Asian American Health Initiative
Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services

FY2018

ANNUAL REPORT
On behalf of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services’ (MCDHHS) Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI), we are proud to release the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018) Annual Report to highlight AAHI’s advancements towards achieving health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. In FY2018, 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.

In FY2018, AAHI continued to build upon their mental health and senior health programming. This year, AAHI released their first Mental Health Toolkit, which gives community leaders tools to provide mental health education to their communities. Keeping in line with past years, AAHI continued to develop their mental health photonovel project with the release of their third photonovel entitled *More Than Just Stress*, which was developed in response to the mental health needs of Asian American adolescents. AAHI also saw substantial growth in their senior health and wellness efforts, particularly with their Friends’ Corner project. Friends’ Corner expanded to several new locations throughout the County, including senior centers and faith-based organizations.

Throughout the year AAHI collected a number of different achievements: they launched their first-ever social media campaign in honor of Mental Health Awareness month; they hosted an informative and insightful roundtable with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health; they concluded their Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) workshop series on senior health and initiated a new series on emergency preparedness; their cultural competency training was converted into a continued education course offering for all MCDHHS staff; and most importantly, they continued to attend outreach events in the community and connect with thousands of residents. Together, their diverse and comprehensive services and programs advanced their goal of eliminating health disparities for Asian Americans in Montgomery County.

As FY2018 comes to an end, we hope you will join us in celebrating our 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Message from AAHI Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>About AAHI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Snapshots: FY2018 at a Glance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Accomplishments: FY2018 at a Glance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Health Communications &amp; Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Capacity Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Systems Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Service Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Financials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>AAHI Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>How to Get Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

As the Asian American community witnessed rapid growth, the need to address their unique health disparities also grew more evident. In response, 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 which addressed the health disparities of the multiple Asian American communities within Montgomery County. From years of community outreach and engagement, AAHI has gained a nuanced understanding of community health needs and tailors resources to best fit the respective community.
The Asian American population 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 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) states that Asian Americans comprise 14.9 percent (154,518) of Montgomery County’s population and 6.4 percent of Maryland’s population (385,167). In addition, 43 percent of Maryland’s Asian American population lives in Montgomery County.

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, languages, and needs. According to the 2016 ACS, 71 percent of the Asian American population in Montgomery County is foreign born. In addition, 29 percent of Montgomery County’s Asian American population has 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.
SNAPSHOTs
FY2018 at a Glance

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

FRIENDS' CORNER

HEALTH PROMOTERS PROGRAM

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS PROJECT

HEALTH EDUCATION WORKSHOPS
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**FY2018 at a Glance**

**ALL PROGRAM AREAS**

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<tr>
<th>Outreach &amp; Health Communications</th>
<th>Community Outreach Events*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81 outreach activities attended</td>
<td>3,370 community members assisted</td>
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<td>584 health screenings and vaccinations given</td>
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<td></td>
<td>149 health service referrals provided</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% of community members agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with AAHI’s service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100% of community partners would recommend AAHI to other organizations/events in their community</td>
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**HEALTH EDUCATION MATERIALS**

| 189 multilingual resources offered |

**AAHI CULTURAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

| 22 articles published |

**AAHI IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

| 463 social media posts shared |
| 75,767 Blogger, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube views reached |

**HEALTH EDUCATION WORKSHOPS**

| 249 community members assisted |
| 9 workshops conducted |

**AFFORDABLE CARE ACT**

| 162 community members assisted |
| 204 hours contributed to ACA |
**SERVICE ADMINISTRATION**

**PATIENT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM**
- 2,219 on-site medical interpretation sessions conducted
- 1,212 phone medical interpretation sessions conducted

**HEPATITIS B PREVENTION PROGRAM**
- 132 community members screened
- 46 community members completed or in the process of completing 3-shot vaccination series

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

**HEALTH PROMOTERS PROGRAM**
- 18 Health Promoters recruited
- 15 languages and dialects spoken
- 10 communities represented

