from AAHI Leadership

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services’ (MCDHHS) Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) is proud to release its Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017) Annual Report to highlight its advancements towards achieving health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. In FY2017, AAHI worked to empower communities and individuals to take control of their health and improve their own health status. Simultaneously, AAHI worked to strengthen and enhance the local health care delivery system and ensure its responsiveness to the needs of the diverse Asian American community.

AAHI demonstrated its unwavering commitment to improving the health and well-being of Montgomery County residents through its work. The AAHI team continued to provide quality services and programs to the community such as community outreach, health education, and community capacity building initiatives. At the same time, in FY2017, they expanded their mental health project. Not only did they continue developing mental health photonovels and organizing Mental Health First Aid trainings, but they also increased their efforts to include more robust outreach around mental health. Additionally, they piloted a cultural competency training for mental health care providers and service-delivery staff.

FY2017 also marked the launch of a new focus at AAHI: senior health and wellness. AAHI team members piloted new programs like Friends’ Corner, which focused on the health, wellness, and wellbeing of older adults and provided concentrated outreach to Asian American seniors. All of these services and programs progressed AAHI’s work towards eliminating health disparities for Asian Americans in Montgomery County.

As FY2017 comes to an end, we hope you will join us in celebrating our achievements and accomplishments from the past year. We appreciate the support and dedication of the AAHI Steering Committee, MCDHHS leadership, community partners, Health Promoters, and devoted volunteers who help make our work possible. We stay committed to working alongside our partners and community members to build a healthy community.

Meng K. Lee
AAHI Steering Committee Chair

Perry Chan, MS
AAHI Program Manager
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The mission of AAHI is to identify the health care needs of Asian American communities, to develop culturally competent health care services, and to implement health education programs that are accessible and available to all Asian Americans in Montgomery County.

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) was established in Fiscal Year 2005 with support from the Montgomery County Executive, County Council, and community leaders. AAHI was the first County program to specifically address the health disparities of the pan-Asian American community in Montgomery County. Through insight from community partners and feedback from community members, AAHI gains a nuanced understanding of community health needs, mores, and cultures. Subsequently, AAHI is then able to share information on health and social topics that are most pertinent and impactful to each respective community. Through AAHI’s tailored outreach approach, they are able to provide culturally and linguistically competent resources to Montgomery County’s diverse Asian American community.
The Asian American community is one that has seen tremendous growth, both nationally and locally. According to the 2010 United States Census, Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in the country. Similarly, Asian Americans are the second fastest growing minority group in Montgomery County. The 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) also states that Asian Americans comprise 15.1 percent (156,974) of Montgomery County’s population. In addition, Asian Americans in Montgomery County account for 41 percent of Maryland’s total Asian American population.

While Asian Americans are often referred to as one homogenous group, they are actually comprised of multiple subgroups. Among these subgroups lies a rich diversity of cultures and beliefs. According to the 2015 ACS, almost 71 percent of the Asian American population in Montgomery County is foreign born. In addition, 29 percent of the County’s Asian American population have limited English proficiency - meaning they do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.
OUTREACH & HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS*
4,361 community members assisted
83 outreach activities attended
68 internal requests completed
685 hours contributed to outreach
12 ethnic communities reached
12,426 pieces of literature distributed
4,985 educational encounters conducted
972 health screenings and vaccinations given
366 health service referrals provided
93% of community members agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with AAHI’s service
100% of community partners would recommend AAHI to other organizations/events in their community

SERVICE CONNECTION
26 community members requested a service connection
32 service connections completed

HEALTH EDUCATION MATERIALS
187 multilingual resources offered

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO SERVICES
133 community members assisted
92 small businesses reached
2 clinics provided outreach
32 hours contributed to Connect

AAHI CULTURAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN
32 articles published

AAHI IN SOCIAL MEDIA
504 social media posts shared
50,086 Blogger, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube views reached

HEALTH EDUCATION WORKSHOPS
739 community members assisted
16 workshops conducted

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT
67 community members assisted
262 hours contributed to ACA
**SERVICE ADMINISTRATION**

**PATIENT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM**
1,823 on-site medical interpretation sessions conducted
1,323 phone medical interpretation sessions conducted

**HEPATITIS B PREVENTION PROJECT**
217 community members screened
61 community members completed or in the process of completing 3-shot vaccination series

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

**HEALTH PROMOTERS PROGRAM**
24 Health Promoters recruited
15 languages and dialects spoken
13 communities represented

**EMPOWERING COMMUNITY HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS PROJECT**
2 workshops conducted
202 individuals representing 100 organizations attended
94% of attendees rated overall workshops as 4 or higher on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest

**FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE FOR RESOURCES AND SERVICES TRAINING**
192 community members assisted
7 FIRST & PREP sessions completed

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
155 hours contributed to technical assistance
42 organizations provided technical assistance to

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**
2 trainings conducted
61 individuals attended
*FY2017 numbers include some numbers from FY016.

