



Incorporating Multicultural Resource Centre

fka
**Children's Services
Bicultural Support**



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fka Children's Services (fkaCS) is a not-for-profit service that provides Bicultural Support, advice, consultancy, training and resources to Victorian children's services. Our vision is for all children to have access to quality Early Childhood Education and Care services that recognise and value diversity where:

- Skilled staff incorporate multicultural perspectives in all programming*
- The maintenance and development of languages other than English is promoted and children are supported to learn English as an Additional Language*
- Children from all cultural backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate and achieve*

fkaCS Bicultural Support builds the capacity of children's services to meet the needs of children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and supports the development of culturally competent educational programs and practices.



What is Bicultural Support?

Bicultural Support is provided by *fkaCS* to children's services throughout Victoria. It offers children's services access to skilled and experienced professionals who provide specific language and cultural assistance to help enrol and settle children from CALD backgrounds.

fkaCS has a team of experienced children's services consultants who are available to provide support to educators working in children's services. The support provided will depend on the specific needs of the service and may include:

- Telephone support and onsite advice regarding cultural and child-rearing practices of families from CALD backgrounds
- Onsite visits from a qualified and experienced *fkaCS* consultant to support educators in developing culturally competent programs and practices
- Onsite support from an *fkaCS* bilingual worker who speaks the home language of the child to assist them to settle and participate in the early childhood program
- Resources for educators and translated information for parents
- Access to the *fkaCS* resource library
- Professional learning opportunities

Why access Bicultural Support?

'Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live...' (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, 1989)

Bicultural Support enhances children's learning and wellbeing, values identity and supports children and families from CALD backgrounds to develop a sense of belonging within children's services. Supporting children and families from CALD backgrounds to settle and enrol in children's services is an extremely important step in building respectful, supportive and collaborative partnerships with families (ACECQA, 2011). Children and families from CALD backgrounds, may feel overwhelmed by the new and unfamiliar environment and language of a children's service. Children may be distressed or disengaged from the program and educators may find it challenging to communicate with the family. *fkaCS* Bicultural Support has been developed in line with the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and My Time, Our Place - Framework for School Age Care in Australia. The presence of an *fkaCS* bilingual worker provides the opportunity for children and families to hear their home language and demonstrates that the service values and respects children's cultural and linguistic rights. Children, families and educators are able to communicate more effectively, which assists in bridging communication gaps that may exist when families and educators do not have a shared language. The *fkaCS* bilingual worker can also inform the educator of common cultural practices and share key words in the home language. Educators become more informed of the needs, interests, expectations and cultural practices of the child and family, and build their capacity to implement culturally competent programs and practices.

What is Cultural Competence?

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia defines cultural competence as 'much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures' (DEEWR, 2009, p.16). To effectively develop respectful and supportive relationships with all children and families, educators need to value the influence that culture has on experiences, understandings, expectations and practices. Cultural competency is a lens applied to our thoughts and actions when working with children and families. It enhances our ability to support children's identity, sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Cultural competence is referred to as a journey or continuum because there is no end to culturally competent practices and understandings. No individual can be deemed 'competent' in any one particular culture as the very nature of culture is fluid and experienced differently by all people. Therefore, cultural competence is not the ability to be 'competent in a culture', rather the ability to competently work with children and families from all cultural backgrounds. Cultural Competency is defined as 'a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or professional and enable that system, agency or professional to work effectively in cross-cultural situations' (Cross, 1989, cited in New York State Citizens Coalition for Children, Inc., 2006). One of the first steps towards cultural competence is to reflect on your own world view and how that has been influenced by the cultural values implicit in your life. Educators who identify the cultural influences in their own experiences and perspectives are able to recognise that others also experience life in a cultural context. This understanding can assist children's services to embed cultural perspectives throughout all programs, practices, policies and relationships to create a culturally rich and safe environment for all children and families.

For support on your cultural competence journey please contact *fkaCS* on 9428 4471.

Where do you currently sit on the Cultural Competence Continuum?

TOWARDS CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural Proficiency

Service holds culture in high esteem and seeks to add to knowledge base of culturally competent practice by conducting research. For example, services that implement philosophies that recognise the importance of culture as central to identity and wellbeing, advocate for all children's cultural and linguistic rights and promote self determination. Services that employ educators and staff from CALD backgrounds and encourage the use and development of languages other than English in all children and employees.



Cultural Competence

Demonstrates respect for all cultures and awareness of the privileged position of the dominant culture. For example, services that implement continuous reflective practice, value culturally competent practices in all aspects of service, engage in continuous expansion of knowledge and resources, and employ educators and staff that represent the diversity of the community.



