

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blueprint for the Asian American Health Initiative, 2020-2030

With guidance from Asian American community leaders, the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) was established in 2005 to specifically address the health disparities of Asian American communities in Montgomery County, Maryland. Asian Americans are one of the most diverse and fastest growing communities in the County, with a reported 153,504 residents in 2017 comprised of over 15 ethnic subgroups. As the Asian American population continues to grow, Montgomery County must be prepared to address the unique and emerging health and wellness needs affecting this community.

This document, the *Blueprint for the Asian American Health Initiative, 2020-2030*, presents updated priorities and strategies to improve the health and wellness of Asian American communities in Montgomery County over the next decade. Following the 2005 and 2008 County-wide Asian American health needs assessments and the 2011-2015 AAHI strategic plan, the Blueprint incorporates AAHI's renewed focus on community engagement and a stronger emphasis on equity and data-driven approaches to community health. With input from key stakeholders in Montgomery County, the Blueprint analyzes Asian American data trends and multilevel factors that influence health and well-being outcomes while providing a framework to support targeted actions, programs, and policies that will aid in health improvement for Asian Americans in the County.

A closer examination of data on the social determinants of health of various Asian American ethnic subgroups reveals the unmet health and social needs that are masked by aggregated data, further perpetuating the model minority myth. Factors such as immigration, language, educational attainment, poverty, health insurance coverage, and housing costs can vary significantly when examined at the subgroup level. Asian Americans are at high risk for several health conditions and diseases including cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and hepatitis B. Other notable trends disproportionately affecting the Asian American population are related to mental health and include low mental health service utilization, higher rates of attempted suicide and suicidal thoughts in youth, and prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder in refugees. In addition, there is increase concern of a growing Asian American older adult population with a myriad of chronic diseases compounded by inadequate healthcare coverage.

Qualitative approaches, including multiple focus groups and interviews of representatives from the County's Asian American communities, were conducted to obtain insights on the trending social- and health-related concerns facing Asian Americans. These challenges include lack of disaggregated data for Asian Americans and the need for sustainable culturally and linguistically sensitive resources for service providers to better serve Asian Americans with limited English proficiency. Seniors are often reticent to seek services due to feelings of shame and a desire to not "burden" others, hindering access to care and increasing risk of social isolation. Lack of civic participation and engagement as well as generational and acculturation differences were also identified as contributing factors that can impact Asian American health outcomes.

The core priority areas outlined in the Blueprint provide a framework for planning programs, sustaining meaningful partnerships, and influencing policies to improve health and wellness outcomes for Asian Americans in the County. AAHI welcomes organizations and service providers from all sectors to use the Blueprint as a guide towards a collaborative effort in advancing Asian American health and wellness and achieving equity for all communities in Montgomery County.



Core Priority Areas

With insight from key stakeholders along with Montgomery County's continual efforts toward equity and addressing social determinants of health, four core priority areas have been identified that provide a planning framework for AAHI:

Community Engagement

Conduct outreach to engage

AAHI works in collaboration with the community to actively promote health enhance knowledge on resources, and navigate and connect community members to services. AAHI participates in community outreach events, raises awareness of health and social concerns facing Asian Americans, hosts health-related workshops, partners with local organizations and businesses, publishes information in local news media and social media, and develops culturally and linguistically responsive materials on relevant health and social issues affecting Asian Americans.

Community Empowerment

Provide technical assistance to empower

AAHI strengthens community organizations by preparing them to respond the health and social needs of their members. AAHI educates community leaders on the needs and concerns of the Asian American community regularly to increase organizational awareness, knowledge, and skills to help better serve Asian Americans in the County. AAHI also serves as a resource that supports community efforts in planning health and social service programming to effectively and efficiently respond to Asian American community needs.

Capacity Building

Create models and tools to demonstrate promising practices

AAHI invests in the infrastructure and advancement of Asian American health and social service programming. With emphasis on leadership, evidence-based research, and innovation, AAHI develops program models and tools to demonstrate best practices. The successes and lessons learned from these community approaches are shared via toolkits and forums and can be easily adapted by community-based, faith-based, and non-profit organizations that are interested in serving their target community.

Change Catalyst

Influence changes to improve systems

AAHI influences change to improve infrastructure and systems. AAHI advocates for meaningful and disaggregated data to better understand the needs of Asian American subgroups. AAHI educates County, state, federal, and community partners about Asian Americans, their unique needs, and the model minority myth. Additionally, AAHI collects program data to provide guidance on the development of health improvement strategies.