Body and Soul:
Mental Health for Asian Americans,
Challenges and Perspectives

Promoting Access to Health (PATH)
Program for Midwest and Mountain States

May 13-14, 2002
St. Paul, Minnesota

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
SAMHSA’s mission within the nation’s health system is to improve the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, addiction treatment, and mental health services in order to improve health and reduce illness, death, disability, and cost to society.

Office of Minority Health (OMH)/Office of the Secretary
Under the direction of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health, OMH advises the Secretary and the Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS) of DHHS on public health issues affecting American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, Blacks/African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos. The mission of OMH is to improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations through the development of effective health policies and programs that help to eliminate disparities in health.

Minnesota Department of Health
The Refugee Health Program at the Minnesota Department of Health is mandated by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement to offer a comprehensive health screening examination to all newly arrived refugees resettling in Minnesota. The goal of the screening is to control communicable disease among, and resulting from, the arrival of new refugees. This is accomplished through the screening exam, treatment of conditions identified, and referrals for on-going care. The Refugee Health Program is also dedicated to health education for both health care providers and newly arrived refugee communities. Education is offered through publications, lectures, presentations, and radio programs. For more information about the Refugee Health Program visit the website at www.health.state.mn.us/refugee or call 612-676-5237.

UCare Minnesota
UCare Minnesota is a nonprofit health maintenance organization (HMO) created in 1984 by the Department of Family Practice at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Today UCare is an independent HMO serving approximately 100,000 members throughout Minnesota. UCare Minnesota’s mission is “To improve the health of our members through innovative services and partnerships across communities”. The organization is dedicated to providing preventive, comprehensive quality health care to its members.

The Minneapolis Foundation
The Minneapolis Foundation is a statewide center for philanthropy, helping Minnesotans make the most of their charitable giving. The Minneapolis Foundation maintains assets of more than $500 million, awards millions in grants annually to nonprofit organizations, and engages the community on critical issues. Established in 1915, the Minneapolis Foundation is the oldest foundation in Minnesota and one of the nation’s largest community foundations. For more information, please visit www.MinneapolisFoundation.org.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation
The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation works with communities and organizations statewide to make a healthy difference in the lives of Minnesotans. This foundation is Minnesota’s largest grant making foundation with assets exclusively dedicated to health improvement. One of the foundation’s priorities is to improve health care access by helping people with chronic illnesses or unique cultural needs navigate the health care system.

First Regional Conference on Mental Health for Asian Americans in the Midwest and Mountain States

The Promoting Access to Health (PATH) program of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), with partners in Minnesota, convened this day and a half long conference, entitled “Body and Soul: Mental Health for Asian Americans, Challenge and Perspectives” in St. Paul, Minnesota, on May 13-14, 2002.

The goal of the meeting was to address the mental health needs and issues of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the Midwest and Mountain states region, and to share information and existing service delivery models that would help service providers diagnose and treat AAPI clients. The original idea for this conference came out of a day-long dialogue between AAPI mental health providers in the Midwest and Mountain states and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in the summer of 1999, jointly convened by AAPCHO and SAMHSA. In recognizing the lack of mental health services and the increasing need for AAPI communities in the region, SAMHSA provided additional support to the PATH program to carry out this much needed regional conference.

AAPCHO believes that this conference was a key opportunity in continuing our dialogue on AAPI mental health issues for the region. We hope to keep this dialogue going to address mental health needs in AAPI communities in the region.
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Goal

To address the mental health needs and issues of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the Midwest and mountain state region, and to share information and existing service delivery models that will help service providers diagnose and treat AAPI clients.

Objectives

- To identify current and emerging mental health needs and issues
- To identify and share tools that will assist providers in the diagnosis and treatment of their AAPI clients
- To provide a forum for networking, building relationships, and sharing knowledge among conference participants from across the region
- To showcase established service delivery models
Welcoming Remarks by State Senator Mee Moua

Senator Mee Moua, the first Hmong-American legislator elected to office, advocated for mental health care, especially for Hmong men, to address the mental health issues rooted in wars, death, and destruction in their home countries. She recognized that more lawmakers are paying attention to mental health issues because more mental health service communities speak out in political settings.

Senator Moua’s legislative concerns focused on how to prevent mental health problems in these communities, such as removing the stigma and discrimination associated with non-citizen or non-permanent resident color-coded driver licenses. She urged the audience to remain dedicated to their cause and to expand the resources available in order to be effective advocates for AAPI communities.

The Surgeon General’s Report: Implications for Asian Americans in the Midwest and Mountain States

Kana Enomoto

Public Health Advisor, Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, DHHS

Ms. Enomoto highlighted the Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity. She explained its importance and its implications for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs), specifically, for Asian Americans in the Midwest and Mountain States. Ms. Enomoto discussed national activities addressing the mental health issues of AAPIs and populations with limited English proficiency.
Highlights of Ms. Enomoto’s presentation:

• Report recognizes that mental illnesses are real and disabling disorders that affect all populations, regardless of race or ethnicity.

• There is compelling evidence that AAPI communities are severely underserved, frequently receiving lower quality of care, and experiencing more barriers to access than European Americans.

• “Culture Counts” — The report recognizes that culture shapes all people’s views on illness, wellness, healing, and coping. It is essential that our mental health system is sensitive to the influences of culture and society.

• According to Census 2000 data, 1.85 million AAPI’s live in the Midwest and mountain states region, but many remain in relatively small communities isolated from linguistically and culturally appropriate services. The diversity within the AAPI population was noted, with particular attention given to Southeast Asian Americans, many of whom came to the US as refugees. Not only does the refugee experience bring its own unique mental health challenges to the individual, but many cultural issues come into play as traumatized individuals begin to interact with the service system.