Cultural Pre-competence

Aware of the need to develop service capacity to effectively engage children and families from CALD backgrounds. For example, services that acknowledge the importance of addressing cultural diversity but lack the ability to recognise and respond to cultural influences. This can sometimes lead to tokenistic practices as services may attempt to address culture by only including stereotypical imagery and understandings.



Cultural Blindness

Belief that all children and families are the same. For example, services that exhibit a lack of value for a child's cultural and family practices (such as eating and resting preferences) and/or hold lower expectations for children from some cultures. Services that have a lack of awareness of the impact that cultural exclusion has on a child's wellbeing.



Cultural Incapacity

Lack of capacity to support children and families from CALD backgrounds due to extremely biased beliefs and a paternal attitude towards those not of the dominant culture. For example, services that encourage children and families to assimilate to the dominant culture, ignore cultural strengths and demonstrate little value for children's cultural and linguistic rights.



Cultural Destructiveness

Attitudes, policies & practices that are destructive to a culture and subsequently to individuals within that culture. For example, services that insist all children speak only the language of the dominant group, e.g. English. Services which refuse to accommodate, or disrespect religious and culturally significant family practices.

Who is eligible for Bicultural Support?

All children's services can access Bicultural Support from *fkaCS*. Services may include, but are not limited to, Kindergartens, Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Occasional Care, Outside School Hours Care, Vacation Care and Schools.

Victorian government funded children's services (state funded Kindergarten programs) can access Bicultural Support at no cost.

All other services can access Bicultural Support on a fee-for-service basis and may be eligible for government funding towards the cost through the Inclusion Support Programme.

For further information on eligibility for your service call *fkaCS* on 03 9428 4471.

Want to access Bicultural Support?



Contact *fkaCS* on 03 9428 4471

An *fkaCS* consultant will provide immediate phone support and discuss your options. Your service may be eligible for government funded Bicultural Support. Visit www.fka.org.au/bicultural-support for more information.



We'll listen to your needs and provide customised recommendations

We'll explain the types of support options available, associated costs and eligibility for government funding.



We'll develop a Bicultural Support Action Plan in collaboration with you and your team

An *fkaCS* consultant will provide phone support, strategies and resources. Professional development options and support visits by a consultant and/or a bilingual worker will be organised as needed.

Bicultural Support Stories

*Names have been changed for confidentiality

1

SUPPORTING YING

A long day care service in the northern suburbs of Melbourne recently requested Bicultural Support for educators in their three year old room. Ying*, a three year old child from a Chinese background had just started attending and was highly distressed when at the service. The primary educator of the room initially contacted *fkaCS* with some challenges they were facing in settling and communicating with Ying and her grandmother. Ying had only been at the service for a few weeks, she would cry most of the day and was extremely distressed at drop-off time. Lunch and rest time were very challenging as she wouldn't eat anything and stood at the door crying. The educators also noticed that Ying's grandmother found it challenging to leave her in the morning and would stand outside the door and peer through the window. An *fkaCS* consultant provided the educators with useful strategies to support Ying in the room and valuable information about learning English as an additional language. It was decided that a bilingual worker was required and *fkaCS* bilingual worker Lin* was organised to visit the service.

During Lin's first visit, she worked with the educators to support Ying on her arrival in the morning. Lin spoke to her in Mandarin and provided Ying's grandmother with reassurance that her granddaughter was safe at the service. The presence of Lin provided Ying's grandmother and the educators with opportunities to ask questions and build a positive relationship. Through this communication, the educators were informed that Ying was hand-fed at home. The *fkaCS* consultant encouraged the educators to implement this practice for Ying at the service, highlighting the importance of incorporating familiar home practices in the program for children and families. With Lin's support, the educators were

able to communicate with Ying and learnt that the reason she was crying at the door was because she couldn't access her bag. This was an easy fix and once Ying had access to her bag she was much more settled throughout the day.

By the time Lin completed her visits, the educators noticed positive changes in Ying's behaviour. She no longer cried when her grandmother dropped her off in the morning and on one occasion she even smiled on arrival! She was more engaged in the program and was beginning to show interest in playing with the other children. The educators also noticed that by feeding Ying at meal times, she was eating all of her lunch and was much happier in the afternoon. Key words in Mandarin that were provided by Lin were useful during transition times and educators found that other children were very interested to hear another spoken language. They were also surprised that the presence of Lin speaking Mandarin supported another child from a Chinese background to develop his confidence and begin to use Mandarin in the room.

Accessing Bicultural Support helped the educators along their journey of cultural competence as they began to realise the importance of incorporating the home language and implementing culturally competent practices within the service. With Lin to support communication, they were able to develop positive relationships with Ying and her grandmother, and the educators gained a better understanding of their home practices. The educators have continued to implement many of the strategies learnt through *fkaCS* Bicultural Support and are now applying this knowledge to support other children and families from CALD backgrounds.