**EMPOWERING COMMUNITY HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS PROJECT**
- 2 workshops conducted
- 134 individuals representing 56 organizations attended
- 88% of attendees rated overall workshops as 4 or higher on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID***
- 3 trainings conducted
- 53 individuals attended

*FY2018 numbers include some numbers from FY2017.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
- 122 hours contributed to technical assistance
- 33 organizations provided technical assistance to

**AAHI 101 & COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS**
- 22 hours contributed to presentations
- 11 organizations presented to

**SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT**

**WORKGROUP PARTICIPATION**
- 58 hours contributed to workgroups
- 10 workgroups participated in

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

**SENIOR HEALTH & WELLNESS**
- 1,703 community members assisted
- 13 Friends Corner sites established
- 53 Friends Corner sessions completed

**BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**
- 3 cultural competency trainings for providers conducted
- 41 individual attended
- 3,094 photonovels distributed
- 886 individuals who accessed the mental health toolkit
One of the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) focuses is to enhance health communication and education as well as provide robust community outreach to the diverse Asian American community. Research indicates that ethnic and racial minorities often seek, access, and utilize health care services less than Non-Hispanic Whites. For Asian Americans in Montgomery County, a 2010 study and AAHI’s 2008 Health Needs Assessment, identified the following factors hinder access to preventative and curative health care services: lack of health insurance, high cost of health care services, lack of transportation, limited English proficiency, limited health literacy, variance in cultural beliefs and attitudes about preventative care, and preference for health care providers of certain gender and/or cultures.

To overcome these barriers, AAHI developed a robust and comprehensive health education and outreach program. AAHI utilizes a community-centered framework and goes to the community directly at their churches, temples, mosques, and community centers to inform and empower them. AAHI encourages community members to enroll in available health services and informs them on where they can go sign up. AAHI utilizes multiple vehicles of dissemination to provide health information, materials, and resources. These vehicles include social media, multilingual educational materials, and local news. The goal of health education and community outreach is to empower individuals by providing them with the information and resources they need to make educated decisions about their health.
AAHI has developed a Resource Library that includes educational literature on various local health and human services. AAHI regularly reviews the health education materials to ensure they are providing up-to-date information to the community. They also review educational materials released by the federal government to find literature that would be beneficial to share with the Montgomery County community. AAHI is committed to providing health education materials in multiple Asian languages. The most common languages materials are provided in, but are not limited to, include English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese.
Asian American communities utilize various forms of media to access health information. Through AAHI’s cultural media campaign, AAHI is able to expand their reach to more Asian Americans in the community. AAHI publishes various health educational articles both through local print and online news. Given their wide distribution, publishing educational articles enables AAHI to reach hundreds of community members to provide information on different health topics and resources. According to the National Institute of Health, Asian Americans who are older, from certain ethnic groups, speak limited English, and are foreign-born are most likely to use print media, in their native language, to gain health information.
Social media’s ability to reach large groups of people makes it a powerful health communication tool. AAHI utilizes social media to share local resources, local health events, and quarterly e-newsletters.

AAHI is constantly seeking to utilize social media in innovative ways. In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018), AAHI began sharing health infographics, designed and created by their staff, to share health education and information about local services in a graphic format. They also had a social media campaign in May to commemorate Mental Health Month. This campaign focused on mental wellness and included posts on mental health tips, statistics about mental health and Asian Americans, and local resources.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

AAHI connects with and provides outreach to community members in places that they congregate. These include but are not limited to: weekend schools for kids, health fairs targeting Asian communities, services at faith-based institutions, community-based organizations, and cultural celebrations. AAHI tailors its approach to the needs of the community. They try to assess the community health needs and demographics so they can provide community members with the most pertinent and useful health information. Through community outreach, AAHI is able to distribute up-to-date health education literature, provide health promotion, and connect community members with local health services.

In FY2018, AAHI’s community outreach events also include Health Education Workshops, Affordable Care Act efforts, behavioral & mental health efforts, hepatitis B prevention project, and senior health & wellness efforts.