• Systemic barriers that prevent racial and ethnic minorities from accessing high-quality services include:
  - Financial: AAPI’s are 50% more likely to be uninsured and/or to live in poverty.
  - Language: Half of all AAPI’s speak a language other than English at home and a significant number report that they do not speak English very well.
  - Quality of Care: Studies of other ethnic groups indicate that ethnic minorities are half as likely to receive care that meets treatment guideline criteria.

• Recommendations for next steps:
  - Build capacity — Individuals involved in all aspects of the mental health field need to develop their understanding of the roles that age, culture, gender, race, and ethnicity play in the research and treatment of mental illnesses.
  - Respect Title VI of the Civil Rights Act that guarantees Americans access to federally funded services regardless of race, color, or national origin. This includes accommodations for persons with limited English proficiency.
  - Engage communities — Because of mistrust, historic maltreatment, and profoundly different worldviews, the majority of racial and ethnic minority communities will not embrace improved mental health systems unless there is a sense of ownership among community members.

For more information, please email Kana Enomoto at: kenomoto@samhsa.gov
Depression and Demoralization and Use of Medications Among Southeast Asian Mental Health Patients

Jerome Kroll, MD  
Professor, University of Minnesota

Dr. Kroll explored the concept of demoralization and explained how it is different from depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He used examples of Southeast Asian (SEA) refugee patients to describe why demoralization occurs when these patients consider their future. Dr. Kroll also explored the pros and cons of medication use among this group of patients.

Highlights of Dr. Kroll’s presentation:

• There are common denominators of depression shared by all people and cultures, but the Western system of diagnosis is often imperfect and problematic for use with non-westerners.

• Demoralization refers to “a giving up, a profound sense that nothing the individual can do can alter the present situation or future trajectory” and presently is a more pertinent concern than PTSD for many SEA refugees who have been in the U.S. for 10-20 years.

• Demoralization can occur as a result of problems with physical health, finances (e.g. minimum wage jobs without medical benefits, welfare cuts), citizenship, housing and safety concerns, and intergenerational conflicts.

• The use of medication must be weighed within social and political perspectives, as results and reasons for use vary with patients:
  - Antidepressants help about 50% of patients.
  - Patients may choose to not use medications due to religious or cultural beliefs.
  - Comprehensive treatment plans (including social and family support) are important in the successful use of medications.

For more information, please email Jerome Kroll at: kroll001@maroon.tc.umn.edu
The Use of Interpreters in Mental Health Counseling

Michael Goh, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota

Kathryn McGraw Schuchman
Licensed Psychologist, Independent Practice

Dr. Goh and Ms. Schuchman introduced the origins of the mental health interpretation study within the broader work of the Hmong Research Group of the Minnesota Hmong Mental Health Providers Network. The Network’s mission is to explore and establish ways in which service providers can better coordinate mental health and social services and share expertise, to expand and promote understanding about mental health issues and mental health services within the Hmong community, and to identify and provide guidance for research, policy, and legislative initiatives that promote positive mental health outcomes for the Hmong community. In addition to the interpretation study, the Hmong Research Group is also involved in developing best practices for bridging Hmong-English mental health concepts.

The goals of the mental health interpreting study are to:

• Develop best practices for the use of interpreters in mental health counseling.

• Gain a better understanding of various mental health interpreter models and their strengths and weaknesses.

• Establish focus groups to discuss and help generate appropriate mental health terminology for use with various ethnic minority groups.

The outcome of this ongoing interpretation study is the need to teach a dynamic partnership model of mental health interpreting to providers and interpreters.

Highlights of Dr. Goh’s and Ms. Schuchman’s presentation:

• The Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health noted that culture and language are barriers for ethnic minorities in accessing mental health services.

• The role of mental health interpreters is significantly different from that of medical or court interpreters, with mental health interpreters required to pay particular attention to the development of a trusting therapeutic relationship between all three parties.

• Issues in using interpreters in mental health counseling include:
  - Roles
  - Language/terminology
  - Expectations
  - Process
  - Cultural norms/values

• Several models of mental health interpreting were shared:
  - Freelance — content focus, minimal context
  - Staff interpreter
  - Interpreter stays with client over multiple visits/long term (best model)
Bilingual staff — no interpreter necessary but need to recognize that bilingual staff are not necessarily trained to be interpreters

- Guidelines were suggested for working with interpreters in mental health counseling for: a) preparing for a clinical session; b) beginning the session; c) during the session; and d) debriefing after the session.

For more information, please email Michael Goh at gohxx001@umn.edu or Kathryn McGraw Schuchman at kathrynschuchman@hotmail.com

For Some, The War is Not Over: PTSD in Southeast Asian American Communities

Evelyn Lennon, MSW, MA
Refugee Mental Health Project Coordinator, Center for Victims of Torture

Thanh Son (Lisa) Nguyen, PhD, DABPS
Director of Multicultural Services, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

Ms. Lennon and Dr. Nguyen discussed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among Southeast Asian refugees. Ms. Lennon presented an overview of PTSD in the refugee population while Dr. Nguyen emphasized the prevalence of PTSD symptoms among Southeast Asians related to their refugee experience.

PTSD and refugees

Since World War I there has been discussion about war trauma and the recognition of torture. War trauma is defined as severe, prolonged exposure to the violent events of war. During the Vietnam War, PTSD was identified as a result of the combination of war trauma and torture. Although there has been increased awareness about PTSD among professionals, many lay people, including refugees themselves, do not know about this disorder. It is estimated that 5-35% of the refugees in the US suffer from PTSD, and while this is a small number, the entire refugee community can be affected by the consequences. Common challenges encountered by refugee communities include: distrust of others, including those from the same country; anger and irritability; resentment; grief and loss; and difficulties adjusting to new life. If an entire community is pulled apart by trauma, it is difficult for those community members to care for each other.

Both the refugee community and the local community should encourage and advocate for treatment services for war trauma survivors. Sensitive media reporting appears to be crucial in the community healing process. The goal of torture was to break the community apart — now the community needs help in coming together.

