

Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Steering Committee	Present	AAHI Staff	Present
Organizational Members		Muhammad Hasan	X
Ji-Young Cho	X	Tammy Wan	X
Wilbur Friedman	X	Betty Lam	X
Pallavi Gowda	X		
Michael Lin	X		
Hina Mehta (Vice Chair)	X		
Nguyen Nguyen (Chair)	X		
Tho Tran	X		
Thao Bui	X		
Sovan Tun			
Yuchi Huang	X		
Individual Members	Present	Guests	Present
Shruti Bhatnagar		Raymond Crowel	X
Nerita Estampador	X		
Meng K. Lee			
Sunmin Lee			
Cynthia Macri	X		
Judy Wang			
Affiliate Members	Present		
Anis Ahmed			

Welcome (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen Nguyen called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.
- Nguyen asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

ACTION: Audio recording of meeting was approved with no objections.

Approval of Agenda (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Today’s meeting agenda was shared with members prior to the meeting. Nguyen asked if there were any objections to the agenda.
- Wilbur Friedman moved to approve it and Yuchi Huang seconded it.

ACTION: Meeting agenda was approved with no objections.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (Nguyen Nguyen)

- The Steering Committee meeting minutes from Tuesday, July 13, 2021 were shared with members prior to today's meeting. A motion to approve the July meeting minutes was presented.
- Michael Lin moved to approve the meeting minutes. Wilbur seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.

ACTION: July's meeting minutes were approved with no objections.

New Steering Committee Member Introduction (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Introduction of Dr. Pallavi Gowda. She introduced herself as a primary care doctor in Rockville. Dr. Gowda will be an Organizational member representing the National Council of Asian Indian Associations.

Retreat Discussion (Nguyen Nguyen & Hina Mehta)

- Hina Mehta and Muhammad Hasan are planning a virtual retreat for the steering committee this year.
- Hina said that they will be doing the retreat with a facilitator. Hina will be sending four options for dates and she requested a response from committee members by Sept 15, 2021.
- The retreat will be conducted on Zoom over two days with a break in between the days and for two hours on each day.
- Day one will be a reflection over the last year including challenges and observations of the community. Day two will be sharing emerging needs and planning for what we can do for our community moving forward.
- Resilience will be the theme for this year's retreat.
- Michael Lin asked if there were any topics collected.
 - Hina replied that they have not nailed down the final topics but to feel free to send suggestions.

COVID-19 Presentation (Raymond Crowel)

- Dr. Crowel mentioned that the third shot is coming.
- They're hoping for vaccinations for 5–12-year-old age range to open.
- Nguyen had three items for discussion:
 - How is the leadership vacancy in the department going to be filled?
 - About COVID and the variants.
 - COVID isn't the only issue. There are other issues in the community. What are the department's near and long-term goals?
- Dr. Crowel talked about vacancies across the department. Two prominent vacancies are the Chief of Children, Youth and Families and the Health Officer/Chief of Public Health Services. The , Health Officer is a joint appointment, and the selection process will need to be coordinated with the

state. The selection would have to be agreed upon by the County Executive, County Council, and the Secretary of MD Department of Health.

- Raymond indicated that he would like community feedback on the important qualities the community would like to see in the next Health Officer. Dr. Crowel will do front-end work with the community to get input before the interview process of potential candidates.
- The County has instituted rapid testing for students; 1,700 students quarantined in the first week of school due to possible exposure to COVID.
- 163,000 students went back to school; 844 of those students were quarantined appropriately.
- Worked with schools to maintain social distancing and to determine contact tracing and close contacts.
- Uptick in testing of over 5,000 a week in the County; Uptick in vaccinations.
- Some discussions on vaccine passports to demonstrate people have been vaccinated before they get into open venues.
- On near-term plan, there are discussions on how to manage COVID but also how HHS will deal with the disparities discussed all year.
- Talked about looking at the budget to see what the racial inequalities and social impacts are, use the data from health disparities and figure out a plan to fill the gaps.
- Got funding to create mobile HHS services from a van for services like Narcan distribution, and connection to social services, etc.
- Need to continue to promote development of partnerships that can address the healthcare inequities in communities of color across the County.
- Community hubs will continue building a navigation system that makes it easier for the community to access services.
- Michael asked, “The third shot is still undecided, is that correct? Even though the FDA already spoke about it unofficially?”
 - Dr. Crowel answered yes. Everyone has spoken about it unofficially. There’s no official date for the third shot yet.
 - Cynthia Macri added that there’s a difference between the third dose and the booster. There’s currently a pushback with the booster. She discussed the vaccination of all MD correctional facilities.
- Cynthia asked Dr. Crowel regarding the job openings and the status of such. She mentioned possible candidates.

<p>ACTION ITEM: Dr. Crowel will send out the job announcement that the search firm put out.</p>
--

- Dr. Crowel said that possible candidate can also send resume and cover letter to his office.

