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## RESPONDING TOGETHER

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# MULTICULTURAL YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

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Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia have a wide range of personal experiences. Young people can face multiple challenges associated with settling in a new country and those with a refugee background may have particular stressors associated with their experience.

Most young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are incredibly resilient and generally cope well despite the challenges of their refugee, settlement and migration experiences.

Experiences of racism, discrimination and the challenges of navigating a multicultural identity, however, can negatively impact on young people's wellbeing. A sense of inclusion and belonging is critical to the mental health of young people.



## POLICY SOLUTIONS

### STRENGTHENING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Address racism and discrimination to strengthen young people's sense of belonging.

### PSYCHOEDUCATION

Work with young people to develop proactive mental health literacy resources to encourage help-seeking.

### CULTURAL RESPONSIVE SERVICE DESIGN

Implementing cultural responsiveness in individual practice and service design is key to building trust and engagement.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

Research is needed to inform service delivery; develop guidelines for professions; and trial a suicide prevention model.

### TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

A national agenda for preparing health professionals and services for delivering trauma-informed care is required.

There are a range of suicide risk factors that are specific for young people with a refugee and migrant background and some that are shared with other young people. Specific factors include language barriers, worrying about and separation from family and loss of community status or social network.

Traumatic experiences, the stress and uncertainty of seeking asylum, and the resettlement process can contribute to poorer mental health. Experiences of trauma will shape the type of care young people need and how it is delivered.

Multicultural young people, families and communities may hold understandings of mental health that are shaped by cultural and religious views which may differ to clinical approaches used in Australia. Engaging families and communities is an important step in increasing understanding about mental ill-health and the support services that are available.

Cultural responsiveness is the foundation for services to refugee and migrant communities. Cultural responsiveness is about the setting, service system and processes young people and their families encounter. Cultural responsiveness is also being aware of one's own cultural values, beliefs and ways of engaging with the world, and how this influences engagement with another person.

Policy solutions to improve mental health outcomes for refugee and migrant young people need to recognise common issues they face and where targeted responses are needed based on their experiences and reasons for coming to Australia.

“ Young people told us they didn't expect practitioners to be cultural experts but would like them to connect by asking questions with genuine interest.”



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