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AAHI is committed to providing high-quality tailored services to the Asian American community. In line with this commitment, AAHI asks community members and partners to provide feedback on their services. 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. AAHI sends community leaders the Community Partner Evaluation after each outreach event so they can evaluate their experience of working with AAHI. Through these evaluations, AAHI is able to make community-informed improvements to the services they provide.
Health education workshops allow AAHI to provide community members with more in-depth health education, skills-development, and information about local resources. AAHI partners with trusted local community-based organizations and faith-based organizations to provide health education workshops to the Asian American community. Through these partnerships, AAHI is able to provide health education workshops in the preferred Asian language of the community. In FY2018, AAHI held a number of health education workshops on different topics from mental health to Lyme disease to liver health. They also had a concentrated effort this year to conduct mental health education workshops with Asian American youth.
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. This program provides residents with in-person education, eligibility, and enrollment assistance.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) 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.

- 12 outreach events attended
- 204 hours contributed to ACA
- 162 community members assisted
- 296 pieces of literature distributed
- 18 referrals provided
- 28 social media posts shared
Community capacity can be defined as the collection of knowledge, skills, and resources that community members possess and use to work together to identify, pursue, and achieve shared goals. All communities have resources, assets, and capacity. It is a matter of assessing, harnessing, and developing these so that communities can implement sustainable solutions. The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) works with community partners to strengthen their sustainability, expand their organizational growth, and ultimately build greater community capacity.

AAHI implements various projects to strengthen Asian American communities’ knowledge, skills, and resources so they can more effectively and independently achieve their health goals. AAHI’s Health Promoters Program trains community members so they can serve as resources for their communities. The Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Project empowers community leaders to take action in addressing the health priorities of their communities. AAHI’s coordination of the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings enables community leaders to address the mental health concerns of their communities. AAHI also offers “AAHI 101” presentations, to introduce new community partners to AAHI’s work and the health needs of Asian Americans. In addition, AAHI conducts ad-hoc community needs assessments with community leaders to learn more about the nuances of their communities. AAHI provides organizations with technical assistance in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their health programs. Through these efforts AAHI is able to provide support to, and increase the capacity of, local programs and organizations.
AAHI Health Promoters are bilingual and bicultural community health advocates who extend AAHI’s reach to Montgomery County’s diverse Asian American population. Health Promoters serve as gate keepers to their communities and thus are able to 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.
HEALTH PROMOTERS PROGRAM

FY2018 HEALTH PROMOTERS

Alpa Kaji
Chi Yin Hon
Jean KoKo Gyi
Kusuma Udagedera
Leigh (Li-Chun) Chang
Maggie Tung

Maria Truong
Patty Abreu
Peter Uran
Phung Nguyen
Rose Anne Felipe
Shahin Azam

Shamim Begum
Sufia Mannan
Sunghee Kim
Tammy Wan
Tasneem Hussain
Yi Liu

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

4 1-2 years of experience
14 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 programs.

The fall 2017 workshop, “Maintaining Health and Financial Security as We Age”, was the final installment of a three-part series focusing on the health and social needs of seniors and their families. This workshop focused on the health and financial demands that may arise as community members age. It featured a panel discussion on retirement planning, financial management, Social Security, and Medicare.

The spring 2018 workshop, “Building Resilience: Community & Individual Emergency Preparedness”, focused on preparing individuals for disasters. This workshop, included both a feature speaker and a panel discussion, provided an overview on ways to prepare for local and widespread emergencies and the various roles individuals, community organizations, and government entities have during disaster response.
At the conclusion of each ECHO Workshop, attendees complete an evaluation to help AAHI improve the ECHO Project. The feedback gives AAHI insight about the implementation and impact of the workshop. Evaluations enable AAHI to gauge attendee satisfaction and measure any changes in knowledge and attitude.
As a part of AAHI’s mental health project, *Be the One That Makes a Difference*, AAHI coordinates Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings for Asian American community leaders. Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a nationally-certified, 8-hour, evidence-based course. It is designed to empower 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 three years. AAHI works with course instructors to embed Asian American statistics, cultural values, and mental health challenges within the course to make the content as relevant as possible to Asian American communities.

