

## Working with diversity in AOD settings

NSW's Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (NADA) has a guide on working with diversity in AOD settings. This resource covers approaches and principles of working with:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
- LGBTIQ+ people
- Older people
- People with disabilities

It is important to upskill the workforce on understanding stigma and access. We feel less stressed when we know how to support our clients better. The key overarching tips include:

- Ask, don't assume
- Make your service more inclusive
- Ask for feedback to continuously improve your service as a whole and individually as a worker
- Learn more and equip yourself



NADA Access and equity: Working with diversity in the alcohol and other drugs setting - Working with diversity in AOD settings: resource launch with contributors (AUSLAN interpreted)

<https://youtu.be/O6zdyrLNG6I> Watch 4:00 - 6:38



PDF resource - Access and equity: Working with diversity in the alcohol and other drugs setting – second edition

<https://nada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NADA-access-equity-2021.pdf>

## Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients

The vast majority of our clients in AOD services may be born in Australia or New Zealand (89.1%) so many AOD workers may have little experience working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. This may lead some workers to feel like they are working outside of their comfort zone. Here are some additional tips for AOD workers working with those from CALD backgrounds:

- Improve access - people may be unfamiliar with our services or how to access them
- Take account of the person's ethnicity and cultural identity.
- Let the person know that you view AOD as a health issues, and try to understand together the unique contributors to their AOD use including the migration experience.
- Explain what harm reduction is, particularly because in many CALD communities abstinence is the only option.
- In some cultures, gender or age matching is important between the worker and the client
- Build rapport and trust, being aware that for some cultures eye contact and questioning style is different.
- Check for language preference, or whether a professional interpreter can help with engagement.
- Avoid jargon where possible.
- Consider the use of "teach back" technique to check for understanding
- Some cultures are more collective and familiar and may like to be involved in treatment. Where appropriate, provide opportunities for this.
- Be aware of the person's past experience and potential for associated trauma. If treatment is time-limited, undue disclosures of past trauma may not be appropriate.
- Make the physical environment welcoming by reflecting a culturally diverse community.
- For residential or inpatient settings, consider any dietary requirements the clients may have (e.g. Halal food)
- Seek guidance from bi-cultural workers or other CALD community representatives to inform any cultural issues you need to be aware of (after gaining consent from your client).

## Working with LGBTIQ+

There has been an increase in identification with LGBTIQ+ according to the national census (3.8%), Compared to people who identify as heterosexual, people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual are more likely to drink alcohol and use illicit drugs at risky levels. Many of these individuals (66%) seek professional support for their drug use from a mainstream service yet our services may not cater for those who identify as LGBTIQ+ or were even LGBTIQ+ inclusive services. Here are some additional tips for AOD workers working with people who identify as LGBTIQ+:

- Take account of the person's sexuality and gender, understand what the different terms might mean to different people
- Ask and don't assume about pronouns and identity
- Include sexual health and wellbeing questions as part of standard assessment, ensure you emphasises that any HIV status will be confidential.
- Consult with those with lived experience and/or obtain feedback in order to make the service more inclusive



QNADA LGBTIQ training - Free cultural awareness training for AOD specialist workers.  
<https://qnada.org.au/lgbtiq/>



Cultural Cues – working with cultural diversity in AOD counselling - North West Melbourne CALD AOD practitioner tipsheets  
<https://www.vaada.org.au/conference/north-west-melbourne-phn-region-cald-aod-forum-presentations-and-resources>



Trauma informed care toolkit - Insight's trauma informed care toolkit provides you with training and resources about working with trauma informed care within AOD.  
<https://insight.qld.edu.au/toolkits/trauma-informed-care/detail>

### References

1. NADA: Network of alcohol and other drugs agencies. Working with diversity in AOD settings: resource launch with contributors (AUSLAN interpreted). [cited 2022 22 Feb]. Available from: <https://youtu.be/O6zdyrLNG6I>
2. NADA: Network of alcohol and other drugs agencies. Access and equity: Working with diversity in the alcohol and other drug setting. 2nd edition. Sydney: NADA; 2021. Available from: <https://nada.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NADA-access-equity-2021.pdf>
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Fact sheet: People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. [cited 2021 1 Apr]. Available from: [https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/afe9a311-b927-465f-af01-73409ee80665/aihw-phe-221-infographic-CALD\\_December-2020.pdf.aspx](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/afe9a311-b927-465f-af01-73409ee80665/aihw-phe-221-infographic-CALD_December-2020.pdf.aspx)
4. Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association Inc. (VAADA). CALD AOD Practitioner Tip Sheets to download. [cited 2022 24 Feb]. Available from: <https://www.vaada.org.au/conference/north-west-melbourne-phn-region-cald-aod-forum-presentations-and-resources/>
5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. People identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer. [cited 2022 22 Feb]. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/priority-populations/people-identifying-as-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-intersex-or-queer>

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