Cultural Issues – An Overview

There are more than 100 different cultures in Australian society, therefore Australia is said to be a ‘multicultural society’. You may need to consider cultural issues when working with young people.

A young person is directly influenced by the cultural group to which they belong. Each culture has many variables – such as the roles of gender, occupations, age, social relations and religious practices. You may also need to consider how the particular cultural group interacts with existing ‘Australian’ cultural values.

As a youth worker, you need to develop sensitivity and awareness when working with young people and families from different cultural backgrounds. You may find it useful to consult with ethno-specific organisations and translation services.

Understanding how to implement programs and services that are culturally appropriate is an important component of youth work. Often this will require you to have the skills and attitudes to relate effectively to people of many different backgrounds.

Consultation with community leaders is necessary when working with Aboriginal communities. The community leader is the point of access to and communication with the rest of the community. Also, some Aboriginal communities have their own tribal laws that just as binding as Commonwealth Acts of Law.

Is it important to know one’s limitations when working with indigenous and other cultural groups. Find out what indigenous and other cultural organisations are in your community. For those of you who are in rural or remote areas of Australia it is a good idea to keep telephone numbers of statewide services. Your local community may not have a Migrant Resource Centre but can conduct ‘secondary consultation’ over the phone.