After completing the training, attendees are asked to inform community members about mental health and report back to AAHI on their educational encounters. This enables AAHI to expand the reach of mental health education beyond class attendees and into multiple Asian communities.

In FY2018, AAHI continued to partner with various community- and faith-based organizations, and had representatives from several ethnic, religious, and professional groups. Community partners have shared that these trainings catalyzed and mobilized their community to build mental health programming, host community education seminars, and work towards dismantling the stigma surrounding mental health.

*Educational encounters conducted by MHFA attendees may include education completed by attendees of FY2017 trainings which were reported to AAHI in FY2018.
With over a decade of experience in building community partnerships, AAHI has discovered some best practices. One approach they have found to be effective is to give “AAHI 101” presentations when working with new community partners. 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 responsiveness. In addition, this presentation informs the partners about AAHI’s publications, programs, and projects. This background information enables new community partners to identify areas where their and AAHI’s missions and goals align.

In addition to AAHI 101 presentations, AAHI also conducts ad-hoc community needs and strengths assessments with new 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 and opportunities within new communities AAHI is able to tailor their health services accordingly.
AAHI provides various forms of technical assistance to community partners and other public health organizations. Working with communities, AAHI provides technical assistance around the planning, implementation, and evaluation of health programs. AAHI often works with the leadership of community- and faith-based organizations to equip them with the skills to navigate local health services and empower them to respond to the needs of their own community members.

AAHI also supports other public and community health organizations by providing technical assistance around community outreach best practices for Asian Americans. By working with communities and service providers alike, AAHI’s aim is to strengthen the community’s ability to respond to their own needs, while at the same time ensuring that services providers can reach and respond to Asian American communities. In FY2018, a major project to which AAHI provided technical assistance was the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Healthy Minds Initiative, where Asian American parents were trained by SAMHSA officers on how to provide mental health outreach to their community.

**SOME ORGANIZATIONS WHO RECEIVED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:**

- American Indians for Community Service
- American Muslim Senior Society
- ASHA for Women
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- Ethiopian Community Center of Maryland
- Korea Daily
- Maryland Buddhist Vihara
- MCDHHS Aging & Disability Services
- University of Maryland School of Public Health
- University of Maryland Health Literacy Initiative
- Vietnamese American Services
The Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) focuses on systems improvement to enhance the local infrastructure so 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 are responsive to the unique needs of Asian Americans and other minority communities.

According to Healthy People 2020, there are three key components of public health infrastructure: 1) A capable and qualified workforce; 2) Up-to-date data and information systems; and 3) Agencies capable of assessing and responding to public health needs. In line with this, AAHI collects local data through its health programs to better understand and help mitigate the unique health barriers to accessing care that exist within Asian American communities. At the same time, AAHI works with Montgomery County to create sensitive data collection systems to enhance the local health infrastructure’s ability to respond to the health concerns of Asian Americans. AAHI emphasizes the need for culturally and linguistically responsive services, disaggregated data, increased data collection for Asian Americans, and adoption of health equity principles. Additionally, AAHI pays attention to emerging health disparities that affect Asian American communities, such as senior health and wellness and behavioral and mental health.
In order to understand the needs of Asian Americans and make strategic programmatic decisions, it is critical to have access to robust data and research about Asian Americans. This is extremely challenging due to the dearth of existing literature and data pertinent to Asian Americans and due to the methodological practices of many health surveys and studies. Historically, Asian Americans have not been well represented in health studies and are therefore excluded from the benefits of their results.

One of the major methodological challenges facing Asian Americans is the aggregation of the diverse subgroups under one racial/ethnic category. AAHI advocates for disaggregated data collection, reporting, and analysis, which will allow for granular level understanding of the health needs of the diverse and numerous Asian subgroups.

Keeping these data challenges and solutions in mind, AAHI works with several entities within the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) to improve internal data methodologies.

