

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

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It is important to consider your patient's life experience and social situation in order to gain their trust and cooperation. This includes experiences and information gained in other countries, where the legal and political environment may be quite different from that in Australia, in relation to communicable disease, public health, the justice system and the health system. These considerations are particularly relevant for refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced persecution or discrimination in countries of origin or prior refuge, or who may be in an uncertain situation in Australia due to their visa status.

Language and cultural dimensions of communication must also be considered. It is important to ascertain the person's preferred language and obtain the support of a trained interpreter if there are any concern about mutual comprehension. It is common for people to overestimate their proficiency in English and for health professionals to underestimate the need for a trained interpreter. Of note, language proficiency is context specific. A person may manage very well in day-to-day transactions yet find it difficult to discuss intimate personal details using words and phrases they less commonly encounter. Where possible, the assistance of interpreters with specific training and expertise in sexual health should be sought.

It is also important to consider cultural sensitivities and attitudes around topics such as sexuality, gender and illicit drug use, recognising that HIV-related stigma and discrimination are commonly encountered in many societies and still persist in Australia. Privacy and confidentiality are of paramount concern to many people diagnosed with HIV, viral hepatitis or STIs and this is particularly important for small communities where English is not the primary language with few trained interpreters.

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