**AAHI 101 & COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**
43 hours contributed to presentations
29 organizations presented to

**SERVICE MAPS**
38 service maps created

**SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT**

**WORKGROUP PARTICIPATION**
74 hours contributed to workgroups
9 workgroups participated in

**LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR EQUITY AND THE ELIMINATION OF DISPARITIES**
65 hours contributed to activities

**SENIOR HEALTH & WELLNESS**
399 community members assisted
2 Friends Corner sites established
9 Friends Corner sessions completed

**BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL HEALTH**
2 provider cultural competency trainings conducted
26 individual attended
3,608 photonovels distributed
One of the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) prime focuses is to provide robust community outreach and quality health communications to the Asian American community in Montgomery County. Asian Americans face several unique barriers to care. In AAHI’s 2008 County-Wide Health Needs Assessment, Asian Americans reported experiencing challenges to accessing quality health care due to a lack of health insurance, inadequate coverage, financial difficulties, limited transportation (particularly for seniors), linguistic barriers, and insufficient access to health care providers who speak their language. To overcome these barriers, it is imperative that culturally and linguistically competent health education and outreach programs are available and accessible.

AAHI utilizes multiple vehicles of dissemination to provide health information, materials, and resources to the Asian American community. These vehicles include social media, multilingual educational materials, and local news. AAHI increases access to care through outreach to diverse and underserved Asian Americans. They engage with the community during health fairs, small business outreach, and health education workshops. Through these efforts AAHI ensures that community members not only learn about important health topics but also are connected to services. The ultimate goal of health education and community outreach is to empower individuals to take control of their health by providing them with the information and resources they need to make changes in their lives.
To ensure the Asian American community is equipped with the tools it needs to make educated health decisions, AAHI has developed a collection of health education materials. In FY2017, AAHI expanded their library to include more senior health and wellness related community resources. Health education materials are available at outreach events and online. They are also available in multiple languages including but not limited to: English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tagalog.
To expand AAHI’s reach to the Asian American community, AAHI created their cultural media campaign. Through partnerships with local print and online news sources targeting different Asian subgroups, AAHI publishes educational articles on various health topics. These articles are published in several Asian languages based on Montgomery County’s Asian American population.
Social media’s ability to reach large groups of people makes it a powerful health communication tool. AAHI utilizes social media to share information on local resources, promote local health events, and inform community members of volunteer opportunities. In addition, AAHI publishes quarterly e-newsletters. These methods of communication extend AAHI’s reach to different groups of Asian Americans.
AAHI employs a dynamic community outreach model to ensure all Asian Americans in the County have access to quality health information. By visiting community members at their churches, temples, mosques, and community centers, AAHI is able to break through traditional barriers that characterize the Asian American community. Additionally, before each outreach activity, AAHI takes into consideration the needs of that specific community to ensure they are providing the most pertinent and useful information. Through community outreach, AAHI is able to distribute up-to-date health education literature, provide health promotion, and most importantly, connect community members with local health services.

In FY2017, AAHI’s community outreach events also include Health Education Workshops, Service Connection, Affordable Care Act efforts, behavioral & mental health efforts, Connecting Communities to Services, hepatitis B prevention project, and senior health & wellness efforts.
AAHI is committed to providing high-quality tailored information to the Asian American community. In line with this commitment, AAHI asks community members and partners to provide feedback on their work. AAHI collects at least one Participant Evaluation from every outreach event to measure community members’ satisfaction with AAHI’s service. In addition to English, the Participant Evaluation is available in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese - the languages of Montgomery County’s largest Asian subgroups. After each outreach event, AAHI sends community leaders the Community Partner Evaluation so they can provide feedback on their experience of working with AAHI. Through these evaluations, AAHI is able to make community-informed improvements to the services they provide.
Through AAHI’s community outreach efforts, numerous community partnerships, and data collection efforts, AAHI identified the need for more in-depth health education on specific topics of relevance to the Asian American community. To satisfy this need, AAHI works with different trusted community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide health education workshops to the Asian American community. In FY2017, AAHI partnered with the Korean American Outreach Group (KAOG) and the American Indians for Community Service (AICS).

