

## Strategies to Support Engagement in Sports for Newly-Arrived Young People

September 2010

**Do young people of newly-arrived migrant and refugee want to participate in sports and recreation activities? The answer is "YES"!**

Sport can play an important role in resettlement for young people. It provides a break from worrying about settlement issues and an opportunity to keep fit and have fun.

Newly-arrived young people are often keen to participate in sport and recreation, but show lower rates of participation than their Australian-born counterparts. They meet a range of barriers that complicates their ability to join structured sport. This Tip Sheet provides strategies to help clubs and sporting associations to become more accessible to young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds in their local area.

This Tip Sheet is based on a Multicultural Sports Network Meeting held in Mildura in May 2010 and coordinated by the Mallee Sports Assembly. Where CMY was inspired by the efforts of the 3 Colours Soccer Club in opening its doors to young people of CALD backgrounds in the area. It also builds on *Giving Communities a Sporting Chance (2010)*, a resource manual published by the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

BARRIER

### Lack of parental support/involvement

The experience of resettlement in a new country is both difficult and daunting. Individuals and families are required to adjust to a different culture, language and social systems. Refugee young people may be faced with additional burdens such as the physical and mental impact of torture and trauma, and the loss of family members. With all of these daily challenges, children's involvement in sport and recreation is not seen as a high priority for newly arrived parents. Family or cultural commitments may also take priority over physical activity.

STRATEGIES

- **Involve families:** invite the parents and young people to an open day/information session at the beginning of season to talk about the importance of sport and how the families can help. Most young people will rely on their parents giving them permission to take part in activities; by being involved you will not only increase the number of young people participating, you will involve more people in your program/club/leisure centre, with all the benefits that this brings.
- **Network with local schools, youth groups and your local council.** Some successful sports and recreation programs involving newly arrived migrant and refugee background young people have relied on support from people like youth workers and teachers

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**Cost** *“\$300 a year?! That’s why I don’t have (a club)”*

The costs associated with physical and recreation activities can often be too much for a newly arrived family to cover. Refugee background families may have additional financial responsibilities to send money to family members who are still living in the country of origin or in refugee camps. Many families also arrive in Australia indebted to family members or others for the cost of their airfares to Australia.

STRATEGIES

- Subsidise fees through grant opportunities or fundraising  
*(Giving Communities a Sporting Chance provides a list of resources and possible grants).*
- A payment plan to allow the young person to pay over time rather than upfront
- Alternatives to full fees, such as volunteering
- Family memberships

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**Transport** *“My parents would worry if they didn’t know the person (taking me home)”*

Newly arrived migrant and refugee background young people tend to rely on public transport to access leisure venues. Facilities that are centrally located, and close to public transport, play an important part in accessing sport for newly arrived migrant and refugee background young people. A recent VicHealth report also highlights how parental fear for young people’s safety is an obstacle to young people’s participation in sports. This fear can be particularly acute for parents who are themselves newly-arrived and have suffered trauma and loss of relatives.

STRATEGIES

- Use local schools or Youth Services to transport young people to specific programs, if accessibility is limited.
- Investigate community buses as another potential solution.
- Include maps and bus/train times in your posters/promotional materials. These can be found at <http://www.street-directory.com.au> and [www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au](http://www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au)
- Car pooling could also address this issue.

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**Lack of knowledge about Sports and Recreation Providers**

*“I’m still looking for a club because clubs are good. You make friends with everyone who is there already”*

Many newly arrived communities are not familiar with sports and recreation providers and the activities they provide.

STRATEGIES

- Make sure your information is written in simple English and includes plenty of visuals (including people of diverse ethnicities). If complex, you can get it translated, particularly for the families of young people who may not be literate in English.
- Run information sessions where the young people are – at language schools etc.

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STRATEGIES

- Promote your facilities and services within ethno-specific organisations and through ethnic media to reach your target audience effectively.
- Encourage people to join in through guided tours or “Come and Try” Days that are run with language support for ethnic community groups.
- Offer “Come and Try” sessions during lunch hour at local schools.

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### Lack of options for newly arrived migrant and refugee background young women

Newly-arrived young women have limited opportunities to participate in physical and recreation activities due to barriers experienced from both leisure facilities and from within their own communities. Barriers can include: lack of appropriate facilities; lack of culturally specific programs available; and lack of encouragement from their families and communities.

STRATEGIES

- Implement culturally specific programs addressing specific needs, such as women’s only swimming programs.
- Consider flexible program times (after dark is not an option for some newly arrived migrant and refugee background young women).
- Ensure adequate numbers of female supervisors/trainers.
- Liaise closely with communities to earn their trust and understanding of your centre, programs, procedures and staff.
- Promote the importance of physical activity.

Check Tip Sheet 4 from [www.cmy.net.au/MulticulturalSports](http://www.cmy.net.au/MulticulturalSports) for more information.

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### Uniform requirements for young women/men

Some communities may expect men, and particularly women, to dress modestly, so short shorts and singlet tops may not be appropriate.

- Be flexible around uniform requirements and allow young women to wear long pants and long sleeves if they want to dress modestly.

STRATEGIES BARRIER

### Perceived lack of an inclusive environment

Experiences of perceived racism or discrimination can deter a newly arrived migrant and refugee background young person from participation in a new environment. If they are not made to feel welcome, there is little incentive for continued participation.

- Have inclusion policies in place and display them around the centre in English, as well as community languages.
- Target bilingual workers from newly arrived communities for employment as referees, umpires, administration workers or life guards. They will be a great link between your organisation and the communities you hope to involve.

- Create a welcoming culture at your club, where clear boundaries are set around discriminatory behaviour.
- Display “hello” and/or “welcome” signs in different languages. These can be sourced from <http://www.wikihow.com/Say-Hello-in-Different-Languages> and <http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/welcome.htm>

## The 3 Colours Soccer Club

### Creative approaches from Mildura

The 3 Colours Soccer club made a commitment to be more family friendly—and therefore more inclusive all round. This shift in culture was driven by a parent, whose children played in the soccer club, but felt a bit disappointed by the culture. She felt that it didn’t sufficiently involve families and after making some suggestions, found herself in the role of President.

### The barriers identified that made it difficult for newly-arrived young people to join were:

- Cost
- Transport
- Uniform
- Perceived lack of an inclusive environment

### Some of the changes made include:

- Reduced fees for families who volunteer
- Payment plans for membership fees
- Recycling of boots and uniforms, including having a bank of shin pads
- Redistributing the excess of donations they received through their original request for members to donate their old gear to other clubs in the league

- Catering to all dietary requirements, halal, vegan etc.
- Organising club members to transport those without transport
- Accommodate cultural requirements for uniforms
- Social events after training (pasta nights, BBQ) to encourage a more cohesive club environment and a good team vibe

### Benefits for the club have been:

- Improved performance on the field at all levels
- Increased membership—currently the club is at capacity—but are negotiating to include more sides
- Development of a close relationship with FFV
- Increased profile
- Improved vibe all round
- Club reflective of community – diverse membership

For more information, contact Mallee Sports Assembly in Mildura:

(03) 5021 3464 or [mildura@malleesportsassembly.org.au](mailto:mildura@malleesportsassembly.org.au)

Copies of *Giving Communities a Sporting Chance* are available through CMY and can be downloaded from CMY’s website: [www.cmy.net.au](http://www.cmy.net.au)

If you would like further assistance or information about inclusiveness of CLD young people in your club, please contact: CMY Multicultural Sport & Recreation Program on (03) 9340 3700 or [info@cmy.net.au](mailto:info@cmy.net.au)