



Engaging  
Arabic Speaking  
Communities Within  
Mental Health Services

**CALD Toolkit**

Culturally Accommodating  
and Safe Interface (CASI)  
Framework

**wellways**

1300 111 400 | [wellways.org](http://wellways.org)

# CASI Framework for Engaging Arabic Speaking Communities

## What are the important values of Arabic speaking culture?

Strong family ties

Parent-child ties

Nationalism

Identity and **cultural affiliation**

Spirit of hospitality

Gender roles

Emphasis on privacy

Extent of **social integration**

Language and dialect spoken

Religion/denomination and spiritual life

Honour and respect

Community connections

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for organisations who wish to engage Arabic speaking communities (ASC) in a culturally safe and accommodating way. This Culturally Accommodating and Safe Interface (CASI) framework identifies ten essential values that define what a CASI would encompass for an Arabic speaking person.

CASI consists of ten values that may inform an Arabic speaking person's identity and cultural affiliation and will help to assist organisations in understanding how to engage ASCs in a culturally responsive way.<sup>27</sup> Using

CASI as an overarching framework within marketing, community engagement, and service delivery will help organisations reach, inform, educate, and empower the Arabic speaking community to engage in services.

This resource should be used in conjunction with *A Marketing Guide to Engaging Arabic Speaking Communities*, as well as *SICAS Questionnaire – Workers Guide*. This guide is provided in condensed format, refer to *Chapter 2: A Marketing Guide to Engaging Arabic Speaking Communities* of the CALD Toolkit for the full text.

## The Arabic speaking client journey

Reach > Inform > Educate > Empower >

Link >

Connect (SICAS questionnaire) > Support (CASI framework)



Marketing to the ASC



Referral



Service provision



### CASI value 1: Family ties

Traditional family roles stem from strong tribal connections in many Arabic speaking countries. Often, fathers provide for the family while mothers help to manage the household, educate and raise the children. The Elderly are considered esteemed and are treated dutifully, spoken to politely, and consulted with on all matters. While fathers may have the final say, parents generally discuss and plan together before making decisions. Traditions are changing, and women are working outside as well as from the home.<sup>24</sup> Second and subsequent generations growing up in Australia may feel conflicting pressures between the cultural values of their family and Australian society and are generally more adaptive to dominant Australian values and customs.<sup>27</sup>

### CASI value 2: Parent/child ties

Parent/child ties are strong amongst ASCs. Traditionally, children often do not leave home until they marry. Sons tend to protect the family and take on responsibilities outside the house, whilst daughters manage the household. Often, one son will live at home after marriage to care for his parents' needs. In some Arabic countries of origin, the healthcare support system is under-funded and under-equipped, so young women rely on their mothers and grandmothers during childbirth and the childcare that follows.<sup>24</sup>

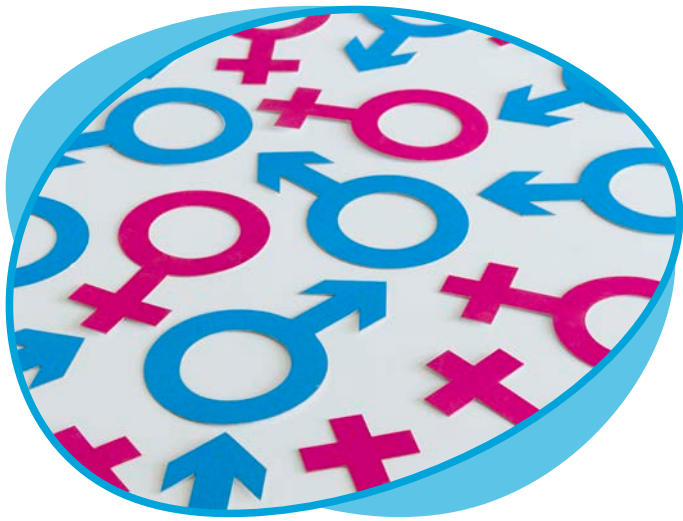


### CASI value 3: Nationalism

Whether immigrating to Australia voluntarily or by force, people of a diaspora typically preserve and celebrate the culture and traditions of their homeland. This diaspora reality is partly a social construct, a consciousness based on excavating memory of homeland, history, meaning and feeling, fables and folklore, group identity, goals and dreams. This shared nostalgia of diaspora and nationalism provides comfort to Arabic speaking communities.<sup>23</sup> There is great diversity in ethnicity and religious practices across the Arab nation. Some individuals think of their identity in nationalistic or sectarian terms and will define their identity in either national (e.g., Lebanese), religious (e.g., Chaldean) or ethnic terms (e.g., Kurdish), depending on how they identify individually.<sup>27</sup>

### CASI value 4: Spirit of hospitality

Due to the collectivist nature of the Arabic culture, hospitality forms an inherent part of an Arabic speaking person's sense of identity and includes sharing recipes, hosting gatherings with family and friends and extending hospitality to guests through food and accommodation. Catering to guests can be a very validating experience that helps build rapport and connection with the Arabic speaking community.



