even in a paid Multicultural Advisor role, the cultural load persists because:

- **Emotional and relational labour**
Cultural advisors often act as cultural bridges, mediating misunderstandings and supporting others through culturally sensitive issues. This work can be fulfilling but also emotionally taxing.
- **Expectations to “speak for” a whole community**
Advisors may be implicitly expected to represent all multicultural perspectives, placing an unfair and unrealistic burden on one person.
- **Constant advocacy fatigue**
They may repeatedly have to justify the importance of inclusion, explain cultural issues, and/or discuss issues of racism and discrimination which may lead to burnout.
- **Invisible expertise**
Cultural knowledge and lived experience can be undervalued, and perceived as interpersonal strengths, instead of being recognised as specialised professional expertise.

Addressing cultural load

Organisations can take steps to reduce the cultural load on Multicultural Advisors so that this responsibility is not solely on the advisors. These are the steps:

1. Recognise cultural expertise as a valued form of professional knowledge.
2. Ensure shared responsibility for inclusion, not leaving it solely to Multicultural Advisors.
3. Provide professional supervision or peer support tailored to the emotional and cultural aspects of the role.
4. Include cultural load in workload planning and performance frameworks.
5. Invest in cultural responsive practice training for all staff, to reduce reliance on Multicultural Advisors as educators.

Practical ways to support yourself

1. Set clear boundaries

Define what is (and isn't) part of your role. It's okay to say no to additional requests that go beyond your capacity or formal responsibilities.

2. Seek supervision or mentorship

Find a trusted supervisor, mentor, or coach who understands the dynamics of cultural work. Regular reflection can help you process challenges safely.

3. Build peer connections

Connect with other cultural advisors or diversity practitioners. Peer networks provide validation, shared strategies, and a sense of solidarity.

4. Prioritises self-care and recovery

Make time for rest, reflection, and activities that restore you, such as cultural practices, time with family, or creative expression.

5. Acknowledge emotional impact

Recognise that emotional fatigue is a normal response to ongoing advocacy and representation. Give yourself permission to feel and to rest.

6. Stay grounded in culture and community

Cultural connection can be a powerful source of resilience and pride. Engage with your language, traditions, and community networks regularly.

Remember that your insight and lived experience bring vital richness to your workplace and community but they should never come at the expense of your wellbeing. Taking care of yourself allows you to continue your work with clarity, strength, and purpose.

Additional resources

General information about culture, data, and supporting culturally responsive practice in out-of-home care:

Australian Bureau of Statistics – Cultural Diversity Data

- User-friendly summaries and interactive tools showing where cultural groups live, languages spoken, and migration patterns.
- Helps practitioners understand the local demographic context.

Supporting cultural needs: Working with culturally and linguistically diverse children in OoHC

- A recorded webinar (and transcript) that summarises research and practical tips for working with CALD children in OoHC – useful for teams who prefer audio/visual learning.

Emerging Minds - How to support meaningful participation for children in out-of-home care

- A step-by-step guide for practitioners on supporting children's voices and active participation in decision-making. Includes practical strategies and reflection questions.

NSW Government: Caring for children from diverse cultural backgrounds

- Supports carers with strategies for cultural maintenance, dealing with discrimination, and accessing community supports and services.

STARTTS & Australian Association of Social Workers (NSW Branch): Working with people from refugee backgrounds: A guide for Social Workers

- This guide offers Social Workers a comprehensive framework of definitions, trauma-informed approaches, cross-cultural skills, and settings-specific strategies to support people from refugee backgrounds in settlement and wellbeing.

SBS Cultural Atlas

- Covers 100+ cultural and religious groups in Australia.
- Plain-language guides with sections like communication, values, family, etiquette, religion, and naming conventions.

Resources for Multicultural Advisors

Bilingual Staff Research Project Report

- This report provides insights and recommendations on how organisations can better support and utilise bilingual staff in their work with migrant and refugee communities.

Addressing the Strengths and Complexities of Bicultural Youth and Family Work

- This resource supports Multicultural Advisors by offering definitions, context, and practical strategies to help organisations understand and strengthen bicultural youth and family work.

Youth Affairs Council Victoria: Creating safer spaces

- This YACVic resource outlines principles, environments, and practices for creating 'safe spaces' that support young people's emotional, physical, cultural, and psychological safety—especially considering trauma, accessibility, and diversity.





Acknowledgements and Contributions

Centre for Multicultural Youth

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a non-profit organisation based in Victoria, Australia. We've been shaping culture for more than 35 years. Our purpose is to create a society where multicultural young people live a life where they are connected and can fully reach their potential.



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