

# CULTURAL SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURE



## Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Pathways SouthWest meets its obligations to ensure equitable access to services for people from indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds and to address communication barriers and cultural differences in the understanding of mental illness/distress and treatment. Pathways SouthWest will also seek to improve the current underutilisation of services.

Pathways SouthWest also recognises, respects and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and is committed to the National reconciliation efforts to create a united Australia that provides equity for all. As such, National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations pay respect to the traditional owners as custodians of the land on which we work, by implementing and monitoring strategies that promote the values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The policy seeks to meet the following requirements:

- Each person is encouraged and supported to contribute to social and civic life in their communities in the way they choose.
- Service providers work with people with disabilities and their community to promote opportunities and support their active and meaningful participation
- Service providers develop connections with the community to promote opportunities for active and meaningful participation.

Service providers develop ways to maintain and further develop their local connections so that options for people with a disability to be included and valued are increased over time

## Scope

This policy applies to clients, their nominated support persons and all staff including permanent and casual, contract workers, students and volunteers. This policy is owned by the Management Team.

## Definitions

- **ATSI:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- **Carer:** Under the Carers Recognition Act 2004 a carer is a person who (without being paid) provides ongoing care or assistance to another person who has a disability, a chronic illness or a mental illness, or who is frail
- **Clients:** For the purposes of this policy and procedure clients are Pathways Southwest consumers and carers.
- **Consumers:** Consumers are people with a lived or living experience of mental health challenges and receiving a service from Pathways SouthWest

Date deployed:  
Revalidate:  
Approved by CEO  
Signature

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Owner:  
Author:

Management Team  
Coordinator Quality and Service Improvement

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- **Cultural Diversity:** Cultural diversity refers to the distinguishing feature of a person's background which could include but is not limited to:
  - Country of origin
  - Languages spoken at home
  - Family ties
  - Cultural and religious background, and
  - Self-identification (Babacan 2008)
- **Cultural Competence:** Cultural competence refers to Betancourt's definition: "A 'culturally competent' health care system has been defined as one that acknowledges and incorporates, at all levels, the importance of culture, assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs.

A culturally competent system is also built on an awareness of the integration and interaction of health beliefs and behaviours, disease prevalence and incidence, and treatment outcomes for different client/client populations. Furthermore, the field of cultural competence has recognised the inherent challenges in attempting to disentangle 'social' factors (e.g. socioeconomic status, supports/stressors, environmental hazards) from 'cultural' factors regarding their influence on the individual client/client. As a result, understanding and addressing the 'social context' has emerged as a critical component of cultural competence" (Betancourt 2003).

- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Cultural responsiveness refers to health care services that are respectful of, and relevant to, the health beliefs, health practices, culture and linguistic needs of diverse client/client/client populations and communities. That is, communities whose members identify as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home. Cultural responsiveness describes the capacity to respond to the healthcare issues of diverse communities. It thus requires knowledge and capacity at different levels of intervention: systemic, organisational, professional and individual.
- **MHC:** Mental Health Commission. The Western Australian Mental Health Commission is the government body responsible for planning and purchasing mental health, alcohol and other drug services.
- **NMHC:** National Mental Health Commission provides instruction to the Western Australian Mental Health Commission and other states and territories who are responsible for planning and purchasing mental health, alcohol and other drug services. Their **Vision** is "All people in Australia are enabled to lead contributing lives in socially and economically thriving communities".
- **SMS:** Service Management System (SMS) is a comprehensive and innovative management software provided via SaaS and is developed explicitly for agencies delivering community care. Owned by Alchemy Technology who are a Software Development and Support company.

## Principles

Pathways SouthWest is part of a culturally diverse society, and views people through the broad lens which reflects the diversity of cultural experience. As far as is practical, Pathways SouthWest will recognize and meet the cultural, linguistic, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual requirements of its clients. The organisation will continue to recruit staff that mirror the diversity of culture including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CaLD), those of different ages and abilities, social class, ethnicity, gender and people who identify as LGBTI. Pathways SouthWest will seek to appreciate the cultural context and take a holistic view of mental health that is thoughtful to cultural diversity. Pathways SouthWest will develop partnerships with the SouthWest Aboriginal Mental Health Service (SWAMS) and other Aboriginal, CaLD and LGBTI organizations to facilitate a culturally sensitive service.

Pathways SouthWest identifies that an Indigenous agency will be able to support and best assist us to meet the needs of our Indigenous clients. Our policy is to promote access to our services for CALD people and professional interpreter services are an important part of achieving that goal. Although a person may speak some English, they may not be able to articulate their needs successfully in English and should therefore be given the chance to work with an interpreter if desired. Although an employee may think that an interpreter is required, a client may not choose this for a number of reasons, (e.g. size of their local community making confidentiality an issue) (see Interpreter Use Policy).