These outreach efforts typically take place at local CBOs and faith-based organizations (FBOs) where Asian Americans typically gather. They are also often provided in an Asian language. Workshops cover a myriad of topics which affect the Asian American community. Some topics include diabetes management, nutrition, exercise, social security, allergies, Lyme disease, and Zika virus.
Through the *Connecting Communities to Services* project, or Connect as it is commonly referred to, AAHI is able to reach more isolated and marginalized community members by conducting outreach at local small businesses and community clinics.

When conducting small business outreach, AAHI representatives visit local Asian-owned and/or employed restaurants, shops, nail salons, grocery stores, and retail establishments during non-peak business hours to share health education and resource information.

For clinic outreach, AAHI team members set up Resource Information Tables in clinic waiting rooms, distribute health literature, and provide education to patients as they wait to be seen. These clinic visits also feature screenings of AAHI’s multilingual mental health video.
At community outreach events, AAHI refers community members to local services. Since Fiscal Year 2016 (FY2016), AAHI has escalated their approach to service referrals by directly connecting community members to local services. AAHI accomplishes this by assisting community members in making appointments, reminding them about their appointments, ensuring they have needed documents and paperwork, and following up with them after the appointments.

In FY2017, AAHI continued to provide service connections. They help community members access a myriad of services, including but not limited to: Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Maryland Health Connection, dental services, Montgomery Cares, mental health services, and senior and disability services.

By working directly with community members, AAHI is able to gain insight into the different barriers that hinder access to services. Some of the challenges that community members who seek service connections face include: lower-income, limited English proficiency, immigrant status, lack of health insurance, and limited transportation. Service connections help AAHI not only better understand these barriers, but also further minimize and overcome these barriers.
The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law on March 23, 2010. Its passage brought sweeping health care reforms, including:

- Increased coverage
- Improved quality of care
- Lowered health care costs
- New consumer protections

Maryland created a state-facilitated health insurance marketplace, the Maryland Health Connection. Residents can enroll online, by phone, or in-person. To help residents enroll, the Maryland Connector Program was created. Through this program residents are provided with in-person education, eligibility, and enrollment assistance.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services serves as Maryland’s Montgomery County Health Connector. As part of MCDHHS, AAHI participates in ACA outreach and education by providing community members with ACA information and updates.
Empowering Asian American communities and expanding organizational growth of Asian-serving and health-focused organizations are the major goals of the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) capacity building efforts. According to the National Institutes of Health, community capacity building is an important element in effective health promotion practice. Community capacity can be defined as the collection of knowledge, skills, and resources that individuals collectively utilize to identify, pursue, and achieve shared goals. All communities have resources, assets, and capacity. It is a matter of assessing, harnessing, and developing the tools to achieve goals that are sustainable.

AAHI works to empower Asian American communities with education, skills, and tools so they can more independently achieve their goals related to the health of their communities. Through the Faith-based Initiative for Resources and Services Training (FIRST), AAHI offers communities an overview of Montgomery County’s health and social services. AAHI’s Health Promoters Program serves as a vehicle to train community members on key health concerns affecting their communities so they can subsequently share that information with others. The Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Project empowers local community leaders to take action in addressing their own health priorities.

Alongside community empowerment efforts, AAHI also provides capacity building support to a myriad of programs and organizations. AAHI conducts “AAHI 101” presentations, which gives communities and partners background on Asian Americans and AAHI. In addition, AAHI conducts ad-hoc community needs assessments with community leaders to learn more about the nuances of their communities. AAHI also creates service maps to help community partners understand and navigate various local health and human services systems. Further, AAHI provides organizations with technical assistance in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their health programs. Through these efforts, AAHI is able to bolster and support the work of local communities.
In Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017) AAHI developed two workshops that focus on health resources education and training: Faith-based Initiative for Resources and Services Training (FIRST) and Public Resources Education Program (PREP).

FIRST is a 3-hour workshop designed for faith-based organization (FBO) leaders and caregivers. PREP is an abbreviated version of FIRST that targets community members. Through FIRST and PREP, AAHI provides an extensive overview on local and government health and social services, in addition to information on where and how to seek services and resources from various offices and programs. Examples of these resources include medical care to individuals who are uninsured and have limited-income, mental health services, dental services, maternal health care services, children services, senior and disability services, Medicaid, and financial services.

