



Intersectionality in practice

This resource forms part of a series on best practice when working with victim-survivors of family violence who are from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This resource covers intersectionality as a framework. Key principles of an intersectional approach are outlined as well as practical tips for using the steps of Recognise, Respond and Refer.

Intersectionality as a framework

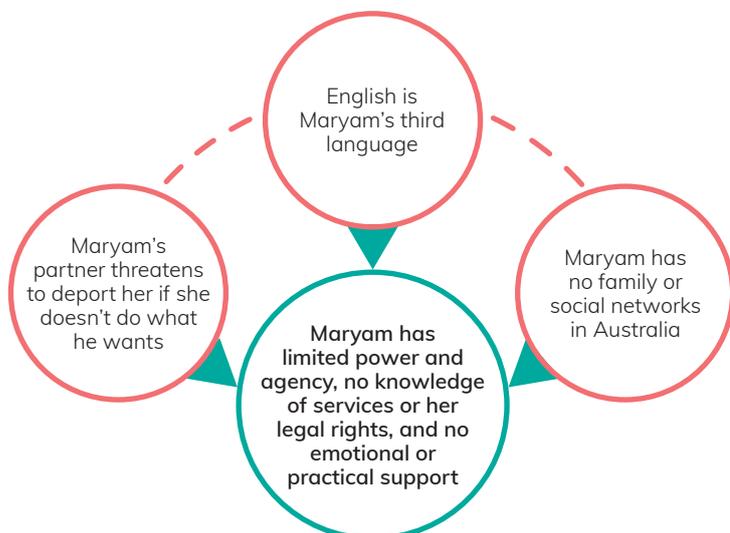
Intersectionality is used to understand how systemic barriers are produced by a combination of different types of oppression such as:

- > racism
- > able-ism
- > sexism
- > heterosexism
- > ageism
- > socio-economic inequity.

When a number of these oppressions come together, a complex form of injustice is produced that impacts the type of services a person will receive and how they receive them.

An intersectional approach

Victim-survivors from refugee and migrant backgrounds face intersecting systemic barriers to accessing support. This can be demonstrated in the example below where a woman, Maryam, calls a service to ask for help.



An intersectional approach to this situation would mean we:

- > have a critical awareness of power. We all experience more or less power depending on our multifaceted identities and context
- > acknowledge the power we hold as service providers while recognising victim-survivors as experts in their own lives and as unique individuals rather than members of a generalised cultural group
- > recognise the diverse strengths of victim-survivors, for example a woman may be fluent in a number of languages, be highly qualified and be a respected community leader/professional
- > think beyond a one size fits all approach.

Intersectionality in practice: Using Recognise, Respond, Refer

Recognise

- > Use culturally responsive practice which means listening without judgement and being critically aware of the potential impact of our own cultural and personal values and power.
- > Think beyond and around eligibility criteria as the situation a woman describes may not fit into the criteria for intake.
- > Consider the different aspects of a victim-survivor's identity and potential barriers to accessing support. For example, Maryam is a woman, a migrant, a wife and a mother. She speaks English as an additional language, does not have permanent residency and may have cultural and religious beliefs about marriage being forever.
- > A victim-survivor may have no knowledge of what the term 'family violence' means. Clearly explain what it means and its different forms.
- > Always consult the victim-survivor on the selection of an interpreter.

Respond

- > Ask gentle, exploratory questions to gain a clear picture of a victim-survivor's situation and beliefs, whilst building her confidence and understanding of her rights and the support available.
- > Check the victim-survivor's understanding in a number of ways – 'yes' does not always mean that someone really understands.
- > Co-create a case management plan with the victim-survivor that recognises her expertise in her own lived experience.
- > Make sure the victim-survivor is comfortable with the plan and knows it is okay to disagree with you.
- > If she chooses to stay with her partner, develop a safety plan with her that meets her needs and fits her situation.
- > Check the victim-survivor's attitudes to seeking help. Who might she be able to trust in or beyond her community? Clearly explain police and court processes and intervention orders.

Refer

- > Combine a warm referral process with advocacy. This means educating services about a victim-survivor's world view, the complexity of their situation and intersecting barriers.

More information

For additional information about the origins of the term intersectionality see:

- > Crenshaw, K 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', University of Chicago Legal Forum, Volume 1989, Issue 1, Article 8.