PTSD among Southeast Asians in the US

After the Fall of Vietnam in 1975, many Southeast Asians escaped the new regimes by sea, land, or other means. Series of traumatic events often took place during their flight for freedom, such as hunger, thirst, illness, sea pirate attacks, rape, and killing. Many refugees suffer the effects of trauma even long after their resettlement in America. Their PTSD symptoms are
not easily detected since they are expressed mainly through a myriad of somatic symptoms. The concept of health in Southeast Asians is based on the integration of body, soul and spirit. Western mental health concepts are foreign to many Southeast Asian groups. In addition, due to stigma and fear related to illness of the mind and of the soul, mental health problems remain serious taboos among these communities and are dealt with only within the family. Communities need education about mental health issues, especially those related to the migration experience, to increase awareness of PTSD and to encourage early treatment.

For more information, please email Evelyn Lennon at elennon@cvt.org or Thanh Son (Lisa) Nguyen at chomcs@enteract.com

The Asian American Primary Care and Mental Health Bridge Program

Teddy Chen, CSW
Bridge Program Director, Charles B. Wang Community Health Center

The Bridge Program seeks to promote early detection and treatment of mental health problems by providing integrated mental health services in a primary care setting. It addresses the barriers (especially cultural barriers) in getting mental health services to the community. The Bridge Program has a team of mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychiatric social workers, case workers, and health educators, working side by side with medical doctors, nurses, and other medical staff in providing total health care to patients.

Highlights of Mr. Chen’s presentation:

• Obstacles in obtaining mental health treatment include: cultural inhibitions, such as stigma and culturally defined ways of dealing with mental health problems; difficulty in identification and treatment of mental disorders by health professionals; lack of mental health services in the community; and the gap between health and mental health systems.

• It is much easier to deal with stigma in a primary care setting because patients are able to get services for mental or emotional disorders in the same setting in which they receive their primary care.

• The integrated system uses shared systems, mutual consultation, multiple providers, and coordinated treatment plans. Local mental health law may affect the level of integration in areas such as confidentiality and charting.

• The majority of psychiatric disorders seen at the Bridge Program are mood disorders, which manifest earlier and are treatable conditions:
  - Mood disorders (54%)
  - Psychotic disorders (23%)
  - Anxiety disorders (17%)
  - Others (6%)

• A traditional community mental health clinic sees more psychotic disorders:
- Psychotic disorders (60%)
- Mood disorders (25%)
- Anxiety disorders (5%)
- Others (10%)

• The Bridge Program is being replicated at South Cove Community Health Center in Boston.
• The Bridge Program was one of the 6 winners of the Models That Work 2000 competition, sponsored by the Bureau of Primary Health Care.
• The Bridge Program is a practical way of addressing the issue of low mental health care utilization rate in Asian American communities and increasing access to mental health care.

For more information, please email Teddy Chen at tchen@cbwchc.org

Consumer Voices

Local Community Members
Facilitator: Steve Maxwell, MSW, LICSW, Mental Health Supervisor,
Community-University Health Care Center

The Consumer Voices session was organized as a panel presentation of consumers of mental health services. The panelists were a Lao caseworker and four clients from the Community-University Health Care Center in Minneapolis.

Caseworker’s Experience

The first half of the session was an overview of the experiences of the caseworker. He is one of several at CUHCC serving many Southeast Asian families. He described problems such as serving clients within the framework of fifty minutes. The holistic case management of services provided to clients often requires longer periods of time and are not fully covered by HMO reimbursements. Clients also need help with transportation and child care. Innovative approaches such as acupuncture have been implemented but it has been impossible to secure ongoing funding for these alternative types of treatment.

Consumer Voices

The consumers spoke frankly about their mental health problems. One spoke about receiving help with addiction and his mental illness. Another spoke about fatigue and sadness. Their difficult and traumatic refugee experiences are the backdrop for their continuing struggles with depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Issues centered on problems in the larger system, the lack of shelters and resources for women in situations of domestic violence and abuse, the feeling of being overwhelmed by problems with their children, lack of support in the community, and the stresses brought on by involvement with the current welfare system. They spoke favorably about their experiences with their mental health providers at CUHCC.

For more information, please email Steve Maxwell at maxwe003@tc.umn.edu
Remarks by Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Congresswoman McCollum advocated for mental health services that allow consumers to be supported and protected, without facing stigma or discrimination because of their mental health status. She also spoke about the benefits of preventive actions to help those at risk, especially children who may turn to school educators for support and advice. Congresswoman McCollum encouraged service providers to be aware of legislation that can affect mental health care, and urged conference participants to become involved in political processes that affect mental health care.

The National Latino and Asian American Study

David Takeuchi, PhD
Professor, Indiana University*

Dr. Takeuchi highlighted his proposed research study “The National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS).” He discussed the purposes of the study, its research design and planning, and how research outcomes can enhance the limited national information available on Latino and Asian Americans in the United States.

Background:

Despite the increased visibility of Latino and Asian Americans across the United States, limited national information is available on these populations about the prevalence of mental disorders and the use of mental health services. The lack of quality data for Latinos and Asian Americans makes it difficult to develop coherent public policies needed for prevention and treatment programs that are appropriate for these populations.