### CASI value 5: Gender roles

Gender roles within the ASC play a huge role in the dynamics between male and female figures within the context of family, siblings, couples and the community at large. Attitudes and perceptions of what it means to be female or male are often inherited over decades of both direct, as well as subliminal conditioning via family, media, community, and social environment. Many refugee men for example are highly focused on their immediate practical needs in relation to settling effectively in their host country.<sup>18</sup> The role of mother or carer embodied by women in the ASC frequently extends to members of the immediate and extended family and is often assumed to be a part of parenting or spousal responsibility.



### CASI value 6: Language and dialects

Language and dialect are very important requirements to consider when marketing to the ASC. A wide variety of differing Arabic dialects branch out of the same root language (Modern Standard Arabic). While it is generally considered that the Arabic speaking community is comprised of groups of people who speak a language of Arabic origin, Arabic speaking people may originate from any one of the 22 principal countries situated in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).<sup>24</sup>



### CASI value 7: Emphasis on privacy

Privacy is particularly important to the ASC and the lack of can be a large barrier to seeking help, as explored within *Chapter 1 – Barriers to Service Access & Engagement* of the CALD Toolkit. For many, the need for privacy is closely entwined with elements of honour, where maintaining a positive public impression is essential to sustaining family ties and community connections.



### CASI value 8: Religion, denomination and spiritual life

Arabic speaking people identify quite strongly with religion and spirituality as a guide to way of life and connection to community. Arabic countries are a highly theocratic society where God and religion are at the centre of life and daily living, and in some countries of origin, forms the basis of the country's governing laws and legislations. Religious studies and scriptures are taught to school aged children and at times even before commencing formal primary education. Spirituality as a deeply entrenched value is demonstrated across pleasantries used by the ASC, where the word 'Allah' that translates to 'God', is used when conversing and connecting with others. This linguistic practice is generally universal across all religions and faiths practiced amongst Arabic speaking people.



### CASI value 9: Honour and respect

The societies from which Arabic speaking people originate are fundamentally conservative. However, the spectrum of conservatism varies across differing sub-cultures and countries of origin, where the honour code may no longer stringently followed. The culture of honour is based on the idea that people should protect themselves and their family by giving a public impression of dignity and integrity and emphasising achievements. For many Arabic speaking people, culture pressures individuals to conceal and deny anything that could tarnish their public impression.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, some individuals fear this may lead to ostracism or rejection from their community.<sup>19</sup>



### CASI value 10: Community connections

Community connections have a huge impact on the ASCs mental, emotional and social wellbeing. Community involvement provides a sense of belonging and social connectedness, whilst offering extra meaning and purpose to everyday life, particularly for those who have been displaced or had immigrated to Australia due to civil war or political conflict. The acculturation experience is a long, arduous and non-linear process, which is why the value of community connections offers the ASC a consistent sense of belonging while attempting to settle into a new host country.

# Choose different, choose wellways

At Wellways, our experience in both mental health and disability allows us to provide supports and understand your physical and emotional needs.

## OVER 40 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

40

Wellways has been working for people with mental health issues, disabilities and carers for more than 40 years.

## MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST



We develop and deliver mental health services including suicide prevention, follow-up after care and housing support programs. We understand the challenges and complexity of mental health issues for individuals, families and communities.

## COMPLEX NEEDS



Our experienced and trained staff work with people with complex needs and multiple diagnoses.

## WORKERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE



Many of our workers have a lived experience. At Wellways we value personal experience together with learnt knowledge and believe this contributes to the depth of our programs.

## WORKERS WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTIQ+



Our programs aim to meet the needs of all participants who identify as LGBTIQ+ by providing them access to LGBTIQ+ peer and support workers.

## RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN



We are committed to reconciliation, to closing the gap and addressing injustice in association with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Contact Wellways on **1300 111 400** to find out about services and supports available to help you achieve your goals.

Wellways acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we live, work and play and pays respect to their Elders past, present and future.

[wellways.org](https://www.wellways.org) | 1300 111 400

**wellways**

WELLWAYS AUSTRALIA LIMITED  
ABN 93 093 357 165

National Support Office  
276 Heidelberg Road, Fairfield VIC 3078  
03 8486 4200

