

# **Webinar 1 – Set the context – Indigenous Australians experiences of family violence**



# Family Violence Webinar Series

**Webinar 1** - Set the Context - Indigenous Australians' experiences of family violence

**Webinar 2 -18 April, 2.30-4.30pm (NSW time): Effective family violence risk assessment with Indigenous families.**

Case management fundamentals for working with Indigenous families in the context of family violence Part 1: risk assessment - how to assess risk. With a focus on how VACCA does this.

**Webinar 3 - 1 May, 2.30-4.30pm (NSW time): Effective family violence safety planning with Indigenous families.**

Case management fundamentals for working with Indigenous families in the context of family violence Part 2: safety planning - how to develop, implement and monitor safety plans. With a focus on how VACCA does this.



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# Webinar 1 – Set the context – Indigenous Australians experiences of family violence

Structure for each session based on the above will be based on the following format:

- 1- Welcome and introduce presenter (5min)
- 2- Purpose of the session (5 min)
- 3- Presentation on the topic (1.15 min)
- 4- Questions and discussion (30 min)
- 5- Close and reminder re next webinar (5 min)

# Today's Webinar Topics

1. Review Australian history to identify the context of Aboriginal family violence today

2. Defining Aboriginal family violence

3. VACCA's approach to working with Aboriginal family violence



# Purpose of today's webinar

The purpose of today's webinar is to set the Context - Indigenous Australians' experiences of family violence, defining Aboriginal family violence and the impact of past policies and practices and what this means when working with children and families who have experienced or are experiencing family violence. With a focus on VACCA's approach the webinar will provide you with the opportunity and space to reflect on your current practice and how you may do things differently.



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# Cultural competence continuum

Cultural destructiveness

Cultural incapacity

Cultural blindness

Cultural pre-competence

Cultural competence

Cultural proficiency

Towards cultural competence

Characterised by: intentional attitudes, policies and practices that are destructive to cultures and consequently to individuals within the culture

Characterised by: lack of capacity to help minority clients or communities due to extremely biased beliefs and a paternal attitude toward those not of a mainstream culture

Characterised by: the belief that service or helping approaches traditionally used by the dominant culture are universally applicable regardless of race or culture. These services ignore cultural strengths and encourage assimilation

Characterised by: the desire to deliver quality services and a commitment to diversity indicated by hiring minority staff, initiating training and recruiting minority members for agency leadership but lacking information on how to maximise these capacities. This level of competence can lead to tokenism

Characterised by: acceptance and respect for difference continuing self-assessment, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continuous expansion of knowledge and resources, and adaptation of services to better meet the needs of diverse populations

Characterised by: holding culture in high esteem; seeking to add to knowledge base of culturally competent practice by conducting research, influencing approaches to care and improving relations between cultures; promotes self-determination

# Understanding the cornerstones of cultural competence

VACCA has identified the following cornerstones of Aboriginal cultural competence:

- Commitment to social justice
- **Truth telling about Australian history**
- Understanding Aboriginal cultures
- Commitment to Aboriginal self-determination
- Working together to build respectful partnerships with Aboriginal organisations.



# TOPIC 1

Review Australian history to identify the context of Aboriginal family violence today



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# Aboriginal roles and responsibilities prior to colonisation



# History and the context of family violence

From an Aboriginal perspective, the cause's of family violence are located in the history and impacts of colonisation, structural inequalities, such as:

- Dispossession of land and traditional culture
- Breakdown of community kinship systems and lore
- Racism and marginalisation
- Economic exclusion and entrenched poverty
- Alcohol and other drug abuse
- The effects of initialisation and child removal polices
- Inherited grief and trauma
- Loss of traditional roles and status leading to higher rates of male perpetrators

# History and the context of family violence

- Trauma affects development, particularly executive functioning skills like emotional regulation and inhibition which play a role in family violence
- High rates of violence are becoming normalised and passed onto children, thus repeating the cycle

# History and the context of family

violence

Homelessness

Lack of employment

Child removal

Poor physical and psychological health

Suicide

Lack of Education

Racism

Incarceration



Isolation

Grief, loss and trauma

Intergenerational Trauma

Abuse & neglect

Lack of parenting skills

Lack of financial skills

Feelings of powerlessness

Substance abuse

Early Death

Poverty

Loss of traditional culture and lifestyle

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# Risks & Challenges experienced by Aboriginal women in seeking FV support

Lateral violence

Experiences of racism and discrimination

Threats of violence from not only the partner but also his extended family

Isolation can also increase and women can become further disconnected from culture and family if they have to leave their area or their mob

The broad family connections that her partner may have, can deem many areas unsafe

# SELF REFLECTION POINT

1. Do you see the impact of past policies and practices and a connection to family violence?
2. How does what's happened in history have a direct impact on your practice in the family violence sector?