NLAAS:

The National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS), will begin to resolve the deficiency in our knowledge about these ethnic categories. The NLAAS will be the most comprehensive study of Latinos and Asian Americans ever conducted using up-to-date scientific strategies in the design, sampling procedures, psychiatric assessments, and analytic techniques. The Principal Investigators for the NLAAS are Professors Margarita Alegria, University of Puerto Rico, and David T. Takeuchi, Indiana University. The NLAAS intends to: (a) Estimate the lifetime and 12-month prevalence of psychiatric disorders and the rates of mental health services use for Latino and Asian American populations; (b) Estimate the association of social position, environmental context, and psychosocial factors to mental disorders and service use among Latinos.
and Asian Americans; and (c) Compare the rates of psychiatric disorders and utilization of mental health services of Latinos and Asian Americans with national representative samples of non-Latino whites (from the Survey of Health and Stress; NSHS-R) and African Americans (from the National African American Survey; NSAA). To meet these aims, the study will interview 4,000 Latino (Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Cubans, and other Latinos) and 4,000 Asian American respondents (Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and other Asians) across the U.S. Accordingly, the study will be able to provide important baseline data for Latinos and Asians that will be critical to assess whether the U.S. has been successful in meeting its intended health goals for the year 2010. Training for the study began in April 2002.

*At time of presentation. Professor Takeuchi is now at the University of Washington.

For more information, please email David T. Takeuchi at dt@u.washington.edu

Panel One Presentations

Southeast Asian Families and Youth Services

Dr. John Song facilitates the panel presentation on SEA family and youth services.
Barriers to Accurate Assessment and Treatment in Working with Hmong Families

Kay Smongeski, MS, CICSW
Clinical Therapist, Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services

Ms. Smongeski described barriers to accurate assessment and treatment in working with Hmong families. She also illustrated methods to break down these cultural barriers.

Highlights of Ms. Smongeski’s presentation:

• Barriers to accurate assessment
  - Stereotypes/Misinformation
  - Personal bias of service providers
  - Lack of cultural understanding
  - Client difficulty in accessing services
  - Lack of collaboration with family members and other service providers
  - Lack of follow-up/aftercare from service providers
  - Difficulty translating clinical concepts into Hmong
  - Cultural belief that the family/clan should be the sole support system

• How to break down the barriers
  - Honestly assess your ability to work with culturally diverse clients
  - Be willing to learn about and respect the Hmong culture
  - Be open-minded about cultural differences
  - Respect family/clan decisions and work within this framework
  - Collaborate with other treatment providers and family members
  - Assist with scheduling appointments and arranging transportation
  - Advocate for clients’ needs
  - Hire skilled bilingual staff
  - Explain concepts thoroughly
  - Use visual aids
  - Make your office/agency waiting room culturally inviting
  - Use of personal disclosure

• Common cultural misconceptions lending to inaccurate assessment — various Hmong cultural practices that are inappropriately pathologized as symptoms of abuse/neglect or mental illness:
  - Spiritual beliefs and practices
  - Lack of exposure to situations and subsequent inability to intervene (i.e. parenting adolescents)
  - Acculturation problems
  - Illiteracy

For more information, please contact Kay Smongeski at smongekf@co.outagamie.wi.us
Tree of Life: Group Therapy for Southeast Asian Youth

Duy Nguyen, LSW
Director of Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Chaffee Tran
Caseworker

Asian Human Services

Mr. Nguyen and Ms. Tran described their agency’s work with Cambodian and Vietnamese youth in Chicago, most of whom are immigrants and refugees. The presenters discussed the risk factors that make these youth vulnerable to mental health problems, and the evolution of their program serving these youth in a group setting. Program accomplishments, challenges, recommendations, and sample curricula were also shared with the participants.

Highlights from Mr. Nguyen and Ms. Tran’s presentation:

• Risk factors for Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrant and refugee youth:
  - Stressful life events (e.g. war trauma, acculturation issues)
  - Family stresses (e.g. achievement pressures, intergenerational conflict)
  - Low-income environment
  - Discrimination and racism
  - Language and cultural barriers
  - Tendency to internalize negative feelings
  - Feeling shameful about talking about problems outside of the family
  - Low rate of help-seeking behaviors

• Program considerations:
  - Group therapy model allows youth to feel less stigmatized with age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, ethno-centric materials allowing for different English proficiency levels and utilizing various methods of expression.
  - “Tree of Life” metaphor portrays how immigrant and refugee children are like trees uprooted to a new country, where they will be able to thrive with the presence of a supportive, nurturing environment.
  - Challenges include how to address mental health issues within the community, involve family members, reduce stigma of mental health services use, tailor the program to meet the needs of a diverse group of youth, and balance between the process and the products.

• Recommendations include: target group members should be close in age and have similar language abilities, size of group should be under 10, use icebreakers and fun activities to facilitate introductions and build rapport within the group, establish group rules from the onset, and use a trained facilitator.

For more information, please contact Duy Nguyen at: ddhmsw@yahoo.com or Chaffee Tran at: chaffeetran@yahoo.com
Integrated Care Model

Yoon Joo Han, LICSW
Director of the Behavioral Health Services Program, Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS)

Ms. Han presented three ACRS programs that integrate different disciplines and coordinate with other systems of care to effectively serve the Asian American Pacific Islander community in Seattle, Washington. These include the Integrated Care Model, the MICA (Mentally Ill Chemical Abuser) Program, and the Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Consortium. Ms. Han described the need for these services, program development processes, and the key elements of success of each program. Ms. Han also discussed the elements necessary for achieving equitable access to quality mental health services.

Highlights of Ms. Han’s presentation:

• Cultural competency is integrally important at all levels of care, including the structural and political components of service delivery systems, care planning for the individual consumer/family, and direct treatment intervention.

• The Integrated Care Project provides mental health and substance abuse treatment (through the Asian Counseling and Referral Service) at a primary medical clinic (International Community Health Services) to address access issues.

• Integrating mental health and primary medical services promotes available, coordinated, accessible, and less stigmatized treatment by taking a holistic approach to the patient’s health. Advantages of integration include proximity, affordability, convenience, and coordination of care for mental and somatic disorders. This integration also recognizes that primary care alone may not be sufficient/equipped to treat behavioral health.

• The MICA program is designed to provide integrated care for clients with mental illness and a substance abuse/dependency problem.
  - Bilingual, bicultural staff are recruited and trained in both mental health and chemical dependency.
  - Target client population: dual diagnoses, homeless, criminal history, poor rental history, difficult to engage, non-compliant with treatment, high utilizer of inpatient treatment, and no natural support system.
  - Treatment focus is on belonging to the group, peer support, loyalty and trust, provision of food, and celebration of small successes.