Pathways SouthWest will –

- Use the appropriate terminology as defined within the WA Health OD 0439/13 "Use of the term 'Aboriginal' in all forms of WA Health communication" when referring to Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous people and when developing patient information pamphlets and promotional material".
- Promote processes to actively engage with Aboriginal people with regard to health care delivery.
- Follow the WA Health Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership – Guidelines and Protocols for WA Health 2016" for official functions.
- Access, utilise and monitor use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreters available from the NMHS Director Aboriginal Health.
- Provide services to clients in a more culturally sensitive way through the increased knowledge of Aboriginal culture.
- Encourage cultural awareness training for staff so they are sensitive to the way Aboriginal culture expresses their values and beliefs.
- Promote mutual respect and understanding between cultures.
- Respect cultural needs in the workplace.
- Ensure stereotyping and discrimination have no place in the workplace
- Acknowledgement of the past

Professional interpreting services are to be used with the clients consent when:

- Conducting Intake interviews.
- Recovery plans are developed and reviewed.
- Informed consent is required.
- Requested by clients or their families.

Pathways SouthWest has a Use of Interpreter Policy and Procedure.

The use of Interpreter services requires the following:

- Liaise with the client or referring agency and see if they have a partiality for a certain interpreter based on past involvements. If a partiality is indicated for someone who has

worked with the client in the past, ask the interpreting service for this person to be available for your appointment.

- Be aware of the client's own partialities and that our own cultural influences will affect how we perceive people. Be mindful, we may judge other people's behaviour and beliefs according to the morals of our own culture, and we need to reflect on our practice to begin to understand the person.
- Be aware of making assumptions about cultural impacts and applying generalisations to individuals.
- Appreciate that the behaviour and beliefs of people within each culture can contrast considerably. Respect the difference and don't stereotype.
- Appreciate that not all people identify with their cultural or religious background. Increase your knowledge about different cultural practices and issues through cultural awareness training or cultural background information.
- Appreciate the importance of suitable communication and regulate your communication accordingly.
- Always explore cultural explanations. If at all possible, do not use family members to interpret for you. Some ethnic groups favour talking to women over men and vice versa. Ask about the client's gender preference before booking an interpreter.
- Always remember to talk to the client and not to the interpreter.
- Remember to use short sentences and to stop frequently for the interpreter to repeat to the client. Big pieces of dialogue can take a while for interpreters to repeat and the interpreter can forget parts if he/she has to wait for you to finish.
- During the session check to make sure the client has understood what has been interpreted. Quite often words or impressions do not translate well into other languages

### **Client Engagement**

Community engagement with CaLD communities, carers and clients. Pathways SouthWest engages with the community and promotes CaLD people to be active members on the Board.

Culturally inclusive services and client engagement will be enabled through:

1. Cultural information that is related to our services and published as content of the Pathways SouthWest Newsletter. The information raises awareness of issues the outcome of which can positively influence and promote the provision of culturally responsive care to CaLD clients/clients and their carers.
2. Advice to staff on how to provide a culturally safe environment. The availability to staff of the following information and training –
  - The Aboriginal Cultural Capability Toolkit from [aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit.pdf](#) (accessed 17/02/2026)
  - Mental Health Commission Multicultural Plan 2022-25 [Multicultural Plan 2022-2025](#) (accessed 17/02/2026)  
Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia [Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia - Towards culturally inclusive service delivery | National Mental Health Commission](#) (accessed 17/02/2026)

### **Work Force**

Pathways SouthWest promotes and encourages the support and development of a culturally and linguistically responsive workforce. These policies include the Workplace Health, Culture and Equity Policy and Procedure and Pathways SouthWest Staff Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure. All employees at Pathways SouthWest are made aware of their responsibilities to each other under these policies through education programs

## Key Contacts

Questions about how to implement this procedure should be directed to Pathways SouthWest CEO on [ceo@pathwaysouthwest.org.au](mailto:ceo@pathwaysouthwest.org.au) or phone 97911257

## Other Reference Documents

- Australian Commission on Safety and Health Care. [Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#) (accessed 17/2/2026)
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health [NSQHS Standards User guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#) (accessed 17/2/2026)
- Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership – Guidelines and Protocols for WA Health [Welcome to country and acknowledgement of traditional ownership](#) (accessed 17/2/2026)

## Related Policies and Other Documents:

- Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure
- Compliance Policy and Procedure
- Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Governance Policy and Procedure
- Incident Management Policy and Procedure and all related reporting forms.
- National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations

## Relevant Legislation

- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Carers Recognition Act 2004 (WA)
- Carers Recognition Act 2010
- Charter of Health Care Rights
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)
- Environmental Regulations Amendment (Work Health and Safety) Regulations 2022
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Human Rights Act 2004
- Mental Health Act (WA) 2014
- Privacy Act 1988
- Public Sector Ethics Act 1994
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Quality of Care Principles 2014
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- Work Health and Safety Act 2020
- Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022