The Data to Enhance Effective Practice (DEEP) workgroup encompasses individuals throughout MCDHHS who collect and analyze County-level data. DEEP enables data experts to come together and determine the data needs and best practices for the County. AAHI supported DEEP’s work through participation at several DEEP meetings, by representing the Office of Community Affairs (OCA) in a discussion about framing the department’s budget around performance measures, and by collating OCA’s annual performance measures for CountyStat.

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, and enhance the physical and social environment to support optimal health and well-being. In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018), AAHI participated in various workgroups through Health Montgomery. Through their involvement in these workgroups, AAHI advocated for culturally responsive data collection and evaluation.
Through its various programs, AAHI is able to collect data on program outputs and community needs, which informs AAHI’s decision making:

**Community Outreach Evaluations:** At outreach events, AAHI gathers evaluations from community members and leaders about their health concerns through Participant Evaluations and Community Partner Evaluations.

**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 collected from these assessments helps illuminate the health concerns and access barriers faced by the community.

**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.

**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.
AAHI participates in several workgroups that aim to strengthen health and human service systems within Montgomery County. Some workgroups focus on specific health disparities while others target health infrastructural issues. As a part of these workgroups, AAHI contributes to discussions by advocating for Asian American health and social needs as well as 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

LIEED members, including AAHI, address the needs of the minority population in Montgomery County through collaborative leadership. Their goal is to improve systems and systematic practices within MCDHHS as they strive for equity.
In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, which occurs every May, AAHI hosted an Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Roundtable Discussion which served as a platform for local and national leaders to discuss barriers, solutions, challenges, and opportunities in Asian American health. AAHI was honored to welcome the Director of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health and the Chief Medical Officer to discuss Asian American health needs at the national level. MCDDHS Director of Health and Human Services and Chief of Community Affairs similarly shared challenges and opportunities around Asian American health in the county. Local leaders discussed their work and provided insight on the grassroots efforts taking place in the County to address health disparities among Asian Americans.
The Equity and Social Justice Initiative was established to help the Department understand and adopt equity as a value in all of its work. The Initiative’s mission is to eliminate inequities in health and human services, including child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health services, employment, and housing assistance. By working across service areas, the Equity and Social Justice Initiative aims to ensure the successful integration of equity into the fabric of MCDHHS.

AAHI continues to participate in the Equity and Social Justice Initiative. The Initiative engages in systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities to help MCDHHS understand and adopt equity.

MCDHHS defines equity as

“Fair policies, decisions, and actions that guide the way that we work with our customers, our colleagues, and our community to promote health, safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency.”
AAHI remains steadfast in addressing new health concerns which community members express. In FY2018, AAHI continued to expand their senior health and wellness and their behavioral and mental health efforts:

**SENIOR HEALTH & WELLNESS**

Asian Americans 55 years and older make up more than a quarter of the Asian American population in Montgomery County. From 2000 to 2030, the senior population in the County is expected to increase by 137%. Asian American seniors, in particular, are growing rapidly. In fact, 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, low income, and high rates of disability.

In FY2017, AAHI began to address senior wellness by piloting Friends’ Corner. In FY2018, AAHI continued to expand the program and has hosted more Friends’ Corners, reaching even more older adults.

**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 disparities in the Asian American community. Suicide is 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.

Despite the prevalence of mental health concerns, it is a topic that continues to be stigmatized in the Asian American community. This stigma has resulted in lower service utilization rates and higher treatment drop out rates.

Due to these disparities, mental health continues to be a priority area for AAHI. In FY2018, under the *Be the One that Makes a Difference* project, AAHI developed and tested different educational, outreach, and capacity building techniques.
In FY2018, AAHI continued to expand Friends’ Corner, a program targeting Asian American older adults. AAHI partners with local senior centers and community- and faith-based organizations to host ongoing Friends’ Corner sessions. The AAHI team holds anywhere from four to eight Friends’ Corners at a site. Friends’ Corner informs older adults about more than just 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. Friends’ Corner sessions cover a variety of topics, including: falls prevention, liver disease, high cholesterol, transportation, health care coverage, and technology. Additionally, through Friends’ Corner, AAHI provides information on and links to County resources for Asian American older adults in various Asian languages.

