Top 10 Practice Tips
during pregnancy care

Supporting women and families of refugee and migrant backgrounds

Women and families of refugee and migrant backgrounds face a number of barriers to high-quality maternity care in Australia, and disparities in perinatal outcomes like stillbirth persist.

Fortunately, we already know a lot about what helps to overcome these barriers. Some approaches focus on individual health professional practice, while others require broader service system change.

The Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence and the Stronger Futures Centre of Research Excellence have identified these top 10 practice tips for health professionals, services, and systems.

TIP 01 — Ask Questions

Ask women and families how they would like to access information about their health and pregnancy care. This can include understanding people's preferred language and dialect, whether written or audio-visual health resources are more suitable, and how women and families would like interpreters to be involved in their care.

TIP 02 — Try to slow down

We know you're busy; you're juggling a lot! Doing what you can to slow down your speech and approaches to providing pregnancy care can help to show families that you have time for them, genuinely care about their health needs, and have time for their questions. This also gives interpreters the time they need to share complex health information across cultural and language contexts.

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TIP 03 — Interpreters are essential

You can help end preventable stillbirths by supporting women and families to access the right interpreter, speaking the right language or dialect, at the right time.

TIP 04 — Use the culturally adapted Safer Baby Bundle

The updated Safer Baby Bundle provides guidance on how women and families of refugee and migrant backgrounds want to have conversations about stillbirth prevention during pregnancy. This also gives interpreters the time they need to share complex health information across cultural and language contexts.

TIP 05 — Get to know your local communities

Building relationships with local refugee, settlement, and multicultural health and social care organisations can help you learn more about the unique communities and families in your local area.

TIP 06 — Avoid assumptions

Each woman, family, and community of refugee or migrant background is unique. It is not possible to understand someone's cultural, language, spiritual, religious, emotional wellbeing needs or experiences based on how they look, where they were born, or how they came to live in Australia.

TIP 07 — Build relationships

Continuity of care and caregiver can overcome barriers and help to ensure high-quality pregnancy care for women and families of refugee and migrant backgrounds.

TIP 08 — Increase bicultural support

Bicultural workforces, such as bicultural mentors or doulas, can improve the accessibility and cultural safety of maternity care for women and families.

TIP 09 — Culturally safe and trauma responsive care is the foundation

Improving perinatal outcomes for women, babies, and families of refugee and migrant backgrounds rests on our ability to provide compassionate care that is culturally safe and responsive to individual, family, and community experiences of trauma. When we get this foundation right, stillbirth disparities can be addressed, and experiences of care improved.

TIP 10 — Prioritise your learning needs

As health professionals, we work in complex systems and are always learning and adapting. Whether you're seeking to increase your confidence working with interpreters or would like to know more about local communities of refugee and migrant backgrounds in your area, there are plenty of formal and informal ways for you to support your practice.

learn.stillbirthcre.org.au
Professional development modules and resources for health professionals and interpreters.

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