



Webinar summary Stories from the red dirt

The ESA Academy with Shannon Hallatt

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Cultural sensitivity & safety

Why is it important?

Nationally, 3.8% (of the recorded population) are First Nations peoples

- 325,604 under the age of 15 years
- Over 150 languages are spoken
- 23% of population are CALD (approx 6 million)

Of the 610,502 people with a NDIS plan:

- 10% are First Nations peoples (up to 50% in the NT)
- 8.6% CALD (*NDIA data unclear)

We can also see that the rate of disability is significantly higher in First nations and Migrant peoples than in the wider population.

In the NT for example, around 30% of the population are indigenous, yet represent 50% of people with NDIS plans.

Largely, health and disability services are inaccessible for First nations people, with barriers including services not being available within their local area, difficulty accessing services, out of pocket expenses, waiting times, and most notably, the lack of culturally safe and responsive health systems.

Workforce shortages amplified

Part of building a culturally safe service, is workforce diversity and inclusion, including people of various ages, gender identity, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.

In a space where we have chronic allied health care workforce shortage, this challenge of diversity is amplified.

We have 200,000 practicing allied health providers in the country, across all areas of service, including health, education, disability, management, rehab, mental health, mining, acute services and aged care and many others.

10-50% of NDIS participants (around 60,000 people), and 3.8 % of the general population are indigenous. We only have approximately 2400 First nations allied health providers.

It cannot be the responsibility of First Nations allied health providers to be drivers for culturally safe services within organizations, and we all have a responsibility to be learning and sharing in a way that contributes to positive social change, and outcomes for the people and communities we support.



Best-practice is key

Best practice is universal. It tells us services should be:

- family and client centered
- considering the child in the broader context of their family, school, and community (including innate strength, history, trauma, support networks and socio-economic factors)
- collaborative and co-designed
- building the capacity of the people around the child
- provided in an environment of comfort and safety
- A coordinated team, with a lead practitioner / keyworker

Cultural accessibility initiatives

Diverse workforce representative of local community

- Allied Health Assistants and Keyworkers
- Linkages with ACHO and ACCO to build relationships
- Cultural training
- Respect the cultural view of disability

When we build the capacity of people around the child, we build the capacity of people around every child

Cultural training

Cultural training is not a “one and done” module, it is a lifelong pursuit. The more you learn, the less you know.

Getting started with cultural training

- **Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA)** www.iaha.com.au
- **Your Mob Learning:** Online Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training www.yourmobilelearning.org
- **Local tours** and self-directed learning to educate yourself about the local area and the local families in the area

Respecting culture

Respecting cultural view of disability and learn what this means for each family that you work with.

Understand shame, trauma and vulnerability that comes with engaging with health and disability services.

It's important to understand the paradox that many families face when their children are being measured by western developmental and educational standards.

1. Choose an open mind and an open heart
2. Make your own decisions to overcome cultural bias
3. Challenge own assumptions



Cultural accessibility & the NDIS

As allied health providers, we have the opportunity to contribute to real social change.

If we contribute to the capacity of the people around the child, we build the capacity around every child.

We help the children who aren't yet able to access services, are on the waiting list or those who aren't ready to take that step yet. We help the mum, the aunty, the educator, the teacher, and they help every other child they come into contact with.

Through putting on our lens of collectivist culture and bridging the gap of the individualist NDIS, we can make a wide collective difference.

Different ways to help bridge the gap

- Video explainers of service agreements or practitioner introductions
- Accessing a local service or trusted community member to support consent process e.g., working with local schools
- Collecting consent from an authorized family member in the kinship system
- Visual supports for goal setting e.g., drawing on a notebook or using card decks

- Adjusting service locations, appointment lengths & attendees
- Awareness of men's business / women's business
- Slow down – it's about the process not the product

Yarning as rapport building

Yarning is basically having a chat before getting into business.

Sometimes it might take up the first two sessions,

There are informal protocols when we meet an indigenous person, including identifying where on country you are from, if you have indigenous family, and sharing a bit about yourself. It's also important to provide space and silence for the other person to share. It is valuable to share something that will establish common ground between you both in the initial stages of meeting.

Slow down. It's about the process not the product. While it may take extra time to achieve the goals, the impact for the child, family and community will be monumental

About us

Early Start Australia is a national organisation committed to delivering evidence-based early intervention and therapy services to children, young adults and families

Everyone has different needs and abilities, so everyone's therapy journey is their own. We know it's not always easy. It can be confusing, frustrating and challenging. That's why we are here. We help people realise their full potential, no matter where they are in their therapy journey, and no matter when they choose start it.



Careers with Early Start Australia

As part of a national allied health organisation, there are opportunities to work around the country. We offer flexible working arrangements because we respect that people have varying needs and want you to be the best version of yourself at work. We provide comprehensive professional development to help you reach your full potential and be able to provide the best possible outcomes for our clients.

To find out about our open roles visit the APM Careers website by clicking the button below or email our recruitment team about our job opportunities at recruitment@earlystartaustralia.com.au.

Browse open roles

Graduate Program

Our graduate program for an opportunity to grow and specialise in your field while making a difference in the lives of children and their families

Find out more

Get in touch with our speakers

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