

What is a youth service?

A guide for families who have migrated to Australia

In Australia there are special services and programs for young people aged between 12 and 25 years of age. This factsheet is designed to help families who have migrated to Australia understand the role of these services and how they can help both young people and their families.

Who are 'youth'?

In Australia, young people between the ages of 12 and 25 are generally called 'youth'.



Why 'youth' may need support

Every culture has different ideas about what it means to be young and the sorts of roles that young people should have in the family and community as they are growing up.

In Australia, it is generally recognised that 'youth' have different needs than children and adults. 'Youth' is usually considered a transition period between childhood and adulthood when young people are not expected to have the same responsibilities as adults.

Young people can often find it hard to find a balance between expectations from home and expectations from their friends or their school. They can often feel alone and that no one really understands what they are going through at this time in their development.

What are youth services?

A youth service is specifically designed to support young people and their families. Youth services include special projects and programs that focus on meeting the particular needs of young people, including those who are newly arrived to Australia.

Youth services can be run from youth or community centres, schools, local councils, churches, mosques or temples and from Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs).

Some of the things that youth services can help with include:

- Education - homework clubs and study help
- Employment - help to find work and writing CVs and preparing for job interviews
- Physical and mental health
- Entertainment - school holiday activities and sport and recreation programs
- Making friends and socialising
- Counselling
- Problems adjusting to life in Australia
- General advice and support.

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Who are youth workers?

Youth workers are professionals who are experienced and qualified to help young people and organise safe and fun activities for them. Youth workers do not only work with young people who are 'in trouble' but with all young people.

Like teachers or doctors, youth workers have a responsibility to look after the young people who participate in their programs or activities - the safety of participants is a priority. This is called 'duty of care'.

Youth workers also have a responsibility to respect 'confidentiality'. This means that any personal information that is shared with a youth worker is kept private. Youth workers cannot talk to others (including family) about personal information without the young person's permission, unless there is an emergency and they need to share information to keep a young person safe.

About youth programs

Youth programs are often designed for a particular group of young people. For example activities are often organised according to:

- Gender - for boys or girls only
- Age group or year at school
- The suburb where you live or go to school
- What language you speak or your ethnic background
- Particular issues, such as health.

Some youth programs are free of charge - you do not need to pay for them, and for some you do need to pay.

Some programs for young people under the age of 18 will require permission from their parents or guardians before a young person can participate.

What can I expect when my child participates in a youth activity or program?

You can expect that all youth services, programs and activities provide safe and positive environments for young people from every cultural background. You also have the right to ask questions about any of the youth programs or activities that your child may want to participate in.

What are the benefits of participating in a youth program or activity?

Young people benefit from participating in youth programs and activities because they:

- Receive practical assistance with education, health care and employment
- Learn new skills, such as English language, sport and leadership skills
- Make friends
- Receive support that helps them feel confident about themselves and build stronger relationships with their family, friends and community.

For more information

For more information ask your local Migrant Resource Centre or Community Centre or Council about the youth services offered in your area.

For information about youth work and youth services in NSW go to the Youth Action and Policy Association's website: www.yapa.org.au or Toll Free 1800 627 323

Or contact the Multicultural Youth Affairs Network (MYAN) NSW: www.myannsw.org.au