## Topic 2.

# Defining Aboriginal family violence



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# Definition of Aboriginal family violence vs mainstream

“An issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide. “





# Definition of Aboriginal family violence vs mainstream

- The task force further believes that family violence includes:

Inter-generational violence and abuse and recognises all victims, whether they are affected directly or indirectly;

Perpetrators and victims of family violence can include parents, uncles, aunties, (step) children, (step) siblings, cousins, grandparents, in-laws and distant relatives



# Definition of Aboriginal family violence vs mainstream

- An individual can be a perpetrator and a victim at the same time in a family situation
  - It includes Elder abuse
  - It encompasses a range of acts that are criminal under the crimes act 1958 and non-criminal acts such as emotional abuse and economic abuse is a criminal act under state and territory legislation.



# Aboriginal Family violence

## Facts and stats

The following are some of the main trends that emerge from existing family violence data:

- Family violence disproportionately affects women and children, and the majority of perpetrators are men.
- Female victims are more likely to be a current or former partner of the perpetrator, while men are more likely to experience violence in different familial relationships—for example, as a son or a sibling.
- Some groups are at greater risk of family violence or experience it at increased rates. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and women with disabilities. These and other groups face particular barriers in seeking and obtaining help; they include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living in rural, regional or remote areas.



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# Aboriginal Family violence - National Statistics

Family violence occurs at higher rates for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians. Family violence within Indigenous communities needs to be understood as both a cause and effect of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma (ABS 2016).



# Aboriginal Family violence - National Statistics

- In 2014–15, 1 in 7 (14%) Indigenous women experienced physical violence in the previous year. Of these, about 1 in 4 (28%) reported that their most recent incident was perpetrated by a cohabiting partner (ABS 2016).
- From 2012–13 to 2013–14, 2 in 5 Indigenous homicide victims (41%) were killed by a current or previous partner, twice the rate of non-Indigenous victims (22%) (Bryant & Bricknell 2017).

# Aboriginal Family violence - National Statistics

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians experience:



# Victorian Aboriginal Family violence

980

Aboriginal children in  
out-of-home care

88%

of children had experienced family  
violence



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# SELF REFLECTION POINT

Q. Reflecting on the definitions of Aboriginal family violence and the statistics presented how does this impact on your practice in the family violence sector?





# Topic 3.

## VACCA's approach to Aboriginal family violence



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# Aboriginal Identification

At the point of first contact, many organisations ask whether a person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Such questions allow your organisation to understand who accesses services and are a basis for future service planning. It is important to ask these questions of everyone.

Assuming that a person is not an Aboriginal person based on their appearance is both disrespectful and inaccurate.



# Culture is a protective factor

Culture has been variously defined as:

- the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon our capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations
- the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
- the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a system, company or corporation and
- one group or people's preferred way of meeting their basic human needs.



# Culture is a protective factor

Brain research indicates that culture is integral to the development of personal identity and is a significant protective factor and has also demonstrated positive changes as an outcome of continuous and consistent opportunities to practice culture.

Cultural programs increase the capacity of Aboriginal people to manage their traumatic life experiences and identify the supports and interventions that are most effective. This leads to increased service access and arguably participation in the economy and broader Australian society

(Pattel, 2007; Poroch, Arabena, Tongs, Larkin, Fisher and Henderson, 2009; Caruna, 2010; Yellow Bird, 2012, COAG, 2012 and Berry, 2013).



# Culture is a protective factor

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has released the research report

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts* which suggests strong connection to culture can reduce vulnerability to sexual abuse among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The report finds that when children are separated from their cultures, they are more likely to be separated from protective factors such as self-esteem, secure attachments and strong social networks, and that culturally appropriate care offers a protective mechanism in out-of-home care contexts.



