

Cultivating Diversity and Participation for CALD Individuals with Disabilities

Mirsia Bunjaku¹

Grace Chiang²

¹ Australian Migrant Resource Centre Inc

² Australian Migrant Resource Centre

Aims/Objectives: What was the purpose what you did? Why is your topic important? What did you want to change? What difference did you want to make?

People with disabilities from CALD backgrounds face unique challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, access to services, economic disadvantage, social isolation, lack of understanding of disability, community perceptions of disability, barriers with health access and education.

Develop activities to increase community participation for people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds by involving them in program design and development. Through this we wanted to reduce stigma, isolation and increase community participation, as well as increase awareness and access to services. Our aim was working towards a more inclusive and equitable society for people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds.

Methods/Process: Who was involved? What did you do? (100 words)

The project involved people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds, their caregivers, family members and their ethnic communities. The program also involved partnering with service providers, community leaders, disability providers, local councils and other key stakeholders.

Methods used were:

- consultations
- surveys
- interviews
- forums
- tailored activities
- information sessions
- workshops

The methods were aimed to identify areas of interest for people with disabilities to participate in the community. In addition, identifying support systems that are culturally appropriate, use interpreter services and foster community inclusion.

Results: What did you find? What changed? What difference did you make? What did you learn?

Having people with disabilities actively involved in planning and decision-making resulted in increased confidence, choice and control. We saw a significant reduction in stigma and negative perceptions, increased participation in social events and community activities.

We worked with Afghan, Burmese, Bhutanese, and Arab communities and conducted information sessions at religious places, community centres, schools etc.

Outcomes included:

- Transition from isolation to active participation in social events.
- Strengthened community support networks.
- Greater awareness of the rights and capabilities of people with disabilities.

The project successfully increased inclusion and empowerment.

Conclusion: How could other people use what you found out? What would you recommend other people do based on what you did and what you found out?

Using strength-based approaches by involving people with disabilities, listening to their views, and understanding cultural expectations helped develop tailored programs that increased participation and supported skill development. Creating a safe environment, building rapport, and understanding the challenges faced by CALD individuals are very important. Maintaining a two-way approach with partners and building strong community and stakeholder partnerships were key to achieving successful outcomes.

Our recommendation would be to involve people with disabilities, and not only them but also their families and their communities for a holistic approach while at the same time advocating for better access and inclusion.

Alignment with the Conference Theme: How does your proposal address the conference theme of ‘New Frontiers’? How does your proposal showcase something new we can do to make the world a better place for people with disability? (50 words)

Our proposal addresses the ‘New Frontiers’ theme by pioneering innovative, strength-based approaches that actively involve people with disabilities in program development.

These approaches showcase new methods to increase participation, break down barriers, and improve the quality of life for people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds.