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Preparing for an Impact of Race and Culture Assessment (IRCA)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR DEFENCE COUNSEL

A successful IRCA begins before the first interview. Thoughtful preparation by defence counsel can help facilitate a comprehensive assessment, reduce avoidable delays, and support the preparation of an evidence-informed report for the Court.

Early communication, timely sharing of information, and preparing clients for the assessment process all contribute to a more efficient and meaningful assessment.

REFER EARLY

Whenever possible, refer clients as early as practicable. Early referrals provide additional time to:

- request and review records
- schedule client interviews
- identify collateral contacts
- address unforeseen delays
- prepare the report before sentencing

PREPARE YOUR CLIENT

Clients often participate more effectively when they understand the purpose and process of the assessment. Encourage clients to:

- attend all scheduled interviews
- be open and honest
- take time to reflect on significant life experiences that may be relevant to the assessment
- identify potential collateral contacts
- notify the assessor if circumstances change

WORKING WITH THE ASSESSOR

Defence counsel can support a comprehensive assessment by:

- sharing available disclosure and court documents promptly
- advising of sentencing and court timelines
- identifying potential collateral contacts
- communicating accessibility or accommodation needs
- providing updates when significant developments occur throughout the assessment



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UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENT TIMELINES

While early referrals support timely completion, assessment timelines vary depending on the complexity of the case and the availability of information. Factors that may influence timelines include:

- delays in obtaining records
- difficulty contacting collateral sources
- outstanding disclosure
- missed or rescheduled interviews
- evolving court timelines
- new information requiring follow-up

COMMUNICATING CLIENT NEEDS

Where known, advise the assessor of:

- interpreter requirements
- literacy concerns
- mental health conditions
- cognitive or intellectual disabilities
- learning disabilities
- communication needs
- mobility or accessibility requirements
- custody or institutional restrictions

REMEMBER

An IRCA is an independent assessment. Defence counsel facilitate the process by sharing relevant information and preparing clients, while the assessor remains responsible for conducting an objective, evidence-informed assessment.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE

Early collaboration between defence counsel, clients, and assessors can strengthen the assessment process. Timely communication and the sharing of relevant information help ensure the report reflects the client's lived experiences and the issues before the Court.

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CITATION (APA 7)

Duhaney, P. (2026). Preparing for an Impact of Race and Culture Assessment (IRCA): A practical guide for defence counsel (Nusura Legal Practice Series, Vol. 2). Nusura Consulting Inc.

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