The expected outcome from FIRST and PREP is that caregivers will gain skills and knowledge on available resources and services in Montgomery County and will assist their community in accessing them.
AAHI Health Promoters are bilingual and bicultural community health advocates who enable AAHI to reach Montgomery County’s diverse Asian American population. By serving as gatekeepers to their communities, Health Promoters help reduce cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing health services. Through passion and dedication, Health Promoters provide information to some of the County’s hardest to reach Asian American community members.

To provide the highest quality and most up-to-date information, Health Promoters participate in multiple trainings each year. To ensure each training results in adequate changes in knowledge and attitude, AAHI institutes pre- and post-tests at each training.
HEALTH PROMOTERS PROGRAM

FY2017 HEALTH PROMOTERS

Alpa Kaji
Chi Yin Hon
Hena Thakur
Jean KoKo Gyi
Jinkle Mody
Kusuma Udagedera
Leigh (Li-Chun) Chang
Lina Ray
Maggie Tung
Maria Truong
Patty Abreu
Peter Uran
Phung Nguyen
Raymond Zhou
Rose Anne Felipe
Ryan Nguy
Shahin Azam
Shamim Begum
Sufia Mannan
Sunghee Kim
Tammy Wan
Tasneem Hussain

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN FY2017

6 new to the program
5 1-2 years of experience
13 3+ years of experience
The Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Project provides a series of practical and professional training workshops aimed to build the capacity and sustainability of community organizations. In partnership with Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services’ (MCDHHS) African American Health Program, Latino Health Initiative, and Community Action Agency, AAHI hosts two workshops a year. Through these workshops, AAHI equips community leaders with information and skills to develop culturally and linguistically sensitive health programming.

The fall 2016 workshop, “Aging in Montgomery County: Creating an Inclusive Community for a Lifetime”, was the first of a three-part series focusing on the health and social needs of seniors and their families. The senior health series was developed with support from the MCDHHS Aging and Disability Services. This workshop provided an overview of the current and emerging senior population of the County and discussed the social, physical, and fiscal impact which aging has on communities.

The spring 2017 workshop, “Aging in Montgomery County: Building a Safer Community Together”, was the second installment in the three-part series. Representatives from various Montgomery County and state agencies were brought together to discuss issues of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as provide resources to community leaders to improve the safety of older adults in their communities.
At the conclusion of each ECHO Workshop, attendees complete an evaluation to help AAHI improve the overall ECHO Project. Responses from the evaluations offer AAHI insight about the implementation and impact of the workshop. Specifically, evaluations allow AAHI to gauge attendee satisfaction and measure any changes in knowledge and attitude.

**Evaluations**

**SENIOR HEALTH I**
Out of 57 evaluations...

- 97% of attendees rated overall workshop as 4 or higher on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest.
- 82% of attendees, after attending the workshop, felt more or somewhat more knowledgeable about the services available to older people in Montgomery County.
- 91% of attendees, after attending the workshop, felt they had a better or somewhat better understanding of the health and socio-economic disparities among older people from diverse populations.

**SENIOR HEALTH II**
Out of 59 evaluations...

- 90% of attendees, after attending the workshop, felt more or somewhat more knowledgeable about the available resources related to the financial exploitation of older adults.
- 92% of attendees, after attending the workshop, felt they had a better or somewhat better understanding of the safety and abuse concerns related to older adults.
In Fiscal Year 2015 (FY2015), AAHI launched the *Be the One That Makes a Difference* initiative with the goal of reducing mental health stigma in the Asian American community. Since then, AAHI has worked to strengthen the Asian American communities’ capacity to address mental health concerns. In particular, AAHI wanted to ensure community leaders were equipped with the tools they needed to support their community members. Thus, AAHI coordinates Mental Health First Aid trainings in the Asian American community.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a nationally-certified, 8-hour, evidence-based course. It is designed to enable participants with the skills needed to recognize mental illness and to assist an individual who might be in crisis. After completion of the course, participants are certified for the next three years in Mental Health First Aid. Additionally, after completing the training, attendees are asked to educate members of their community and report back to AAHI around their educational activities.

In FY2017, AAHI continues to coordinate Mental Health First Aid trainings for community leaders. AAHI worked with four community- and faith-based organizations to plan two trainings. The impact of these trainings go beyond education. Community partners have shared that the trainings catalyzed and mobilized their community to build mental health programming, host community education seminars, and ultimately work towards dismantling mental health stigma.