- Cynthia asked about rapid testing in schools and efforts for parents to take responsibility and why they're still sending their kids to schools with symptoms. Cynthia thinks that the solution lies with targeted approach to school athletes.
 - Dr. Crowel replied that this is a three-way partnership. HHS can provide guidance; schools provide proper spacing; and parents keep their sick kids at home. He liked the idea of getting the school sports teams vaccinated to keep them safe and become role models.
- Tho Tran asked a question about promoting the third dose. She wondered if they should wait to promote the third dose since some people tried to get the third dose were turned down.
 - Dr. Crowel replied that people can get the third shot if they are immunocompromised. The challenge is how you can verify that a person is immunocompromised. Dr. Crowel mentioned that the governor decided that those living in nursing homes and in congregate areas needed the third dose.
- Pallavi asked two questions: 1.) What are the focused efforts for those who are hesitant to get the vaccine? 2.) Is the CVS outpatient COVID test a reliable test?
 - Dr. Crowel explained that if a child has symptoms like COVID will be given a rapid test. If the child tested negative for COVID, the child will be sent home and will be followed up with a PCR test, a more sensitive test.

Regarding focused efforts, the Office of Community Partnerships has put together a community outreach team who come together to do outreach and engagement in the community. The emphasis has been much more on trusted messengers to encourage community members to get vaccinated. The team has been having more meetings regarding boosters and shots for 5–12-year-olds. A new wave of campaigns could be coming.

- Ji-Young Cho asked about flu season and if they interact with COVID vaccines and how does the County handle that?
 - Dr. Crowel pointed out that the same precautions for COVID were helping to drive the flu rates down. He expects the flu rates to be higher this year than last. Social distancing, masking and flu shots will help.
- Yuchi Huang asked two questions 1.) Do you have a winning strategy to combat misinformation? 2.) Any happy medium that people can follow regarding social distancing?
 - Dr. Crowel answered it is important to have trusted members in the community to continue to share correct information via mainstream media outlets. As for social distancing, it likely cannot be evenly or reliably implemented. However, we know that social distancing and masking are great preventative measures. Vaccine passports mandate would cause people to demonstrate reliably that they have been vaccinated. If people are adhering to the vaccine mandate, you have reasonable assurance to think that those people have lower rates of transmission.

- Hina asked about the current percentage of unvaccinated people in Montgomery County, identifying the population to see how the Steering Committee can help.
 - Dr. Crowel answered that CDC reported that Montgomery County is about 87% fully vaccinated at this point. A Pulse report is produced on a weekly basis and reports on vaccination rates and heat maps can help to target communities for vaccinations and to determine where efforts can be increased.

ACTION ITEM: Betty will send Pulse report after the meeting.
--

COVID Relief Grant (Nguyen Nguyen & Muhammad Hasan)

- The grant has been worked on since the beginning of the year and is almost ready.
- Muhammad Hasan presented on the Relief Grant.
 - In May, the County Council approved the first phase of funding to develop this program and identified PCC as the lead agency that will help run the grants process in response to COVID-19 in the AAPI community.
 - In June, a Steering Committee subgroup was formed to give their input in the development of the grant scope. Staff also did research on other existing grants programs and processes in the county as reference. .
 - In July, meetings were held with County Council to provide status of grant development and to champion for funds. Additional \$1.15 million was appropriated. Phase II starts.
 - In August, PCC got the go ahead and started the planning process with AAHI. Met with various county entities to discuss new contract. ECHO workshop on grants took place. Multiple meetings to develop RFP.
 - In September, RFP was finalized and will be released on September 15, 2021. There will be two technical assistance workshops to be held on September 22 and Oct. 2, 2021. October 15, 2021 will be the deadline to submit proposals. The grant period will be from November 15, 2021 to June 15, 2022.
- Ji-Young has a couple of questions: Can you explain the scope of services that covers the Anti-Asian hate crime? Can the budget plan reflect retrospectively? Are the two workshops proposed identical or different?
 - Nguyen answered that the specifics of the RFP will be released on Sept 15, 2021. The document that will be shared will have all the details of what will be supported in the RFP.
 - The implementation should be within the period that is proposed.
 - Muhammad answered that the two technical assistance workshops will be identical.

- Nguyen stated that he strongly recommends members of the Steering Committee to apply. and strongly encourage partnership in their proposal, however, it is not a requirement.

ACTION ITEM: When the information and link is available, it will be shared with the committee.

AAHI Program Updates (Muhammad Hasan)

- Muhammad shared AAHI updates.
- Participated in events at senior centers with AAHI resource table. These events were held at the Wheaton Senior Center and Margaret Schweinhaut Center.
- Sent out quarterly newsletter in August that featured the ECHO workshop, highlighted community partner and announced events.
- Upcoming newsletter will be in October. If committee members have an organization that can be featured in the newsletter, then do contact AAHI staff so they can follow up with interviews. . Any upcoming community events can also be listed in the newsletter. .
- Nguyen asked how many of our organization members partner with AAHI?
 - Yuchi mentioned that CCACC has worked with AAHI regularly and especially with COVID-19 vaccination.
 - Ji-Young received a call from Phoebe from AAHI on senior programs.
- Betty announced the hiring of the Program Manager II, Sanjana Quasem, who will start on September 27, 2021.
- Pallavi asked if there is a list of people who are eligible to apply to become steering committee members?
 - Nguyen said to talk offline to discuss further on bringing more members.
- Nguyen asked to please take the Healthy Montgomery Survey.
- Hina reminded everyone to select dates for the retreat.

Adjourn

- Nguyen adjourned the meeting at 8:03 PM.

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 9th, 2021, 6:00pm-8:00pm

Retreat Meeting Day One: Tuesday, November 16th, 2021, 6:00pm-8:00pm

Retreat Meeting Day Two: Thursday, November 18th, 2021, 6:00pm-8:00pm