

Community Legal Education for Communities & Clients With Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds

Build Relationships

Groundwork is required to establish relationships, trust and understanding between a CLC and the various CALD communities in its area. This is a two way process. A commitment of time and resources is needed.

CLCs often initially establish relationships with specialist workers or agencies from, or who work closely with, CALD communities, such as Migrant Resource Centres and settlement workers. These agencies or workers have already established their credentials and have built relationships; they can assist the CLC to access and work with individuals and groups from the CALD communities. Connections with key workers are often critical to successful relationships with CALD communities.

Identifying and establishing relationships with key people or leaders is another avenue by which CLCs can build links with particular communities. Like any group, there may be a number of sub groups, the CLC may have to make a number of contacts in order to properly access that community.

Relationships with CALD communities are often built up slowly and in stages.

Case Study

On the recommendation of and with support from a settlement worker, Peninsula Community Legal Centre hosted an informal afternoon tea for a group of women from the Sudanese community. The CLC worker spoke briefly about the centre and the services it provided and one of the centre's lawyers was introduced. The main purpose of the event was to create connections – to “make a friendly face”. The afternoon tea was one step towards building trust and breaking down barriers.

Case Study

Moreland CLC participates in a network with a range of agencies that provide services to the CALD communities in the local area. The network organised Refugee Week activities in the City of Moreland. For the new CLC Community Development Worker, involvement in the network and activities was a way to connect with other local agencies and to raise the profile of the CLC.

Tip!

Relationships are built on trust. Be careful about what you promise, balance enthusiasm with reality and do not to create unrealistic expectations. A CLC reported that it “lost face” with a particular community when it was unable to deliver a promised component of a CLE program.

Build Cultural Awareness

If the centre is planning to work with particular CALD groups, then spending time to develop a better understanding of the cultural background, experiences and issues facing the community will be an important investment. Information about the law and legal system(s) that the community members have experienced previously may be critical to the design and delivery of CLE activities.

Be careful to avoid assuming that all people from particular countries or regions or local CALD communities are homogenous and that they share the same culture and experiences.

Consider meeting with community representatives, talking to settlement workers from the local Migrant Resource Centre, doing some research or organising cultural awareness training for staff and volunteers. Liaise with other CLCs who may have worked with similar groups.

Tip!

A very informative Somali Cultural Awareness Workshop was delivered at the Federation’s Community Development & CLE Mini Conference in June 2009. The workshop addressed questions such as - What are the experiences of Somali refugees prior to their arrival in Australia? What are their understandings about the law? What should we consider when delivering CLE to Somali and East African communities?

Contact the Federation’s CD&CLE Working Group for information about how to obtain workshop notes.

The CLC/CLE worker should also consider how they would deal with values conflicts that may arise. The response could make or break the relationship that the centre has with the particular group. Remember, the role is to pass on information about the law, not to pass judgement!

Case Study

When running a CLE workshop about family law to a people from a newly arrived community, CLC staff were asked if it was acceptable in Australia to beat your wife in certain circumstances. Workshop participants said that where they came from this was acceptable and expected, but they were puzzled about how this was viewed in Australia. How would you respond in this situation? The CLC staff responded by creating a safe environment to ask questions and explore issues, and used the opportunity to provide information about Australian law, culture and values.

Build an Understanding of Issues Currently Facing the Community

Various groups and individuals will have differing experiences and needs when arriving and settling in Australia. Exploring the legal and related issues that are currently confronting a particular community may highlight relevant considerations for the design and delivery of CLE.

Case Study

In consulting with settlement workers to design CLE workshops for members of a newly arrived community, Barwon CLC was advised to take into account that after many years in refugee camps some people may lack education, initiative and motivation.

Case Study

People from newly arrived communities, particularly people who having been living in refugee camps, may not have had the opportunity to drive a car, may have little concept of the road system or the context in which road usage occurs and not be aware of the legal requirement to hold a driver's licence. If there are few people in the community who are licensed to drive, then there will be few who are able to assist others to learn and to practise. The Community Car Connection Road Safety Program for New Arrival Communities, of which Peninsula Community Legal Centre is a partner organisation, was developed in response to these issues.

Consult the Community

Ask the members of the relevant community, or their representatives, what they want or need. (See *CLE Made Easy Information Sheet 4 – Needs Assessment*).

Case Study

Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) has established a Diversity Consultancy Panel. The Panel will act as an advisory group to the ECLC, it will provide “advice on how to improve the Centre’s services and community education projects for diverse communities”. The Diversity Consultancy Panel will also provide “a chance for community members to discuss and share opinions on key legal issues facing diverse communities, while assisting members to develop their leadership skills and learn how to support community groups.” (Eastern Community Legal Centre, 2009)

CLE Workshops for CALD Communities – Some Tips!

Consider:

- the number of participants – smaller groups may be preferable, especially if interpreters are being used;
- whether it may be helpful to offer child care;
- where the workshop is held;
- providing refreshments and, if you do, checking what would be appropriate;
- the amount and type of content - keep it simple;
- allowing plenty of time for questions and answers;
- using questions to check comprehension;
- how to create an open, safe and culturally sensitive environment;
- how the community views time – is a stated starting time a direction to be punctual or a general

indicator of when to arrive?;

- keeping written information to a minimum – some people may be illiterate in their first language;
- using non verbal/non written cues - put legal concepts into graphic form, use photographs and other images to help get the message across – depending on the target group, some participants may have few or no literacy skills;
- who should deliver the workshop – for example, would training and supporting community members to deliver the CLE be more effective than the CLE worker doing it?; and
- how to effectively evaluate the activity – taking into account, for example, issues such as English literacy and cultural norms about providing feedback.