2

SUPPORTING DANIEL

Jill* was an experienced early childhood educator working in a large occasional child care service in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. She contacted *fkaCS* to help her to support Daniel*, a child who had been recently enrolled at her service. Daniel was originally from Iran and his family had been in Australia for only five months. They had spent most of his life detained in refugee camps. At the time of the support, Daniel and his family were unable to speak any English and communicated in Farsi. Both Daniel's parents had been professionals in Iran but were now unable to work due to visa restrictions.

Jill called *fkaCS* very concerned about Daniel's behavior and suspected he may have some developmental delays. She recounted her experiences of him at the service where he would repeatedly try to 'escape' and would often take food scraps from the plates of other children when they had finished eating. He also exhibited protective behaviours that appeared aggressive. He was disruptive during group activities and at other times seemed completely disengaged. Jill also said she was unable to communicate with his parents to discuss her concerns.

When she first contacted *fkaCS*, Jill was immediately given strategies to support her communication with Daniel and his parents. *fkaCS* bilingual worker Adeleh* was organised to attend the service to support Daniel and the *fkaCS* consultant offered to facilitate a parent meeting between Daniel's parents and Jill with Adeleh's support.

Adeleh went to visit Daniel soon after and reported that he was highly articulate and a very intelligent and imaginative child. She played with him and found him to be friendly and excited to have someone with whom he could talk and play.

Daniel told Adeleh that he didn't really understand what the educators or other children were saying to him and he didn't like being there. He also talked to her about his experiences in detention. Adeleh was able to translate what Daniel was saying to the educator and provide significant insight into how he felt about himself, his past experiences and why he behaved the way he did. Jill came to understand that even though Daniel was now in a safe environment, his past experiences had led him to develop protective strategies to help him feel powerful and safe. She began to see Daniel's strengths and could view him in a positive light even though his behavior had been challenging for her in the past.

A meeting was arranged between Jill and Daniel's mother Irsa*. The *fkaCS* consultant facilitated the meeting and Adeleh translated for all involved. Irsa explained that Daniel had witnessed a great deal of violence in detention and was visibly upset by the fact that she could not shield him from this as a young child. Irsa repeatedly apologised to Jill for Daniel's behavior and offered to keep him at home. Jill reassured Irsa that she did not want Daniel to be kept at home and the *fkaCS* consultant explained to Irsa that Daniel was not 'bad' and has a right to be safe and supported by the service. Together, the *fkaCS* consultant, Jill and Irsa developed strategies to encourage positive behavior from Daniel and ways in which Jill could further support his family.

Throughout the support, Daniel's behavior improved significantly and his sense of security and belonging at the service increased. Overall, the support offered by both the *fkaCS* consultant and bilingual worker resulted in a much happier child, family and educator.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do we know if we need Bicultural Support?

The need for Bicultural Support is identified when a family from a CALD background begins at a service and support is required to settle or enrol a child. A service may also request Bicultural Support for a child from a CALD background who is already enrolled and requires support for settling and communication.

How long will the support go for?

The length of support to be provided depends on the needs of the child and service. Bicultural Support will always involve access to an *fkaCS* consultant. In some circumstances, it is not necessary for an *fkaCS* bilingual worker to visit a service. In these instances, consultancy and resources will be provided. Services can also access consultancy support at any time over the phone from *fkaCS*.

Does the *fkaCS* bilingual worker teach the child English?

No. The purpose of a bilingual worker is to support communication and maintain the home language of the child within the service. Incorporating the home language supports the child's identity and wellbeing. This often increases the child's confidence to attempt communication in both English and their home language.

Can the *fkaCS* bilingual worker be included in the child/staff ratio?

No. All bilingual workers have obtained a Working with Children Check. However, they are not employed by *fkaCS* as qualified educators and cannot be included in the child/staff ratio. The purpose of the bilingual worker is to work with the educators in the service to support the child in their home language.

Does *fkaCS* translate documents into languages other than English?

Educators can access a range of translated information for families by contacting *fkaCS*.

Is there a cost to the children's service for Bicultural Support?

Victorian government funded children's services (state funded Kindergarten programs) can access Bicultural Support at no cost. All other services can access Bicultural Support on a fee-for-service basis and some may be eligible for government funding towards the cost through the Inclusion Support Programme. Contact *fkaCS* on (03) 9428 4471 to find out more.

Does Bicultural Support involve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

fkaCS provides Bicultural Support specifically for children from CALD backgrounds. For further information regarding support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children please contact the Victorian Inclusion Agency via 1800 177 017 / www.viac.com.au or the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Early Years Team on (03) 9651 3353.





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Acknowledgments

Jade Fraser, Christine Speziale, Pockett Photography, Boroondara Kindergarten and Hello Creative

“The fact that the rights of children are recognized as the rights of all children is the sign of a more accomplished humanity.”

Loris Malaguzzi



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