In addition to community outreach efforts, AAHI also increased partnerships with organizations and programs focused on senior health and wellness. AAHI expanded collaborative efforts with MCDHHS Aging and Disability Services (A&D) to enhance their reach into the Asian American community. In addition, the AAHI team participated in the Behavioral Health Strategic Alignment Senior Work Group to ensure the needs of Asian American older adults were taken into consideration as the County developed their Strategic Alignment Plan.
The goal of AAHI’s *Be the One That Makes a Difference* project is to reduce mental health stigma in the Asian American community. Normalizing conversation around mental health is key to dismantling the stigma surrounding the topic. To do this, AAHI developed educational content related to mental health in multiple mediums. This included health education articles printed in ethnic media, social media posts, and dissemination of health literature. In May of FY2018, which was both Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month, AAHI implemented a mental health social media campaign, which focused on mental wellness and not just mental illness. Posts included mental health tips, statistics about mental health and Asian Americans, and information about local resources.

In FY2018, AAHI released their third photonovel, *More Than Just Stress*, which takes form as a graphic cartoon and focuses on Asian American adolescent mental health. AAHI employed a participatory materials development process when making this photonovel by recruiting youth, called Mental Health Youth Ambassadors, to work with them. Youth Ambassadors advised AAHI on the plot, content, graphic layout, and format of the photonovel. AAHI held three meetings to develop the initial idea and get feedback on draft versions. The final product was a graphic photonovel that depicted the story of Sofia, an Asian American teen, who was overwhelmed from the pressures of her academic load and her parents’ expectations of success. This photonovel encourages Asian American adolescents to pay attention to their mental health and recognize when they are feeling more than just stress.
AAHI continued to provide their cultural competency training, “Building Cultural Bridges: Improving Behavioral Health Providers’ Competency with Asian American Clients”. This training provides information on AAHI programming, local Asian American demographics, health challenges, mental health challenges, promising practices based on mental health research, and community resources. The training was piloted in FY2017 with staff at two MCDHHS programs. Due to the success of the pilot, in FY2018 it was offered as part of the Department’s Center for Continuous Learning (CCL) course offerings, and was subsequently open to behavioral and mental health staff across the entire department. In addition to the CCL course, AAHI also offered this training to the Senior Mental Health Program and the Tree House Child Advocacy Center.

In FY2018, AAHI unveiled their first Mental Health Toolkit: Staying Well and Living Fully. The Mental Health Toolkit is a resource for community leaders, members, and providers who wish to share mental health information with the Asian American community. The Toolkit includes already prepared presentations for community education purposes, tipsheets on conducting mental health outreach, and an in-depth overview of mental health resources focusing on the Asian American community. This toolkit covered many topics related to mental health, such as the various dimensions of wellness, the difference between mental health and mental illness, mental health myths and facts, and tips on how to practice mental wellness. The Toolkit is available for download on the AAHI website.
Different players are required to change the health status of a community. Thus, comprehensively and completely addressing the needs of Asian Americans requires effort across multiple sectors and groups due to the diversity of the Asian American community. The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) collaborates with existing health and social service nonprofits and organizations to deliver various health services. 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 the organizational growth of their partners

In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018), AAHI partnered with community-based organizations to extend their reach. They continued their partnership with the Patient Navigator Program to provide medical interpreters to accompany community members to their appointments. AAHI also supported capacity building efforts for different community organizations on their hepatitis B prevention projects.
AAHI's Patient Navigator Program (PNP) provides medical interpretation for community members with limited English proficiency. Patient Navigators help community members with language barriers 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 community members can make informed decisions about their health.