Interpreters & Translators

The Federation's Access To Interpreters Working Group has done extensive work on behalf of Victorian CLCs to access services and funding and to educate the sector about effectively utilising interpreting and translating services. See the *Interpreters Kit 2006* produced by the Working Group in the *Federation Toolkit*. Working Group members are also an excellent resource, ask the Federation for contact details.

Tips!

- careful preparation and organisation is required when using interpreting and translation services for CLE activities and publications. Make sure that the time, funds and other resources required are factored into CLE planning, budgets and funding submissions;
- most CLCs have access to free interpreting services, however these are usually for advice and casework rather than CLE activities. There may also be limits on the dollar value of service that each centre is able to use. Check what your centre is entitled to;
- check what specific languages or dialects are required by the target group(s) and be specific in arranging interpreting or translation services in these languages. For example, a workshop for the Chinese community may require both Cantonese and Mandarin interpreters. A publication for people from Horn of African countries will need to be translated into several different community languages. To locate what languages are spoken in different communities, consult the *Interpreters Kit 2006*;
- use formal, professional, certified interpreting and translation services. This is a form of quality control. Unless you speak the language, how do you know what is being said? Think carefully about offers from community members to take on informal interpreting and translating roles;
- remember that some communities are relatively small and there may be a very limited pool of interpreters available. The interpreter may be known to the people attending the CLE activity. In some circumstances this connection may inhibit participation. If this is likely to be an issue, talk to community members or those who work with them, ask who they would recommend or how they deal with this situation;
- when working with an interpreter, talk to them before the CLE activity to establish the parameters for how you will work together. For example, will their role be solely to directly interpret what is said? Would you be happy for them to answer questions seeking clarification of what has been said without deferring to you?;
- remember, when interpreters are involved, everything is said at least twice. Therefore, work on the principle of allocating roughly double the time or halving the content;
- if translating materials speak to your community contacts about whether there are any issues to consider for example: literacy levels, consult about images or colours used for the publication; and
- have translated materials checked before using them and definitely before they are printed

or made publicly available. One CLC reports that it was not until during the CLE session that a participant advised organisers that the translated information was written backwards!

Foreign Language Newspapers, Radio and Television

See *Information Sheet 14 – The Media & Community Legal Education*.

Designing and delivering CLE for other specific target groups

Various CLCs have experience and expertise in delivering CLE to particular target groups. Accessing this knowledge can help to avoid making the same mistakes and can help to ensure the delivery of appropriate and quality services. The Federation Secretariat and the Community Development and Community Legal Education Working Group are excellent starting points for information and contacts.

- Youthlaw suggests that when delivering CLE to young people, go to where they are rather than expecting them to come to you, don't talk for too long and consider providing some refreshments.
- Mental Health Legal Centre and Disability Discrimination Legal Service suggest that when delivering CLE to people who have mental health issues, use "people first" language, incorporate lots of breaks, reduce noisy distractions, give hope (but not false hope), show empathy and acknowledgement and point people in the direction of further action they can take.

A note about the language we use ... at the time of writing this Information Sheet the Federation of Community Legal Centres was receiving some indication that the terminology of "immigrant and refugee communities" was increasingly being preferred over "culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Florance, A. (2009) Community Car Connection Workshop Workshop (power point presentation slides/notes) and Interview, Peninsula Community Legal Centre, Frankston
- Eastern Community Legal Centre (2009) *Diversity Consultancy Panel Terms of Reference*, Box Hill
- Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) Inc. *Federation Toolkit* (www.communitylaw.org.au - Intranet – Federation Toolkit – CLC Legal Practice – Interpreters/ Law Reform and CLE – Emerging & Newly Arrived Communities)
- Longmore, N. (2009) Interview, Barwon Community Legal Centre, Geelong
- Muhamed, A. (2009), Somali Cultural Awareness Workshop - Federation of Community Legal Centres CD & CLE Mini Conference (power point presentation slides/notes), Flemington/Kensington CLC, Victoria
- Overall, T. (2009) Interview, Youthlaw, Melbourne
- Seymour, F. & Randa, D. (2009) Workshop – Federation of Community Legal Centres CD & CLE Mini Conference (power point presentation slides/notes),
- Mental Health Legal Centre/Disability Discrimination Legal Service, Melbourne
- Tommasi, C. (2009) Interview, Moreland Community Legal Centre, Coburg

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

- Law & Justice Foundation of New South Wales, Website – Legal Information – Pathways, <http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/information/target>
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship – www.immi.gov.au / www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria – www.eccv.org.au
- Ethnologue: Languages of the World: www.ethnologue.com/web.asp
- Victorian Interpreting and Translation Website www.vits.com.au/publications.htm
- Victoria Legal Aid (Interpreters and Translator policies)
- <http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/languages.htm>