• The API Domestic Violence Consortium is a coalition of Asian Pacific non-profit agencies responding to the unmet needs of domestic violence services through a coordinated community response that includes victim services, batterer treatment, community education and organizing, policy advocacy, and program coordination.

• The three critical elements to achieving the goal of equitable access to quality mental health or social services for underserved Asian Pacific Islanders are:
  - Advocacy
Illinois Refugee Health Screening Program (IRHSP) — Mental Health Issues

Ho Tran, MD, MPH
Special Assistant for Asian Affairs, Illinois Department of Public Affairs

Dr. Tran opened her presentation by telling several true stories of refugee and mental health experiences of members of the Asian American community to illustrate how and why treating mental health issues in this community is complicated and the rationale for it being rooted in culturally appropriate methods. Dr. Tran followed by discussing the cultural competency training program at the Illinois Department of Public Health, and other methods for mental health programs to work towards cultural competency in service delivery.

Highlights from Dr. Tran’s presentation:

• Examples of cultural and/or linguistic misunderstandings:
  - A Chinese man was institutionalized because he was lost and the non-Chinese speaking staff could not understand him.
  - A Vietnamese patient responded “Year of the tiger” when asked “What year is it?” as a mental health assessment question.

• Cultural competency training by the Center for Minority Health Services (Illinois) — “Reach within yourself to change yourself”:
  - Purpose is to raise awareness of health care providers and administrators to the personal and organizational barriers which sometimes prevent sensitive interactions that promote communication. It aims to recognize, accept, and promote diversity in all of its forms. It embraces the importance of treating all people receiving services with dignity, respect, and common courtesy. It stresses the importance of developing an open mind, asking the right questions to gain understanding, and listening with the heart as well as with the mind.

• Health care interpretation training — “Reach out to others”:
  - Course that enables staff to understand the role of the interpreter, types of interpretation, proper procedures in interpreting, ethics and guidelines, basic medical terminology, and techniques and resources for strengthening interpretation skills.

• Mental health training:
  - Refugee mental health screening symptom checklist to assist health care providers and health aides at refugee screening sites in recognizing and assessing the mental health
needs of refugees as they go through the initial health screening upon arrival in the United States.

The cultural competency training curriculum and mental health screening checklist are available from the Illinois Department of Public Affairs. For more information, please call (312) 814-2565.

Afternoon Concurrent Presentations

Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Mary Schwartz, JD, LCPC
Director of Mental Health Programs

Duy Nguyen, LSW
Director of Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Asian Human Services

Ms. Schwartz and Mr. Nguyen highlighted the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Program (PSR) at Asian Human Services (AHS). The presenters highlighted AHS’ skills-based day treatment for chronically mentally ill adults. They also discussed the challenges they faced in running the program for ethnically diverse clients.

Highlights of Ms. Schwartz’s and Mr. Nguyen’s presentation:

• The PSR Program at AHS started in 1998, funded by the state of Illinois and the United Way to provide skills-based day treatment for chronically mentally ill adults. PSR works to enable members to lead productive lives by working with the client’s strengths to build necessary skills.

• PSR’s clients are ethnically diverse — Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Pakistani. AHS has ethnically diverse Asian staff to better meet clients’ needs. Also, PSR facilitators use interpreters (Vietnamese and Cambodian) to communicate program materials to participants. PSR strives for cultural diversity among staff and clients to build a multiethnic environment.

• Clients have multiple needs such as chronic mental illness, adjustment, language, medical, and housing. To meet those needs, PSR offers a variety of skills-building and expressive groups that include art, music, movement therapy, adaptive functioning, cognitive skills, community connection, adjustment groups, daily living skills, and citizenship. Through art therapy, the clients are able to produce concrete objects that garner positive feedback from their peers, staff, and visitors, providing them with a sense of accomplishment and pride.
• The challenge is to build a sense of community among staff and clients as well as to meet clients’ individual needs in ethnically diverse group settings. Some comments by staff and clients indicate that they refer to PSR as a place of friendship or as a “community family” where clients have a sense of belonging.

• Client families’ challenges and difficulties should also be assessed in order to understand the client’s needs.

• PSR utilizes an assessment instrument to monitor each client’s progress and outcomes.

For more information please email Mary Schwartz at mary_schwartz@hotmail.com or Duy Nguyen at duynghuyen@covad.net.

Utilizing a Socialization and Nutritional Program to Improve the Mental Health of Chinese and Korean Elders

May J. Chen, MA, LPCC
Executive Director
Nancy Koo
Asian Services in Action

Ms. Chen and Ms. Koo discussed mental health care needs of Asian American elderly and how one can develop a mental health program for Asian seniors in the community.

Highlights of Ms. Chen’s and Ms. Koo’s presentation:

• Demographic overview of the fast growing Asian American elderly population, including trends, backgrounds, and immigration histories.

• Overview of health concerns of the Asian American elderly (chronic diseases, low vaccination rates, tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, mental illness, suicide, cancer, stroke, and heart disease).

• Other issues facing the Asian American elderly include:
  - Isolation from former friends, problems making new friends, and limits to independence
  - Intergenerational conflict
  - Depression and guilt
  - Minority status
  - Medical and psychiatric illnesses
  - Religious beliefs

• Program development includes:
  - Pre-planning — Identify target population, staff, and volunteers.
- Planning — Identify funding organizations/collaborators to support programs and to support seniors in leadership and decision-making roles.
- Determining program successes and their relevance to mental and physical health.
- Addressing program challenges and solutions.

• A video of senior activities and arts & crafts made by seniors was shown as a demonstration of the positive effects such activities can have on mental health of elders.