*Educational encounters conducted by MHFA attendees" may include education completed by attendees of FY2016 trainings which were reported to AAHI in FY2017.
With over a decade of experience in building community partnerships, AAHI has fine tuned their approach. When working with new community partners, AAHI presents an overview of their work through an “AAHI 101” presentation. This presentation shares information on Asian American demographics, health disparities among Asian Americans, barriers to accessing health care, and the importance of cultural and linguistic competency. Furthermore, this presentation informs the partners about AAHI’s publications, programs, and projects. The background information provided on Asian Americans offers organizations a platform to discuss and align missions and goals with AAHI.

In addition to the AAHI 101 presentation, AAHI may also conduct an ad-hoc community needs assessment with community partners. This assessment inquires about the community’s demographics, health concerns, barriers to accessing health services, and strengths and assets. By understanding the specific needs of the respective community, AAHI is able to tailor their health services to the new community.
One of the many barriers to accessing services is the difficulty of navigating the health care system. Public programs often have eligibility requirements and application protocols that can be complex and confusing. To help clarify the steps community members need to take to access services, AAHI develops service maps. Service maps act as reference tools for MCDHHS staff and volunteers by helping them understand and better relay various programs’ information and application processes to community members.

Each service map provides a summary of the program, a list of key components of the program (i.e. application method, eligibility requirements, services offered), and a flowchart on the process of contacting and applying to the program.
AAHI provides community partners with technical assistance on the development, implementation, and evaluation of health programs. These health programs can include community events such as health fairs and health workshops. AAHI offers technical assistance to community partners on the planning, execution, and evaluation of these events. Additionally, AAHI provides partners with community outreach best practices so they know how to best reach Asian Americans when hosting health programs. Through technical assistance to community partners, not only is AAHI able to strengthen partnerships but also able to increase services for Montgomery County residents.
The Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) focuses on systems improvement to enhance the local infrastructure so that it is responsive to the unique needs of Asian Americans. Health behaviors do not exist in a vacuum. The adoption of healthy behaviors is dependent on one’s built environment and the health systems that surround them. When providing health promotion to the Asian American community, it is critical that the systems in place address the unique needs of Asian Americans and other minority communities.

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, health systems need to be coordinated and integrated, in which everyone works together to identify gaps and achieve better health for all. In line with this, AAHI works with Montgomery County to collect systemic data to enhance the local health infrastructure’s ability to respond to the health concerns of Asian Americans. To supplement County level data, AAHI collects distinct data through its health programs to better understand and help mitigate the unique health barriers to accessing care that exist within the Asian American community. During workgroups, AAHI emphasizes the need for culturally and linguistically competent services, disaggregated data, increased data collection, and adoption of health equity principles. Additionally, AAHI pays special attention to emerging health disparities that affect the Asian American community, such as senior health and wellness and behavioral and mental health.
HEALTHY MONTGOMERY

The mission of Healthy Montgomery is to achieve optimal health and well-being for Montgomery County residents. Healthy Montgomery’s three goals are to:

⇒ Improve access to health and social services
⇒ Achieve health equity for all residents
⇒ Enhance the physical and social environment to support optimal health and well-being

After the completion of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), AAHI continued to support Healthy Montgomery in their priority setting process. Using the findings from the CHNA, Healthy Montgomery identified a myriad of key issues, which were then narrowed to the following top three priorities:

⇒ Health in all policies
⇒ Physical activity and nutrition (using the lens of chronic disease prevention and management)
⇒ Integrated behavioral health

These priorities will guide the work of Healthy Montgomery and its stakeholders for the next three years. AAHI supports the efforts of different workgroups related to these three priority areas.

DATA TO ENHANCE EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

The Data to Enhance Effective Practice (DEEP) workgroup comprises of individuals throughout MCDHHS who collect and analyze County-level data. Each service area within MCDHHS appoints a representative to be a part of DEEP. An AAHI staff member serves as the representative from the Office of Community Affairs (OCA). DEEP meetings enable data experts to come together and identify the data needs and best practices for the County.

In FY2017, AAHI participated in conversations with DEEP colleagues regarding the data collection of race and ethnicity in the new Enterprise Integrated Case Management (eICM) system. These conversations focused on the data collection burden placed on frontline staff and the need for more accurate, precise racial and ethnic data for program planning and needs assessment purposes. Additionally, AAHI supports the collection of County annual reporting measures from among their OCA colleagues.

