

Culturally Competent Care Services – Key Considerations for Engagement with Somalian Carers



- Recognise the intensity of the caring role. Many carers feel invisible, as attention focuses solely on the person being cared for.
- Acknowledge the hidden risk of burnout. Women supporting both their own families and others are at increased risk of emotional and physical exhaustion
- Caring, especially for children with disabilities or elder relatives, is often seen as a lifelong moral duty, particularly for women.
- Be aware of isolation linked to disability. Somali mothers caring for children with disabilities may experience isolation due to cultural perceptions and lack of open discussion about disability.
Do understand stigma around disability
- Offer support proactively and frame services as complementary. Outside help is often welcomed, particularly where community support is limited or unavailable. Emphasise that formal support can support family care, not replace it.
- Explain entitlements and services clearly. Many carers are unaware of their rights, benefits, and available support. Don't assume knowledge.
- Respect religious and cultural practices.
- Same-gender care may be essential. Women may not be permitted to provide personal care to men who are not their husbands
- Be mindful of modesty, language needs, household practices, and faith sensitivities
- Religion can be seen as a potential strength. Faith can provide resilience and validation for seeking support, even when cultural stigma exists.

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DON'T:

- Don't assume carers will speak up about their own needs
- Emotional and psychological distress is often hidden due to expectations of strength and resilience.
- Don't focus only on the cared-for person. Ignoring the carer reinforces feelings of invisibility and burnout.
- Don't underestimate the impact of stigma. Isolation linked to disability is real and can shape how carers engage with services.
- Don't make assumptions about family or community support. Support within the community may be limited, strained, or completely absent.
- Don't overlook gender and religious boundaries. Assigning inappropriate carers or ignoring faith-based rules can seriously damage trust.
- For many caregivers, faith supports help-seeking
- Don't use jargon or vague explanations. Lack of clear information can be a major barrier to accessing support.
- Don't expect carers to prioritise themselves without reassurance
- Self-care may feel selfish or irresponsible without explicit validation.