PNP is comprised of two components:

**MULTILINGUAL REFERRAL AND HEALTH 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.
PATIENT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY CATEGORY

- Physical Check-Ups: 27.00%
- Medical Benefits: 17.40%
- Dental Services: 16.40%
- Cancer Screenings: 12.30%
- Senior Centers: 7.80%
- Vision Services: 7.30%
- Housing Services: 3.40%
- Surgery: 2.50%
- Mental Health Services: 2.50%
- PNP/General Information: 2.30%
- Job Search Services: 0.80%
- Legal Services: 0.20%

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY LANGUAGE

- Hindi: 16.60%
- Vietnamese: 24.40%
- Korean: 27.70%
- Chinese: 25.20%
- Urdu: 5.20%
- Nepali: 0.50%
- Other: 0.30%

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY LANGUAGE & INSURANCE STATUS

- Insured
  - Hindi: 67%
  - Vietnamese: 50%
  - Korean: 49%
- Uninsured
  - Chinese: 33%
  - Vietnamese: 50%
  - Korean: 51%

Hindi & Other

- Insured: 33%
- Uninsured: 67%
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are disproportionately affected by hepatitis B 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, AAHI created the hepatitis B prevention project. This project utilizes a four-step approach that includes education, screening, vaccination, and treatment referral. AAHI partners with local community- and faith-based organizations to provide services that are culturally and linguistically responsive. AAHI provides these partners technical assistance on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the hepatitis B prevention projects.

In FY2018, AAHI partnered with three different organizations on hepatitis B prevention projects: 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 the importance of professional growth in order to provide quality programs. Staying up-to-date on information is crucial to providing quality services. Through staff development and training, AAHI equips staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve and advance its programs as well as the careers of its staff.
As part of professional development, AAHI staff participate in various 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.

In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018), AAHI participated in the Office of Community Affairs (OCA) Meet and Greet. At the Meet and Greet, AAHI came together with their OCA colleagues to discuss their respective programs, reflect on the history of health equity in Montgomery County, and renew their commitment to their work.

- 12 staff development and training opportunities
- 72 hours contributed to development and trainings

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT & TRAININGS**

- Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resiliency
- Behavioral Health Symposium
- Brookings Institute Webinar - Race, class, and culture: A conversation with William Julius Wilson and J.D. Vance
- MC311 Training
- MCDHHS - Creating a Culture of Equity
- MCDHHS - Immigration System and Immigration Reform
- MCDHHS - Limited English Proficiency Course
- MCDHHS - Office of Community Affairs Retreat
- MCDHHS - Opioid Overdose
- MCG Interviewing and Selecting Employees
- Mental Health First Aid
- School and Community United in Partnership Conference Keynote: Promoting Sanity in Insane Times
In Fiscal Year 2018, the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI’s) budget was $916,019. 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 52% of AAHI’s core budget expenditures.

**CONTRACT WITH PRIMARY CARE COALITION**

This category accounts for 48% 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 17 professionally and ethnically diverse individuals. Using their professional expertise and community knowledge, they play a critical role in advancing and leading AAHI.

In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY2018), the Steering Committee progressed 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 FY2018:

- Volunteered over 260 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                                Cynthia Macri
Ji-Young Cho                              Mayur Mody
Nerita Estampador                        Sam Mukherjee
Wilbur Friedman                          Tho Tran
Hina Mehta                                Thomas Tran
Yuchi Huang                               Sovan Tun
Sunmin Lee                                Judy Wang
Michael Lin
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.
COMMUNITY PARTNERS: AAHI has long-standing partnerships with many community- and faith-based organizations. Working with these organizations, AAHI plans health events, participates in cultural festivities, and provides workshops, trainings, and technical assistance. If you are interested in partnering with AAHI or would like AAHI to visit your community, please contact AAHI staff.

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.
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) would like to express its sincerest thanks to the County Executive, Montgomery County Council, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, AAHI Steering Committee, community partners, AAHI Health Promoters, volunteers, and staff for their support during Fiscal Year 2018.

**AAHI STAFF**

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  Program Manager

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  Behavioral Health Program Coordinator

- **Jennifer Chuong**
  Outreach Program Coordinator

- **Maria Lejano**
  Program Assistant

- **Karl Leung, MA**
  Health Education & Communications Coordinator

- **Alice Zic, MPH**
  Behavioral Health Program Coordinator

**SPECIAL THANKS**

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