AAHI participates in various groups to advocate for disaggregated data in Montgomery County.
AAHI collects primary data that is disaggregated and targets Montgomery County residents.

**Community Needs Assessments**: AAHI conducts ad-hoc community needs assessments with leaders of local community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs). The data obtained from these assessments helps illuminate the unique health concerns and access barriers faced by the community.

**Community Outreach Evaluations**: AAHI utilizes outreach events to gather evaluations from community members and leaders about their health concerns through Participant Evaluations and Community Partner Evaluations.

**Photonovel Evaluations**: AAHI administers evaluations pertaining to their photonovels at different community events. Evaluations not only assess reader satisfaction, but also confidence and comfort levels related to seeking mental health support and services.

**ECHO Workshop Evaluations**: Through evaluations administered at the Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Workshops, AAHI collects data on community leaders’ changes in knowledge and attitude on the workshop topics.

**Health Screenings**: AAHI gathers unidentifiable data on the results from their non-diagnostic bone density screening and carbon monoxide screening. This data quantifies the disproportionate burden of osteoporosis and tobacco use in the Asian American community.
AAHI participates and engages in several workgroups that aim to strengthen health and human service systems within Montgomery County. Some workgroups focus on specific health disparities while others address health infrastructural issues. As a part of these workgroups, AAHI contributes to discussions and projects by giving voice to Asian American health and social needs and advocating for culturally responsive policies and programs.
The Leadership Institute for Equity and the Elimination of Disparities (LIEED) was established in July 2013 under the MCDHHS Office of Community Affairs.

The overall functions of LIEED are to:

- Provide strategic leadership and coordination
- Serve as a capacity builder
- Act as a resource partner and collaborator
- Promote effective community engagement
- Promote innovation and support linkages/opportunities
- Support community advocacy

In FY2017, LIEED team members, including AAHI, continue to address the needs of the minority population in Montgomery County through collaborative leadership to improve systems and systematic practices and approaches within MCDHHS.
The Equity and Social Justice Initiative was established to ensure MCDHHS functioned under the lens of social equity. This Initiative looks at various service areas within the Department. By working across service areas, the Equity and Social Justice Initiative aims to ensure the implementation of equitable practices throughout all of MCDHHS’ activities.

As a part of MCDHHS, AAHI continues to participate in the Equity Workgroup, which administers the Creating a Culture of Equity training. The training aims to educate Department staff about the five equity principles, detailed to the right, and facilitate the integration of equitable practices within MCDHHS programs. In line with this goal, in FY2017, the training was offered as a webinar for the first time. The webinar format enables a farther reach and makes the training more accessible to all staff.

In addition, the Workgroup also held a retreat this year. At the retreat, workgroup members discussed how to further progress and enhance their work along four impact areas.
As the Asian American community grows, health and social needs also grow. AAHI remains steadfast in addressing any new and different health concerns which community members express. In line with this, in FY2017, AAHI implemented promising practices in two areas:

**Senior Health & Wellness**

From 2000 to 2030, the senior population in Montgomery County is expected to increase by 137%. Among the senior population, Asian Americans are the largest senior minority group in the County. Asian American older adults have several unique health and social needs, including:

- **Limited English Proficiency:** 37% of foreign-born Asian Americans in Montgomery County speak English less than “very well”
- **Financial Needs:** 33% of Asian Americans in Montgomery County who have an income below the poverty level are over the age of 55
- **Health:** 29% of Asian American residents aged 65 and older in Montgomery County have a disability

To address the health and social needs, and to support the Asian American community in uncovering the opportunities that older adults bring, in FY2017 AAHI placed a special focus on senior wellness.

**Behavioral & Mental Health**

AAHI developed their mental health project, *Be the One that Makes a Difference*, in FY2015 in response to the growing behavioral and mental health concerns voiced by Asian American community leaders.

Among their concerns was the high suicide rates among Asian Americans. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for all Asian Americans, the 2nd leading cause of death for Asian Americans ages 15-24, and the 3rd leading cause of death for Asian Americans ages 25-34. Among women aged 15-24, Asian American girls have the highest suicide mortality rates across all racial/ethnic groups.

In addition, mental health continues to be stigmatized in the Asian American community. In a focus group study conducted with 1.5 and 2nd generation Asian American young adults in Montgomery County, stigma and negative perceptions of those seeking counseling was one of six main deterrents to seeking mental health care identified by the group.

