



National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education: Cultural Competence

The early years are a critical time to introduce key concepts for lifelong learning. Road safety education is an important component of early childhood education as it lays the foundation for children to become safer road users. The National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education have been developed by early childhood education and road safety experts across Australia and New Zealand. The eight national practices are aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework.

National Practice No. 6 – Cultural Competence: Implement road safety education that is culturally relevant for the diversity of children, their families and the community.

What is it? Children’s experience and understanding of being road users is shaped by that of their families. This can be a complex story, particularly for families who are newly settled in Australia and who may have experienced different rules and cultural attitudes to road safety in other countries. Supporting safe road use in culturally sensitive and inclusive ways will ensure children and families become active participants in community life. Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple ways of knowing, seeing and living. Being culturally competent focuses on an educator’s capacity to understand and respect diverse ways of living. When these perspectives are incorporated into programs for children and their families, differences are celebrated and individuals feel a greater sense of belonging and connectedness.

- Seek to understand the concerns, gaps in knowledge and needs of all local families. It can be hard to understand new rules and cultural attitudes, and many of us need help to engage our children in safe road practice through teaching and role-modelling safe practices. Consider if your facility can accommodate bilingual strategies such as additional road safety signs and messages in languages other than English.
- Get to know to local community through dialogue and interaction. Localised knowledge of the lived experiences of the community enables deliberate practice and informed decision-making.

- Consider whether your community is primarily an urban, rural or remote environment, and consider how road safety messages may be applied within your local context.
- Contact and invite community leaders as an ongoing practice, and invite them to address issues such as the safe transportation of children in care. Community leaders and elders can assist in the promotion of key health and wellbeing messages that are fundamental to the safety of children.
- Talk to organisations or agencies who work in the local community in supporting children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. These organisations may be able to assist you to understand the experience of road safety for families before they arrived in Australia, for example, families may have previously been living in a country where the road rules differed, or child restraints were not mandatory.
- Use bilingual workers or invite a parent to assist you to communicate the key messages around road safety. Parents can become safety champions and help other families to understand rules and expectations, and how to adopt safer road use strategies.
- Educators could collect images of their local community (in particular, places that families and children might visit regularly) and display them in the service to assist children and families to feel a sense of belonging and become more aware of how to use these spaces safely.

