

Conversation Guide for Settlement Service Providers

**Stillbirth Prevention Awareness and
Mental Health Support**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 About this Guide

The Social Policy Group has worked closely with women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to co-design resources that aim to increase awareness of stillbirth prevention information, and improve perinatal access to the Australian healthcare system for women during pregnancy and after birth.

Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds highlighted that community leaders, bi-cultural health workers, and settlement staff are key touchpoints to support women's access to trusted information on how to have a healthy pregnancy and lower their risk of stillbirth.

The goal of this Conversation Guide is to raise awareness about stillbirth prevention and to encourage help seeking behaviours. This guide addresses gender specific issues and provides practical guidance to facilitate respectful conversations between community leaders and the women and families in their community.

1.2 Getting Ready for the Conversation

By leading with kindness, curiosity and transparency, we can:

- introduce the topic of stillbirth in a culturally sensitive manner,
- explain risk factors,
- share clinically accurate information,
- address misconceptions,
- encourage help-seeking behaviour, and
- share where to go for mental health support.

For community members who have experienced stillbirth, settlement service providers can help provide support through clear communication and reassurance that it can happen to anyone and by sharing support services available.

1.3 Conversation Tips

Discussing pregnancy can be challenging as it is often seen as a private women's issue and concerns can be deeply personal or difficult to discuss. Stillbirth in particular is broadly seen as taboo or shameful, and there is either little understood about the topic or much misinformation about the causes of stillbirth.

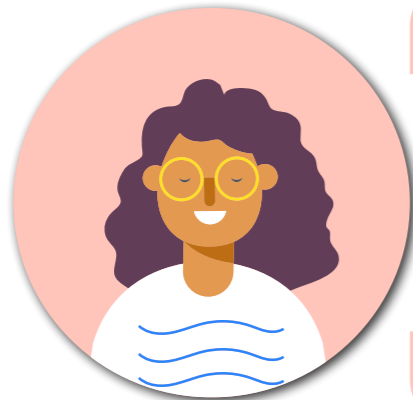
Before starting a conversation about pregnancy and stillbirth prevention, there are some things you can do:

- Pick the right time for you and the person you want to talk to. It is important to choose a moment and place where both of you are comfortable.
- Keep a nice and friendly approach.
- Work to build rapport and trust before broaching the topic.
- Be clear, respectful, non-emotional, and direct when talking about stillbirth. This transparent approach will help strengthen trust. This is also the case when speaking about mental health and postnatal depression.
- Maintain a positive discussion and don't introduce feelings of blame for a woman or her family.
- Generalise the information and don't refer to specific communities as this can build a fear of judgement.
- Remember that opinions are formed through different experiences and circumstances.
- In many cultures, pregnancy is seen as a women's issue, so if you need to organise an interpreter, engage a woman interpreter where possible.
- Understand that they may not feel ready to talk or make changes yet. If this is the case, let them know you will be available if they need information or guidance in the future.



2.0 Having the Conversation

2.1: It is important to first build rapport, gain trust, and give general pregnancy information before introducing the subject of stillbirth. Many migrant and refugee women are not aware of the important role a GP can play from the very start of their pregnancy, so this is a good place to start.



Mother

"We just found out we are having a baby."

"Congratulations, that's wonderful news. Pregnancy is an exciting time, but it can feel like there is a lot to think about. A good first step is to see your GP, have you booked an appointment?"

"Not yet, I don't think I need to go yet."

"It's a good idea to make an appointment. Your GP will connect you with a local hospital or pregnancy service, and will send you for routine tests that are a normal part of pregnancy care in Australia."



Service Provider

2.2: You can introduce the topic of stillbirth in a way that shows that pregnancy complications are something that can sometimes happen to pregnant people and that it is nobody's fault. It is important to be clear and direct and not emotional whilst remaining respectful.

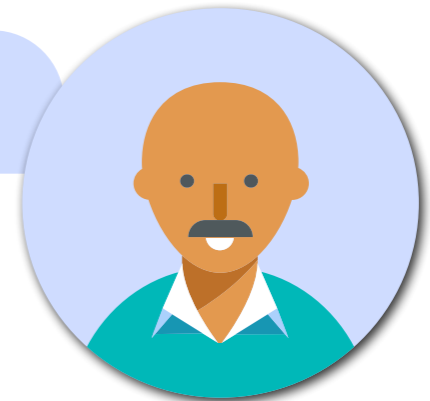


Mother

"Sometimes pregnancies don't go as planned, do you have any fears or concerns?"

"I have thought about this but it is not something that I have talked about."

"Complications or stillbirth can sometimes happen. So it is a good idea to see your GP as soon as you know you are pregnant to check that everything is alright. If there is a concern the doctor can discuss it with you and help you to have a healthy pregnancy. This is the process for all pregnant women in Australia."



Service Provider

2.3: Ask if you can share trusted information with them.



Mother

"I don't know where to go for information."

"There is trusted information in many languages about how to have a healthy pregnancy and reduce your risk of stillbirth. If you are interested I can share it with you. Or I can send it you an email or text message with the link so you can access it later."



Service Provider

2.4: Pregnancy and parenthood can be a time of great joy however it can also be overwhelming and postpartum depression is common. This can also be a risk for migrant and refugee women who are often without extended family and can feel isolated. Again, it is helpful not to go around the issue but speak about it clearly and in a way that shows that it can happen to anyone.

“Women can feel sad and lonely after having a baby, this is common among mothers and can happen to anyone. You should never feel guilty for feeling sad.

You should tell someone if you feel sad. I can share information with you about support that all women can access.”



Service Provider

2.5: For women and families who have experienced stillbirth, it is important to emphasise that it is not their fault and that there is support available.

“I’m sorry this has happened. This happens to many women in Australia and all over the world. You are not alone and there is help available. This may include counselling, joining support groups or accessing support online. Would you like some more information?”



Service Provider

3.0 Where to Find Information

3.1 Pregnancy Support and Stillbirth Prevention Information

Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence

The Safer Baby Bundle is an initiative of the Stillbirth Centre of Research Excellence. It covers evidence-based information and addresses key areas where improved practice can reduce the number of stillbirths. Download Safer Baby Bundle resources in 35 languages:

<https://saferbaby.org.au/translated-resources/>

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby

Speak to a maternal child health nurse **1800 882 436**. Available 7am to midnight (AET), 7 days a week.

MyAus App

MyAus App is a free multilingual app tailored for migrant and refugee communities. It has information on stillbirth prevention, the health system in Australia, maternal health, and the health care workers who can support your pregnancy if you are pregnant or planning to have a baby.



PANDA

PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia – supports the mental health of parents and families during pregnancy and in their first year of parenthood. PANDA National Helpline (Monday to Saturday) **1300 726 306**.

3.2 Mental Health Support After Stillbirth

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby has information for people who have experienced pregnancy loss along with available support services. Access the website:

<https://www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/experiencing-a-pregnancy-loss>

Red Nose

Call the Grief and Loss Support Line on **1300 308 307**. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Access the website: <https://rednose.org.au/page/grief-and-loss-support-services>

Beyond Blue

Call the Beyond Blue Support Service **1300 22 4636** to talk to a counsellor. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Access the website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/talk-to-a-counsellor>



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