Due to this need, mental health continues to be a priority area for AAHI. Under the *Be the One that Makes a Difference* project, AAHI is developing and testing different educational, outreach, and capacity building techniques.
In FY17, AAHI has piloted and embarked on new efforts related to senior health and wellness.

Friends’ Corner is a new program targeting Asian American older adults. AAHI partners with local community- and faith-based organizations and senior centers to develop ongoing Friends’ Corner sessions. Friends’ Corner informs older adults about more than disease prevention and management, rather it adopts a more holistic approach to health where education, tools, and skills are shared related to health, wellness, and lifestyle. Some examples of topics covered in Friends’ Corner sessions are mental health stigma, dimensions of wellness, and technology. Additionally, through Friends’ Corner, AAHI provides information on and links to County resources for Asian American older adults in various Asian languages.

At the same time, AAHI focuses on increasing partnerships with organizations and programs related to senior health and wellness. By expanding collaborative efforts with MCDHHS Aging and Disability Services (A&D), AAHI is better equipped to educate and inform Asian American older adults about County services. AAHI also provides technical assistance to A&D programs around Asian American outreach and language sensitivity.
AAHI’s *Be the One That Makes a Difference* project has the goal of reducing mental health stigma in the Asian American community. Since Fiscal Year 2015, AAHI has been expanding this project, implementing new and different efforts, with the aim of normalizing conversation around mental health and ultimately dismantling the stigma around the topic. To do this, AAHI develops educational content related to mental health in multiple mediums. In FY17, this included health education articles printed in ethnic media, videos of community members with messages promoting wellness, social media posts, and dissemination of health literature at mental health themed resource tables at local community and faith-based organizations.

In addition, in FY2017 AAHI released their second photonovel. This volume, titled *Mental Health: Getting the Care You Need*, is a continuation of the first photonovel. The photonovel encourages the community to get help and showcases what can be expected during therapy. AAHI also recognizes that the health of communities is intrinsically tied and subsequently works across ethnic groups to address mental health stigma. In line with this, AAHI worked with the Ethiopian Community Center in Maryland to develop an Amharic version of their first photonovel, *Mental Health: Understanding is the First Step*.

This year, AAHI piloted a cultural competency training for behavioral health providers. The training, titled “*Building Cultural Bridges: Improving Behavioral Health Providers’ Competency with Asian American Clients*”, provides information on AAHI programming, local Asian American demographics, health challenges, mental health challenges, promising practices based on mental health research, and community resources. AAHI worked with MCDHHS Access to Behavioral Health and MCDHHS Adult Behavioral Health Program to train their staff.
Different key players are required to change the health status of any community. Thus, comprehensively and completely addressing the needs of the Asian American community requires effort across multiple sectors and groups. The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) works to harness the energy of existing health and social service nonprofits and organizations serving Asian Americans by increasing and expanding collaborative efforts. By collaborating with different nonprofits and organizations, AAHI can:

⇒ Increase the reach of AAHI’s health messages into the community
⇒ Provide credible, pertinent health information and resources through trusted community partners
⇒ Support their organizational growth

In Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017), AAHI partnered with various community based organizations to extend their outreach. They also continued their partnership with the Patient Navigator Program to provide trained medical interpreters to accompany community members to their appointments. To increase the receptiveness of their hepatitis B prevention project, AAHI contracted with different community organizations and provided technical assistance as needed.
AAHI’s Patient Navigator Program (PNP) provides medical interpretation for community members with limited English proficiency. It enables community members with language barriers to access services. Communication issues between patients and health care providers can result in inaccurate diagnoses, decreased treatment adherence, and reduced patient satisfaction, ultimately leading to poorer health outcomes. PNP services help clients by providing them accurate interpretation with health care providers so that community members can make informed medical decisions.

PNP is comprised of two components:

**Multilingual Health Information and Referral Telephone Line**

provides general health information and navigates callers through the extensive network of local resources and services available to County residents.

**Trained Multilingual Medical Interpreters**

attend medical appointments with clients, provide face-to-face interpretation, and assist in translation of medical forms. Interpretation is available in several Asian languages, including but not limited to: Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese.
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) shoulder a disproportionate burden of hepatitis B cases in the United States. Comprising less than five percent of the US population, AAPIs account for more than 50 percent of Americans living with chronic hepatitis B. Furthermore, the death rate from hepatitis B among AAPIs is seven times greater than rates among White Americans.