For more information, please email May Chen at asiainc@hotmail.com

Use of Survey Methodology in Program Planning

Kun Shi
Program Evaluator, Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight

Mr. Shi highlighted lessons learned from needs-based program planning of the Ohio Department of Mental Health to address needs of the fast-growing Asian American population in central Ohio (69% increase in 1990-2000). The Asian Mental Health Needs Assessment was conducted in Chinese and Vietnamese populations in Columbus in 1997. Mr. Shi also shared tips and strategies to conduct a needs assessment in rapidly growing Asian American communities in other states.

Highlights of Mr. Shi’s presentation:

• The Asian Mental Health Needs Assessment was conducted to provide mental health services to the fast growing Asian American population in central Ohio. The survey targeted Chinese and Vietnamese populations.
  - Participants: N=162 adults, 98 Chinese (46 males, 52 females), 64 Vietnamese (32 males, 32 females)  
  - Foreign-Born: 97.9% Chinese, 98.4% Vietnamese
  - Employment: Chinese – 71.3% full-time, 3.5% unemployed and 11.5% in school/training; Vietnamese – 62.3% full-time, 9.8% unemployed and 18% in school/training
  - Help-Seeking Behavior: 61% Chinese and 38% Vietnamese found it very hard to handle stressful events in their life, but only 6.5% Chinese had talked to a social worker, and 2% had seen a counselor; 9.3% Vietnamese had talked to a social worker, 5.6% had seen a psychiatrist, and 3.7% had seen a counselor.

• Based on the needs assessment results, the agency developed community mental health education materials (in six Asian languages), family caregiver support, and technical assistance/training for interpreters and service providers.

• The preparation for a needs assessment includes:
  - Learning about the global, national, and local issues related to mental health from World Health Organization reports, US Surgeon General’s reports, and
state and local reports.
- Learning about the myths and facts about mental health and Asian Americans.
- Getting technical support, such as survey design and data analysis from Asian American professionals in the local area.
- Building a relationship with communities to reach out to groups in need.

- Lessons learned from the community mental health support program:
  - Develop a questionnaire based on participants’ literacy level.
  - Organizational leadership is key to sustaining the program.
  - Educating communities about mental health and engaging them in planning is crucial to overcoming stigma associated with mental illness.
  - Training existing providers to be culturally competent is more economically feasible than increasing the number of bilingual counselors when resources are limited.

For more information, please email Kun Shi at kshi@loeo.state.oh.us

Ethnic-Specific Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services in Asian American Communities

Julian Chow, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of California at Berkeley, School of Social Welfare

Ford Kuramoto, DSW
National Director, National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA)

Dr. Chow and Dr. Kuramoto highlighted Ethnic-Specific Services (ESS) for mental health and substance abuse programs in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. They discussed their research study of AAPI mental health and substance abuse programs.

Highlights of Dr. Chow’s and Dr. Kuramoto’s presentation:

- Benefits of ESS include:
  - Increased service use
  - Lower dropout rate
  - Shorter delay of seeking treatment
  - Better treatment outcome

- Purposes of their study were:
  - To identify the characteristics of AAPI-focused substance abuse and mental health programs
  - To determine the capacity of these agencies to meet consumer needs
  - To identify gaps in service delivery

- The study sample included:
- NAPAFASA provider network
  - 24 agencies in 9 states (California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington)

- Among the agencies surveyed, half were founded in the 1970s and one-quarter in the 1980s.

- In terms of service domain, 41% were multi-service and 30% were mental health service agencies.

- Medication, case management, and outpatient counseling are the most common mental health services. Community outreach, job rehabilitation, and self-help/family support services are the most common of ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug) services.

- Key findings of the study include:
  - Existence of incomplete service delivery system (lack of continuous care, transitional services, and support services)
  - The most well-served ethnic groups include Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Japanese, and Laotian. Underserved ethnic groups include Samoan, Hmong, Hawaiian, Guamanian, and Mien.
  - Limited funding for services

For more information, please email Julian Chow at jchow99@uclink.berkeley.edu or Ford Kuramoto at fhkuramoto@napafasa.org

Applying Best Practice Models with Southeast Asian Families: Our Experience With Two Federally Funded SAMHSA Grants

Linda Gensheimer, MSW, LICSW
Director

Louise Eidsmore
Grants and Contracts Manager

Loeung Khi
Cambodian Family Connect Project

Mai Yang
Hmoob Koom Siab/Hmong Working Together

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Social Adjustment Program for Southeast Asians

Wilder Foundation staff gave an overview of two SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)-funded programs that have incorporated best practice models to prevent youth violence and to strengthen family relations and communication. The Wilder Foundation staff offered a description of the community in the Twin Cities area and their needs, an overview of the two models they implemented (Families and Schools Together in
the Hmong community and Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families and Communities in the Cambodian community), some considerations when choosing a model, and an overview of the SAMHSA grant process.

Highlights of the Wilder Foundation’s presentation:

• Factors in selecting a best practice model for Southeast Asian (SEA) families:
  - Has the model been implemented with SEA groups elsewhere and have positive outcomes been demonstrated?
  - Are any program materials available in Hmong or Khmer? Are participants required to have English literacy skills?
  - How well does the model fit with the values and beliefs of the culture being served?
  - Does the model fit with the goals of your project?

• Key points in working with collaborative groups in SEA communities:
  - Develop creative ways to overcome the stigma of mental health.
  - Service providers must be able to advocate for their clients’ needs.
  - The Social Adjustment Program for Southeast Asians is moving toward greater inclusion of parents and youth in leadership roles, and in sustaining ongoing support.

• Strategies to sustain a start up project after the government funding ends:
  - Clarify and update your vision based on what you have learned, what you want to continue, and what has worked best.
  - Know how your program is important to your community partners.
  - Sustain communication externally and internally.
  - Know your internal resources (staff, coordination, planning) as well as government and private foundation grants.

