

Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 11, 2022

<u>Steering Committee</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>AAHI Staff</u>	<u>Present</u>
<i>Organizational Members</i>		Betty Lam	X
Nguyen Nguyen (Chair)	X	Sanjana Quasem	X
Hina Mehta (Vice Chair)	X	Muhammad Hasan	X
Thao Bui	X	Tammy Wan	X
Ji-Young Cho	X		
Wilbur Friedman	X		
Pallavi Gowda	X		
Yuchi Huang	X		
Michael Lin	X		
Tho Tran	X		
<i>Individual Members</i>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Guests</u>	<u>Present</u>
Shruti Bhatnagar		Gabe Albornoz	X
Nerita Estampador	X	Beth Shuman	X
Meng K. Lee	X		
Cynthia Macri	X		
Judy Wang			
<i>Affiliate Members</i>	<u>Present</u>		
Anis Ahmed	X		

Welcome (Nguyen Nguyen)

- Nguyen Nguyen called the meeting to order at 5:57 PM.
- Nguyen asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

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

- Before Montgomery County Council President Gabe Albornoz joined the meeting, Nguyen gave an overview of the two agenda items: the group objectives and membership.

Presentation by County Council President Gabe Albornoz

- Mr. Albornoz shared news regarding those who have gotten the vaccination and the booster shot. He stated that even though there is an increase in hospitalizations, there isn't a significant increase overall. Fully boosted people are more likely to fight off these recent variants. Many who are hospitalized in serious conditions are those who are unvaccinated.

- Currently, one of the bigger issues is with the school system and how it is being affected by the variant, leading to shortages in the school system.
- The County is addressing the problem in a few ways:
 - Appropriations: Based on the success of County funding, there is a request for more funding. All sectors are experiencing a much greater demand than what supplies are available. In the next fiscal year, the County will be in a better position to support efforts with funds.
 - Mask mandate: wearing masks inside buildings.
 - Being considered, vaccine passport: The passport is not a new piece of technology or document. It means your vaccination card will need to be shown, when you are going to a place of business, where your mask will be removed.
- As the new County Council president, Mr. Alborno discussed his priorities:
 - Importance of public health: More people are paying attention to public health and seeing its interconnectivity. Access to quality care must be equitable to eliminate disparities.
 - Supporting innovation: It is important to support community requests to allow programs to be enhanced and provided through grant usage.
 - Data collection and analysis: It is important to create a place where information can be shared effectively and share it in a way that protects confidentiality. This data collection allows organizations and individuals to be in a better position to help the community.
 - Connecting private and non-profit sectors
 - Food security: This remains a foundational issue. With the Food Council and the work of the community, if done effectively, local efforts to address food insecurity could end childhood hunger in the future.
- Mr. Alborno opened the floor for questions.
 - Pallavi Gowda asked why children are still being kept in school, despite the high number of COVID-19 cases and the risks associated with these numbers.
 - Mr. Alborno answered that there were three consequences of kids being out of school for over a year.
 - In general, off-the-charts social and emotional challenges were seen, as well as distress rising to clinical levels in numerous cases. Yet, there is no mental health infrastructure to handle it. There is a strain on students that has been reported by parents with tragic stories. Parents are requesting that schools remain open because of the uncertainty of the effect school closures have on their children.
 - The second issue is that this has disproportionately affected minority communities, who are behind academically and in other ways.

ACTION: Meeting agenda was approved with no objections.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (Nguyen Nguyen)

- The Steering Committee meeting minutes from Tuesday, September 14, 2021 were shared with members prior to today's meeting.
- Wilbur Friedman moved to approve the meeting minutes. Yuchi seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.

ACTION: September meeting minutes were approved with no objections.