# Culture is a protective factor



# A culturally informed approach

The key cultural elements are that our family violence clients are

- Culturally safe
- Their cultural rights are respected
- We acknowledge their cultural responsibilities
- We understand their Trauma as an Aboriginal person
- We recognise Aboriginal Culture as a resilience factor



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# Aboriginal Practice Principles

- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of women and children affected by violence
- Facilitate the healing of men and families
- Recognising the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal families and communities and the intergenerational impact of violence





# Aboriginal Practice Principles

- Commitment to self determination and client centered service
- Holistic responses to family violence
- Accessible, flexible and culturally safe services
- Enhancing community capacity to prevent and address family violence



# Aboriginal Practice Principles

- Trauma informed practices
- Aboriginal services first
- Understanding that family violence is linked to the continuing experiences of disadvantage, racism, disempowerment and dispossession from land and loss of culture
- Building on the strengths of family and community
- A focus on the strengths of culture for healing and change
- Being accountable to our community



# Understanding the Aboriginal perspective on Family Violence

- Most Aboriginal women don't want the relationship to end, they want the violence to stop
- Treating the underlying causes of violence may be a more appropriate way to end the violence than breaking up the family and connections to culture and to community.
- An Aboriginal women's experience of racism often binds her more to her community, including the men of the community
- Family violence may involve more than 1 perpetrator, therefore leaving the violent domestic relationships may not end the violence in her or her children's lives and could actually put them at more risk



# Understanding an Aboriginal perspective on Family Violence

- The high rates of family violence in communities mean that Aboriginal women have become desensitised to violence and the impacts on their children
- Women have fear of being demonised and judged and this can impact on women seeking support
- Due to the high rates of violence in the Aboriginal community, many Aboriginal people believe that violence is just a part of life and is normal
- This knowledge of the community informs our practice principles and our service delivery approach
- All responses must see and understand the woman within the context of her family to be effective and to keep her safe



# VACCA's approach to family violence

- Listen to the woman and what she wants, we don't dictate to her about what to do, she is the expert in her own life
- Let the women set the pace for making changes and support her in this, this helps to keep her connected to our service
- We explain the consequences that their decisions can have, we don't judge and we don't blame



# VACCA's approach to family violence

- We understand the context in which family violence occurs allowing us to have an open mind and see their story from a neutral position
- Support women to stay in their relationships if they choose to and safe to do so by giving them options and letting them know what's available to help
- We aim to keep women connected to culture, surrounded by family and within community as these are her protective factors, sending women away erodes these, and can make them and their children more vulnerable and at risk



# VACCA's Approach To Family Violence

- Help them reconnect with their culture and community through group activities and shared supports with other Aboriginal women
- Promote their healing by engaging them in activities that promote culture
- Educating women that violence is not their fault, helping them to focus on their strengths and build their confidence
- We provide case management support to women as long as they need it
- Provide advocacy for women with statutory services
- Support to attend court, and complete the processes for intervention orders
- Develop safety plans that are realistic and practical, (client driven) and giving the clients material aids and tools to follow through with the plan which may include a prepaid mobile phone, phone credit, taxi voucher, train fares, myki cards, petrol vouchers
- Getting family involved to help keep the woman and children safe and supporting the family to do this



# VACCA's Approach To Family Violence and working with children

- VACCA is committed to the safety and wellbeing of at risk and vulnerable children and young people and place the safety of children and young people above all else.
- VACCA aims to provide a sensitive and supportive service to Aboriginal children who have experienced family violence by working with them to increase safety by reducing isolation and building on protective factors such as: respectful relationships, cultural connection, sense of identity and resilience.



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# SELF REFLECTION POINT

Q. Reflecting on VACCA's principles, approaches and practice in working with Aboriginal family violence, what do you and your team resonate with? What would you do differently?



# Q&A



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***For further information please see our Website or contact  
VACCA:***



- *Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-Operative Limited*
  - *340 Bell Street, Preston VIC 3072*
  - P.O. Box 494, Northcote Plaza, Northcote VIC 3070*
  - *Ph: (03) 9287 8800*
  - Fax: (03) 9287 8999*
  - Email: [vacca@vacca.org](mailto:vacca@vacca.org)*