



24 PRINCIPLES

Working with Indigenous Youth Involved with the Law

(Trotter, Baidawi, & Evans, 2015)

FACTSHEET

COMMUNICATION

1

When working with Indigenous young people it is important to avoid the use of jargon, technical terms, and complex theoretical terms.

2

Where ideas have to be explained, use simple language and concrete examples.

3

Visual aids as opposed to explanations can be very helpful.

4

It is good practice to seek feedback from clients in relation to difficult or complex ideas by asking questions about how they (the clients) understand the ideas.

5

It is important to avoid disrespectful or patronising forms of address, e.g. “you people”, “darl”. This can destroy trust and impede the building of positive relationships.

6

The use of short, simple, casual language, with some humour, is likely to generate more conversation flow and rapport with some younger Indigenous offenders.

7

Adopting a nonjudgmental approach about Indigenous norms and customs is critical to establishing a positive working relationship, for example, accepting hospitality, not judging overcrowding within the home by conventional standards.

8

Many Indigenous people are more comfortable in “side-by-side” body language, where they look out in a common direction or at a similar object while they talk, rather than engaging in prolonged eye-to-eye contact.

9

An awareness that certain language and words may have slightly different meanings or connotations for Indigenous clients is important.

10

It is good practice for non-Indigenous workers to consult and seek advice and information from Aboriginal workers when uncertain about particular situations.

11

Non-Indigenous workers should be aware of community resources and make good use of these services for advice and local information.

CULTURAL RECOGNITION

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

12

It is important for workers to develop an ability to stay focused in unsettled environments and with distracted clients.

13

The ability to read and interpret an Indigenous person's social behaviour accurately leads to better risk assessment and the avoidance of over-reaction.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

14 Rapport and trust may be built with Indigenous clients and their families by finding some common connection or tie to a significant person in their extended family or kinfolk.

15 Taking a family-focused approach to a client is an important strategy to influence the behaviour of the client.

16 Establishing clear understandings about the nature and purpose of supervision (and hopefully a positive alliance) with a younger offender's family or carer is also critical for effective work with the client.

TASK-CENTRED PRACTICE AND ROLE CLARIFICATION

17 The building of relationships can be facilitated through the provision of practical, assistance, for example, helping to get new shoes for a client.

18 Engaging Indigenous young people in activities outside the office for supervision may be less threatening, and opens up the opportunity for better communication and dialogue between the worker and young person.

19 Good referral practice is essential for Indigenous clients, to allow them to engage with and get benefit from the service to which they are referred. Referral must occur with a specific purpose and a plan, and be understood and accepted by all parties. Clients may need to be personally introduced by the youth justice worker to the personnel at the "referred to" agency.

20 Initial clarification regarding the nature of the court order, its ramifications for the Aboriginal client, and initial clarification of the worker's mandatory role are essential to good practice.

CASEWORK PROCESSES

21 Assurance of confidentiality is important, especially on sensitive matters in small, closely connected communities.

22 Use of appointment cards to keep contact with Indigenous young people is likely to be of limited value.

23 Use of a mobile phone to keep contact and send reminders is a valuable tool.

24 Praising a client's positive achievements, for example, the obtaining of a job, is of critical importance.