For more information, please email Linda Gensheimer at lcg@wilder.org
Report Back and Recommendations from State and Population Group Caucuses to National Partners

The caucus was held to assess issues unique to ethnic groups and/or states and to brainstorm what next steps could be taken. The caucus groups held were: the Hmong Caucus, the Minnesota Caucus, the Asian American Caucus, and the Multi-state Caucus.

The issues and next steps discussed in each group were presented at the “Report Back from Caucuses” session to the following national Asian American Pacific Islander health organizations: National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA), National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse, Inc. (NAPAFASA), and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO).

Overall needs and recommendations for next steps:

• Networking in the region and facilitating networking opportunities
- Have a directory of mental health providers and of professional associations
- Network with mainstream, non-Asian providers
- Facilitate an on-going dialogue to learn from other agencies/experiences, and identify opportunities for collaboration
- Reconvene regional mental health conferences annually and videotape future meetings, conferences, and trainings; make videos available to the public

• Coordinate policy/advocacy efforts
  - Inform government officials of needs
  - Invite government officials to visit agency/organization’s office and to attend local activities
  - Ensure the Midwest and mountain states have a voice in national dialogues
  - Centralize data collection and disseminate data through listservs and post on websites

• Provider training/recruitment
  - Recruit bilingual staff/psychiatrists by providing scholarships, mentorship opportunities, and role models, and by improving admission processes of teaching institutes
  - Provide in-services and training on
    a) culturally and linguistically appropriate services
    b) interpreter training
    c) service provider training on utilizing interpreter services
  - Address licensing issues/barriers for professionals trained in their countries of origin

• Engage/inform communities
  - Educate community about issues through health fairs, community leaders, and media efforts (mainstream as well as ethnic/in-language)
  - Encourage volunteering

• Provide translated materials

• Assistance with obtaining resources and/or funding
  - Grant-writing training
  - Grant-writing resources: make successful grants available and centralize available data for reference purposes
  - Notification and wide dissemination of funding opportunities and sources
  - Demand that the health care industry fund culturally appropriate services

For more information, please email Junko Honma, PATH Program Coordinator at AAPCHO, at jhonma@aapcho.org
Victims of Domestic Violence in the Korean American Community

Yoonju Park, LSW
Executive Director, Korean Service Center

Ms. Park discussed two groups of Korean American women at risk for domestic violence — women in interracial marriages and Korean adoptees. Almost 95% of Korean-speaking domestic violence victims are interracially married women. The Korean adoptees often have multiple issues associated with identity in addition to suffering from the trauma of domestic violence. Mental health issues for both groups include depression, bi-polar disorder, paranoia, and schizophrenia.

Highlights of Ms. Park’s presentation:

• Historical and social background of both women in interracial marriages and Korean adoptees
• Types of abuse include physical, emotional, financial and social
• Dynamics and issues in interracial marriages include:
  - Language and cultural barriers
  - Different expectations and values
  - Lack of economic power
  - Visa status
  - Lack of mobility
  - Lack of family support
• Dynamics and issues for adoptees include:
  - Identity
  - Loss and distrust
  - Minority status
  - Low self-esteem
• For women in interracial marriages, an advocate should:
  - Be bilingual
  - Understand the cultural background
- Understand the dynamics of interracial marriages
- Have knowledge about immigration laws

• For women who are Korean adoptees, an advocate should:
  - Understand Korean adoption
  - Understand adoptees’ issues
  - Have a strong network in the Korean American adoptive community

For more information, please email Yoonju Park at kscpark@qwest.net

Intersection of Domestic Violence and Mental Health Needs

K. Sujata
Executive Director, Apna Ghar

Ms. Sujata described Apna Ghar, an agency serving South Asians with domestic violence issues. Domestic violence includes a wide spectrum and pattern of behaviors and affects not only the woman, but her family, friends, and community. Victims often seek help as a last resort and prefer to turn to family or friends first. Immigrants might be reluctant to disclose out of fear of deportation or negative previous experiences. It is important to remember that couple counseling may not be effective in South Asian families in which domestic violence is an issue.

Highlights of Ms. Sujata’s presentation:
• The spectrum of abuse includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, psychological, and economic control.

• No studies have established the prevalence of domestic violence fully among Asian Americans. Ms. Sujata gave an overview of some local statistics.

• The mental health impacts of domestic violence might include depression, PTSD, anxiety and panic attacks, suicide, eating disorders, and substance abuse.

• Barriers for women seeking services:
  - Stigma and shame
  - Provider’s lack of cultural sensitivity and appropriate language skills
  - Abuser controls insurance (barrier to seeking mental health services)
  - Diagnoses used against women in child custody battles (for women with mental health issues)

• Recommendations to improve services:
  - Develop culturally sensitive interventions
  - Use models of healing that do not have a traditional mental health focus (e.g. Eastern medicine and concepts of health)
Domestic Violence in the Hmong Community

Nenglee Vang, MA,
Project Coordinator, Diocese of Green Bay, Catholic Charities

Ms. Vang described the Hmong family and clan system and contrasted it to the structure of the traditional Western family. Ms. Vang explained the process that a Hmong couple experiences during marital conflict (consulting relatives/clan leaders) and the role of the clan in resolving marital conflict and addressing domestic violence.

Highlights of Ms. Vang’s presentation:

• The Hmong process of conflict resolution usually involves family members and/or clan leaders.

• There are existing refugee family strengthening programs in Wisconsin and a state-wide bilingual hotline.

• Hmong men often feel that women have more rights in the American culture. Studies of domestic violence trends show that men who have had military service are more likely to take out their stress on their wives.

• There is concern about the increasing rate of divorce in the Hmong community.

