

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness

Northern Support Services (NSS) aspires to be an organisation that is physically, culturally and emotionally safe; where there is no assault on, challenge to or denial of people's identity, understandings, needs or person. Everyone involved in NSS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing and safety of our clients, our employees, and other key stakeholders. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable persons including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability. NSS is resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in providing services through NSS promote the inherent dignity and fundamental right of all our clients to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment. This commitment is reflected in our mission and vision and put into practice through our policies and procedures.

Policy

NSS supports a diverse community. In doing so, NSS values and respects the uniqueness and diversity of Indigenous culture, society and history, particularly of the Indigenous people of Victoria, and values and respects Elders as the keepers of this rich history. NSS recognises the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and promotes respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout the organisation. It is through recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences that NSS works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

NSS particularly understands the importance of family in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and works with families as well as the participants in NSS programs.

NSS acknowledges the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture and peoples and recognises NSS's responsibility to work towards reconciliation.

Purpose

This policy and procedure sets out the procedures for supporting and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and/or families at NSS.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, participants and nominees in NSS services.

This section should also include a statement detailing how interested parties and internal and external issues were determined in relation to this policy and procedure.

References/Legislation

- Disability Act 2006
- Human Services Standards
- Aboriginal Culturally Informed Addendum to Human Services Standards Evidence Guide (2015)
- Department of Human Services, 2008 Aboriginal Cultural Competence Matrix

- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (2013)
- Child Safe Standards

Procedures

Self-Determination and Reconciliation

NSS will demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and to the process of reconciliation by:

- Development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Conducting regular training in cultural competence
- Establishing links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services
- Acknowledging the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria, and stating that we pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future in all our email correspondence

Cultural Safety and Responsive Practice

Culturally safe, respectful and responsive practices at NSS include:

- Implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Ensuring employees recruited to the organisation are culturally competent
- Providing employees with cultural awareness training from recognised providers
- Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are made aware of the processes to make a complaint or compliment regarding NSS services in an easy to read or culturally appropriate format
- Displaying symbols that indicate support and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (e.g. language maps, significant dates)

Cross-Cultural Practice and Care

- NSS actively consults with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to develop activities appropriate for clients and their families to ensure that all practices are person and family centred
- Feedback is also obtained from clients and/or families regarding the service

Responsibilities

Title	Responsibility
All employees	Respond to people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in culturally appropriate way
Managers and Coordinators	Ensures all staff receive training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence

Definitions

Word	Definition
Culture	Forms and goals of interactions among members of a group, and how they understand and communicate with one another.
Cultural sensitivity	Appreciating that there are differences among cultures.
Cultural competence	Being skilled in understanding interactions among members of a culture on their own terms.
Cultural safety	The outcome of interactions where individuals experience their cultural identity and way of being as having been respected or, at least, not challenged or harmed.
Reconciliation	Reconciliation as a term refers to making two sides amicable and compatible and becoming resigned to and accepting of differences. Reconciliation as an activity in the Australian context aims to facilitate and promote building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.