AAHI Program Updates (Sanjana Quasem)

- Sanjana Quasem shared AAHI program updates from September 2021 to January 2022. She highlighted activities AAHI has completed or is working on related to community engagement, community empowerment, capacity building, and change catalyst. She also provided information on upcoming COVID-19 vaccination and testing efforts. See the attached presentation slides for her full update.
- Following Sanjana's presentation, there was a short Q&A:
 - Yuchi asked about the availability of test kits at the library distribution sites. Sanjana replied that the test kit distribution might be hit or miss. It depends on the library where you go.
 - Meng Lee commented that from his experience, the supply seemed plentiful, and the line was short. He added that the federal government stated that insurance will pay for test kits.
 - Ji-Young Cho shared a few comments and questions. First, she asked if the committee can suggest to the County for community-based organizations to distribute test kits and not just the libraries. Second, she inquired if Chinese American Community Health Services (CACHS) has a representative on the AAHI Steering Committee? Given how much activity they are doing, she suggested that there should be a representative.
 - Sanjana answered that they will talk about SC membership later in the meeting. Sanjana also said she let the Department know that AAHI would like to give the test kits to CBOs to hand them out to the community. If and when there are more, they will be shared with the Asian American CBOs and FBOs.

Retreat Follow-up

- Nguyen reminded the SC members of the three priority areas identified at the retreat: education & awareness, data advocacy, and capacity building & funding.
- He reviewed the objectives:

- What are some of the activities we, as the Steering Committee, should work on to support the objective in 2022?
 - How do we know whether we are on the right path? And when do we know it's necessary to change course?
- Hina Mehta talked about gathering data from the CBO perspective to see where the gaps and needs are, to properly advocate for next funding.
- Ji-Young agreed with Hina on the need to collect evidence on time and effort put into programs. She believed in the importance of sending small advocacy groups to meet with different councilmembers to advocate for funding.
- Yuchi supported the idea of the advocacy activities and added that compelling reasons and good arguments are needed to get results. He stated that data should be collected on funding, for example, who gets what and how much, to determine that each organization is getting their fair share. He agreed with Ji-Young on establishing an advocacy framework to support each other, as well as data sharing to get resources.
- Cynthia agreed with Yuchi and stated that the collaboration between community groups is necessary and that it would be effective to work with groups that have best practices.
- Sanjana noted that it is necessary to be sophisticated in the data shared and to advocate that the correct data is being collected. Asian American adults and children are leading in vaccinations. However, it is important to highlight that pockets of the Asian American community still do not have access to vaccinations. A better job needs to be done in addressing these disparities, and to identify and document the issues.
- Nguyen asked if a subcommittee is needed on data stewardship or data collection to focus on data related to the Asian American community needs.
- Hina stated that if CBOs want to continue getting funding for activities, like for COVID awareness and education, then funding mechanisms are needed. Showcasing the success rate of CBO activities can ensure future funding.
- Yuchi added that successes of other AAPI communities should be shared with other ethnic group CBOs to get their success rates up as well.
- Nguyen summarized two items:
 - Ensure accountability through reporting on the outcome of the program.
 - Data needs to be communicated better.
- Pallavi commented that it's immensely important to have someone invested in data collection. Nguyen confirmed that there would be a staff person dedicated to this. The subcommittee would play an advisory role.
- Michael Lin suggested that a yearly report on community needs is necessary to capture and summarize all achievements.
- Sanjana commented that representation is needed in the group from community organizations. She proposed the creation of a network of community leaders to share best practices and ideas. It could be an informal network meetings/check-ins or an event similar to a symposium.

ACTION ITEM: AAHI to put together a plan regarding community network meetings.

- Nerita Estampador suggested that organizations should meet with AAHI to discuss needs of their communities.

Membership

- Sanjana talked about the membership survey, which 11 people took. She discussed the results of the survey.
- Hina stated the importance of South Asian representation. She discussed the membership criteria that needs to be finalized.
- Hina stated that oftentimes Asian groups are very small that sometimes group leaders are from outside the County. Because it is important to have diversity within the group, allowing representation from outside the County is ok.
- Sanjana noted that we had to keep in mind the number of members we have in the community. Those who can only commit a couple of hours could be part of an ad-hoc committee.
- Wilbur asked who decides the size of the Steering Committee. Sanjana stated that the AAHI SC is not a chartered Board, Commission, or Committee, for which there are certain parameters. The AAHI SC can determine their own membership.
- Nguyen said that we need to have a clear plan of who we want on our committee. The goal is to create a fair and transparent structure for this committee.

Liaison Updates & Announcements

- Cynthia talked about transportation issues within the County. In response to the issue, Montgomery County has contracted with local cab companies to give people transportation options to get vaccinated.

Adjourn

- Nguyen adjourned the meeting at 8:11 PM.

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 8:11 PM.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 8, 2022