• Refugee family strengthening projects pursue prevention through
  - Leadership training
  - Parenting education
  - Support groups
  - Cultural training for service providers

• Intervention services include
  - Counseling
  - Interpreter services
  - Shelter
  - Legal assistance
  - Case management

• Recommendations to stop the cycle of violence in Hmong families include
  - Empower clans to take a stand on domestic violence
- Encourage communication and coping skills in couples
- Ensure families that there is no shame in seeking help
- Educate families about the effects of violence on children
- Educate service providers about Hmong families

For more information, please email Nenglee Vang at nvang@gbdioc.org
Evaluation Summary

Conference Evaluation Results

Numbers represent the raw number of responses received.

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Summary

Overall: About one third of the participants completed the conference evaluation (n=54). 96% of those respondents rated the overall program content as good or better (9% good, 44% very good, and 43% excellent). The majority of the respondents found the conference to be very informative. Respondents appreciated that the conference covered a breadth of cultural information that included various ethnic groups.

Measuring up to expectations: 56% of the respondents reported that the conference met their expectations and 18% said it exceeded their expectations. Many found the conference binder content very helpful. Some conference participants noted that it was a good opportunity to learn about national organizations such as NAPIMHA, NAPAFASA, and AAPCHO and other existing resources.

Achieving the conference objectives: More than 75% of the respondents agreed that the objectives of the conference were met. Overall, the participants reported an increase in their knowledge and awareness of cultures beyond their own, as well as various AAPI mental health issues. Also, many respondents were able to network with other conference participants.

Recommendations: Suggestions on time allowance for presentations and content were received. Many participants stated that they would like more training opportunities on AAPI mental health issues to discuss many of the conference topics in depth. They also would like to see more information on AAPI mental health issues in resource books, journals, and websites.
Conference Agenda

Day One

8:00-9:00  Registration and Breakfast
9:15-9:45  Welcome: Senator Mee Moua
9:45-10:45 Opening Plenary: Kana Enomoto
11:00-12:00 Concurrent Presentations
   a) Depressive and Anxiety Conditions and Use of Medications Among Southeast Asian Mental Health Clients
      Presented by: Jerome Kroll, University of Minnesota
   b) Use of Hmong Interpreters in Mental Health Counseling
      Presented by: Michael Goh, University of Minnesota, & Kathryn McGraw Schuchman
   c) For Some, The War is Not Over: PTSD in Southeast Asian American Communities
      Presented by: Evelyn Lennon, Center for Victims of Torture, & Thanh Son Nguyen, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
   d) The BRIDGE Program: Asian American Primary Care and Mental Health
      Presented by: Teddy Chen, Charles B. Wang Community Health Center
   e) Consumer Voices
      Presented by: Local Community Members

12:15-1:30 Lunch: Keynote Speakers
Professor David Takeuchi – Underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation
Congresswoman Betty McCollum

1:30-3:10 Panel Presentation — Southeast Asian Families and Youth Services
   1) Barriers to Accurate Assessment and Treatment in Working with Hmong Families
      Presented by: Kay Smongeski, Outagamie County DHHS
   2) Tree of Life: Group Therapy for Southeast Asian Youth
      Presented by: Duy D. Nguyen & Chaffee Tran, Asian Human Services
   3) Integrated Care Model
      Presented by: Yoon Joo Han, Asian Counseling and Referral Service
   4) Illinois Refugee Health Screening Program (IRHSP) — Mental Health Issues
      Presented by: Ho Tran, Illinois Department of Public Affairs
3:10-3:30 Break

3:30-4:30 Concurrent Presentations
   a) Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
      Presented by: Mary Schwartz & Duy Nguyen, Asian Human Services
   b) Asian Elders and their Mental Health Needs  
      Presented by: May J. Chen & Nancy Koo, Asian Services in Action
   c) Use of Survey Methodology in Program Planning  
      Presented by: Kun Shi, Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight
   d) Ethnic-Specific Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
      Presented by: Julian Chow, UC Berkeley, & Ford Kuramoto, NAPAFASA
   e) Best Practice Models with Southeast Asian Families  
      Presented by: Linda Gensheimer, Louise Eidsmoe, Loeung Khi & Mai Yang, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

4:45-6:00 Caucus by Population Group and/or State:  
   • Identification of Resources and Training needs  
   • Developing Community Awareness and Mobilization Strategy

6:15 Networking/Reception

Day Two

8:00 Breakfast

9:00 Reconvene

9:15-9:45 Report Back from Caucuses to regional and national partners

10:00-11:30 Panel Presentation — Domestic Violence in Asian American Communities
   1) Victims of Domestic Violence in the Korean American Community  
      Presented by: Yoonju Park, Korean Service Center
   2) The Intersection of Domestic Violence and Mental Health Needs in AAPI Communities  
      Presented by: K. Sujata, Apna Ghar
   3) Domestic Violence in the Hmong Community  
      Presented by: Nenglee Yang, Diocese of Green Bay, Catholic Charities

11:45-12:15 Closing

12:30 Conference Adjourns
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Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
AAPCHO’s mission is to promote advocacy, collaboration, and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian American, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders within the US, its territories and freely associated states, primarily through our member community health clinics.

Promoting Access to Health (PATH) Program
The goal of the PATH project is to promote access to health care and support the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate health services for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) living in Midwest and mountain states.

Objectives to carry out this goal are:

• Identify areas with new and growing AAPI populations in Midwest and mountain states.
• Link those emerging AAPI communities that have limited access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services to existing health, social and human services organizations to meet their needs.
• Provide technical assistance to emerging/growing AAPI communities, health care providers, and local government infrastructure to meet the needs of their newer residents.

Promoting Access To Health (PATH) Listserv Information
This email listserv for the Promoting Access to Health (PATH) project is devoted to linking people and organizations that work with or support new and emerging Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations in Midwest and mountain states. This listserv is offered as a forum to share information and resources, pose questions, and discuss the needs of these communities.

This list was founded in July of 1999 and currently has over 100 members.
To join this list, please send an email to: apachopathsubscribe@yahoogroups.com
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