

# National Survey on Cultural Safety Training

## Introduction

This fact sheet outlines the outcomes of the national survey conducted by the Australian Commission on Quality and Safety in Health Care (the Commission). The survey focussed on the type and extent of training in cultural safety being undertaken by health service organisations and strategies for improving training.

The Commission's aim in conducting this work was to better understand training programs being delivered across health services nationally and what constitutes a good cultural safety training program.

Cultural training is provided by health service organisations to meet the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards. Action 1.21 that states:

The health services organisation has strategies to improve cultural safety and cultural competency of the workforce to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients

Health service organisations can improve cultural safety, patient experience and quality of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the implementation of effective cultural safety training as described in this fact sheet.

## Why is cultural safety training important?

Cultural safety calls on the health professional, their healthcare organisation and the wider health system, to reflect on their own culture, values, beliefs, attitudes and power to bring about a change in the patient-provider interaction.

Importantly, cultural safety is only achieved when a health consumer has deemed the interaction is culturally safe, rather than the healthcare professional determining that culturally safe practice has been achieved.

Training in cultural safety provides the opportunity for:

- Whole-of-organisation and whole-of-system approaches to improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Effective and appropriate communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families that minimises discrimination
- Greater cultural capability, which could benefit all vulnerable or culturally and linguistically diverse patients
- Increased understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues, health needs, and the complex personal experience of individuals, families and communities
- Increased recruitment and retention of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce
- A reduction in racism and discrimination.

## Effective training programs

Effective cultural training programs include opportunities to examine the concepts and information on:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, knowledges, histories, peoples, lore and language and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories and impacts
- The importance of self-determined decision-making in health care
- Strengths-based approaches to healthcare delivery and how it can be applied
- Colonisation and the ongoing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- The impact of history, policies, practices and biases on low levels of trust in the health systems by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Intergeneration trauma, what it is and the impact that can have on an individual's health and wellbeing
- Reflective practice, including reflection on one's own culture, privilege, power, and biases and how this influences healthcare delivery
- Understanding and recognising racism, including interpersonal, institutional and systemic racism
- The right to be different in worldviews, knowledges, values and beliefs
- Definitions of cultural awareness, cultural competency, cultural safety, including their points of difference.

As an organisations cultural safety systems mature, the clinical workforce should undertake training on topics that relate specifically to *care delivered* to individuals *including* but not limited to:

- How to transfer power in decision making and management of care to the patient and their family and the potential impact of action versus inaction
- The impact on power imbalances in care delivery, communication and consent
- Communicating effectively and appropriately, for example through therapeutic yarning

- How to provide safe pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to raise concerns without fear of discrimination or a negative impact on the delivery of their care
- Tailoring care and communication to meet the patients' social, cultural and linguistic needs
- Recognition, acknowledgement and incorporating health knowledges and traditional healers such as Ngangkari into care planning.

Training for clinical and other leaders in an organisation may also include:

- How to develop effective partnerships with peak Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- The impact of the dominant culture's social and cultural beliefs, and knowledge on internal policies and practices and the potential health impacts for people who are not from the dominant culture
- The importance of leadership in determining the environment for delivering services
- Processes for incorporating culturally safe practice into care plans and protocols
- Promoting and supporting patient-centred care that enables service delivery to meet cultural needs
- Establishing, building and maintaining ongoing relationships with the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- Supporting and recognising the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- The importance of creating a welcoming environment and a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to congregate
- The importance of governance structures that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership roles
- Mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of cultural safety training and patient experiences of their cultural safety
- Mechanisms for reporting progress to the governing body, the workforce and consumers.

## Course format of an effective training program

Cultural safety training should not be a 'one-off' event, it should build over time and include:

- Multiple approaches to program delivery drawing on multimedia resources
- Face-to-face training
- Delivery in a culturally safe place
- Support and encouragement, such as through professional development and performance review processes
- Mandatory participation, that is monitored as part of regular human resources processes
- An evaluation mechanism that goes beyond participant feedback and include assessing changes in cultural safety. This could include reflective practice and reporting changes in governance or impact on patient outcomes or experiences.

## Delivering an effective training program

Cultural safety training is most effective when it has considered its intended audience and is delivered over multiple approaches. This includes:

- The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in the design and delivery of training
- Presenting on lived experience and case studies
- Use of techniques such as patient journey mapping and yarning
- Providing practical tools and resources
- When skilled trainers are used to support the development and delivery of the training.

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The George Institute  
for Global Health

## Further information

For more information, please visit: [safetyandquality.gov.au/comprehensive-care](https://safetyandquality.gov.au/comprehensive-care).

You can also contact the Comprehensive Care project team at: [mail@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:mail@safetyandquality.gov.au).