In response to this health disparity, coupled with the need for hepatitis B services, AAHI created the hepatitis B prevention project. This project utilizes a four-lens model that includes education, screening, vaccination, and treatment referral. To provide services that are culturally and linguistically competent, AAHI partners with local community- and faith-based organizations. AAHI provides technical assistance to these partners by helping with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of hepatitis B prevention projects.

In Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017), AAHI partnered with three different organizations as a part of their hepatitis B prevention project: the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center, Inc. (CCACC), the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC), and the Viet Nam Medical Assistance Program (VNMAP).
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) values professional development for staff because they recognize its impact on program quality. AAHI invests in staff to ensure programs run in an effective and efficient manner. Staying up-to-date on information is critical in providing quality services for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. Through staff development and training, AAHI equips staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve and advance its programs.
As part of professional development, AAHI staff participate in a number of webinars, trainings, and conferences provided by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) as well as other local, state, and national organizations. Trainings provide staff with a better understanding of local and County resources, such as Medicare, and introduce them to public health concepts relevant to their work area, such as health literacy.
In Fiscal Year 2017, AAHI was honored to receive three awards from two national organizations in recognition of their innovation and creativity in pursuit of eliminating health disparities among Asian Americans.

Montgomery County received 32 National Association of Counties (NACo) Awards in 2016, recognizing the implementation of innovative projects, programs, and initiatives that assisted County residents. AAHI received two of those awards, one for the Be the One that Makes a Difference project and one for the Empowering Community Health Organizations project.

In addition, AAHI’s first mental health photonovel, Mental Health: Understanding is the First Step, was the winner of the American Public Health Association’s (APHA) 26th Public Health Education and Health Promotion Public Health Materials contest in the Print Materials category.
In Fiscal Year 2017, the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI’s) budget was $857,459. Expenses for the fiscal year are divided into two categories:

**IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE**
This includes program staff, special projects, office equipment, supplies, printing, and mileage. This category accounts for 17.18% of AAHI’s core budget expenditures.

**CONTRACT WITH PRIMARY CARE COALITION**
This category accounts for 82.82% of AAHI’s core budget expenditures.
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee advocates for, advises, and assists AAHI in attaining health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. The Steering Committee is comprised of 16 professionally and ethnically diverse individuals. Using their professional expertise and community knowledge, they play an integral role in developing AAHI.

In Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017), the Steering Committee continued to progress their work towards improving the health of the Asian American community in Montgomery County. Through their passion and dedication, they made the following contributions in FY2017:

- Volunteered over 300 hours in support of AAHI’s efforts
- Advocated in meetings with key leaders and policymakers in Montgomery County
- Advised AAHI programmatic efforts throughout the year
- Served as liaisons to external community workgroups including the County Executive’s Asian American Advisory Committee, Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee, Leadership Institute for Equity and the Elimination of Disparities, Maryland Governor’s Commission on Asian American Affairs, and the Maryland Governor’s Commission on South Asian American Affairs

AAHI Steering Committee Members

Meng K. Lee (Chair)  Nguyen Nguyen (Vice Chair)
Anis Ahmed  Mayur Mody
Ji-Young Cho  Sam Mukherjee
Nerita Estampador  Tho Tran
Wilbur Friedman  Thomas Tran
Sunmin Lee  Sovan Tun
Michael Lin  Edward Wan
Cynthia Macri  Judy Wang
HEALTH PROMOTERS: The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) trains Health Promoters on various health education topics as well as County and AAHI services and resources. Health Promoters, in turn, inform and connect their communities to these resources. For more information about the program, or to apply, visit the AAHI website to download an application form.

INTERNS: AAHI seeks interns during the summer, fall, and spring semesters who are interested in gaining hands-on experience in public and community health. Intern projects are dynamic and multifaceted, providing exposure to public health research, educational material development, and outreach program implementation. If you are a current student or recent graduate interested in a meaningful internship at AAHI, visit the AAHI website for details and to download an application form.
STEERING COMMITTEE: The AAHI Steering Committee is comprised of professionally and ethnically diverse stakeholders from the local community who advocate for, advise, and assist AAHI with its efforts to attain health equity in Montgomery County. Through their wealth of professional expertise and community knowledge, they support AAHI’s growth towards fulfilling its mission and goals. If you would like to join the AAHI Steering Committee, please download an application form from the AAHI website.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS: AAHI has long-standing partnerships with many community- and faith-based organizations. Working with these organizations, AAHI plans health events and participates in cultural festivities. If you are interested in partnering with AAHI or would like AAHI to visit your community, please contact AAHI staff.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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