



CULTURE COUNTS:

HOW FIVE COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS SERVE ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH

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Cover (Clockwise from upper left):

UCCC dancers, AARS, A&PI Wellness condom cover, FAA Oakland, A&PI Wellness condom cover,
UCCC group, EBAYC, AARS, A&PI Wellness condom cover

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to identify culturally competent characteristics of programs providing services to Asian and Pacific Islander (API) youth in the San Francisco Bay Area. The focus was on community-based organizations whose primary clientele was API youth. This study surveyed such organizations and selected five to examine in detail to identify practices that are culturally attuned to their clients, and as a result:

- ▶ increase understanding of a variety of issues,
- ▶ enhance communication between the clients, staff, and parents,
- ▶ implement interventions that truly address the needs, interests, growth and development, and perspectives of youth, and
- ▶ produce outcomes that contribute to their health and welfare.

This document briefly summarizes the literature on cultural competence as it relates to the purpose of the study, the methods used to conduct the study, and a detailed description of each of the five organizations.

WHY IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE NEEDED?

Cultural competence is defined as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enables that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross cultural situations” (Cross et al., 1989, p. 13). The need for such a concept is exemplified by the observations by many health professionals that racial and ethnic minorities not only underutilize mental health services, but also discontinue treatment prematurely compared to White clients (Sue, 2001). Although these results are puzzling if one assumes that all groups have similar rates of mental health issues, Sue indicates that the mental health field “assumed that the process of counseling was value neutral and that mental health practitioners were free of biases when working with clients” and that “intervention strategies had universal applications and could easily be adapted to fit the needs of minority clients.” Typically, “universal” programs assume that Eurocentric values, beliefs, and practices are held by all and are therefore applicable generally; this assumption can deter minorities from using services that don’t resonate with their

attitudes and beliefs. Similarly, Hernandez et al. (1998) list the failure of many systems—juvenile justice, child welfare, education, mental health—to adequately assess and serve children of color, resulting in overrepresentation of these same youth in correctional facilities, out-of-home placements, drop-out rates, and underuse of services. The failure to adapt service delivery to the sociocultural perspectives of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans has relegated large segments of the U.S. population to inappropriate treatment, inadequate levels of service, or lack of any service.

For over 20 years now, health professionals have advocated for cultural competence in service delivery. The movement to make cultural competence a standard for programs in the health and mental health fields assumes that the cultural values and traditions of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, when incorporated into a program, provide a strong and integrated message in health care delivery. For example, the Substance



FAA

Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and its Center for Mental Health Services “believe that mental health services often are more effective when they are provided within the most relevant and meaningful cultural, gender-sensitive, and age-appropriate context for the people being served” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website). Also, realizing the impact of culture and language, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services developed the national standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) in health care through a national collaboration based on analysis of current laws and standards (Office of Minority Health, 2001).

The issue of competence is critical in health and medical arenas as well as in other direct service fields where language issues and interaction styles may impede the ability of providers to effectively understand the problem at hand and, ultimately, to provide the most appropriate treatment. Conversely, cultural competence in service delivery may affect the willingness of clients to seek treatment, describe their issues, and/or apply the recommended treatments. Considerable attention has been directed to ensure that health services include bilingual, sometimes multilingual, capacity and that service providers reflect the ethnicity of the clientele

and are attuned to the assumptions, beliefs, and practices of their clients.

The attempt to systematically apply standards for cultural competence is most obvious in the health area, but cultural competence is also a “buzzword” in youth services, with an array of programs that provide drug treatment, delinquency prevention, tutoring, mentoring, violence prevention, gang abatement, and mental health services for particular ethnic groups or subcultures discussing culturally competent services. While many of the same elements apply as for adult populations, providing culturally competent programs for youth presents its own challenges and issues. Additional issues that need to be considered include the stages of youth development, the pervasiveness of youth culture(s), relationships to parents and community, as well as increasing multiculturalism in the social settings in which youth attend school, play sports, and participate in other activities.

CONCEPTS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

There is a large body of literature informing practitioners how to become culturally competent, such as, how to provide effective services to culturally diverse groups in a manner, format, language, and environment that is respectful and acknowledges the culture and experience of the client (Camino, 1992; Fong & Furuto, 2001; Hernandez et al., 1998; Mokuau, 1999; Philleo & Brisbane, 1997; Sue, 2001). The most basic characteristics of providing culturally competent services are hiring staff who speak the client’s language (Office of Minority Health, 2001) and that reflect the clientele (Philleo & Brisbane, 1997; Camino, 1992). Staff that reflect the clientele, especially, results in more effective communication because of shared world views and basic assumptions that allow staff to identify with the experiences of the client and to function as role models (Camino, 1992). Other practices that promote honest and effective communication include recruitment, retention, training, and supervision of a culturally diverse staff that is skilled in providing the appropriate service (Toralba-Romero, 1998), involving community members in planning processes (Philleo & Brisbane, 1997; Kumpfer, 2002), considering diversity within the ethnicities (Fong & Furuto, 2001; Nash, 1999), accommodating cultural values and world views (Philleo & Brisbane, 1997; Kumpfer, 2002; Mokuau, 1999; Young & Galea’I, 1999), and providing a safe, comfortable environment (Nash, 1999). Hernandez et al. (1998) argue that it is critical to engage communities as working partners in order to design and implement culturally competent services and systems of care, and to focus upon a community’s strengths rather than on needs or problems. Brach and Frasier (2000) identified nine specific cultural competence

techniques as indicated by the literature: interpreter services, recruitment and retention, training, coordinating with traditional healers, use of community health workers, culturally competent health promotion, including family and/or community members, immersion into another culture, and administrative and organizational accommodations. They reviewed each technique and identified how each could conceptually improve healthcare quality and delivery, and “reduce disparities by reducing errors and improving care” (p. 189).

For API clients, Fong and Furuto (2001) discuss the importance of the role of the family in defining problems and acceptable solutions to those problems. Shame, denial, and losing or saving face are mentioned in virtually every article about treating API—phenomena rooted in family dynamics. For example, substance abuse programs that are “feelings-based” are often inappropriate for Asian families, because, among many Asian cultures, discussions of personal feelings are discouraged. Also critical to consider, particularly for evaluators and direct service providers, is the degree to which the program measures its successes according to the values of those being served versus American mainstream values, or uses tools that are attuned to the group that is being scrutinized. For example, evaluators of the Asian American LEAD Program in Washington, DC, a program that primarily serves Vietnamese refugees, used instruments that were inappropriate for the program’s clientele. When survey respondents were asked, “Are you well?” and presented with response options that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” Vietnamese clients were confused. To them, the questions deserved “yes” or “no” answers (Dang, 2002).

Of particular interest was Hernandez et al. (1998) who detail the assumptions behind the concept of cultural competence, specifically, the central role that culture plays in behavior, that everyone can learn to be culturally competent, and that everyone is in need of being culturally competent. Chestang (1998) ends his foreword to Hernandez et al. (1998) with the statement that cultural competence is a way to address “human needs and problems in ways that strengthen the individual, respect their dignity, and have the potential for increasing the effectiveness of...services” (p. xix).

Another insightful article was “Multidimensional Facets of Cultural Competence” by Sue (2001) which details a methodology for examining cultural competence in terms of its components (awareness of attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills), the focus (individual, professional, organizational, or societal) and race- and culture-specific attributes (African American, Asian American, Latino American, Native American, and European American). This article was critical

in developing the survey and areas to examine during the in-depth study of five organizations.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN YOUTH PROGRAMS

Several studies were particularly helpful in identifying the critical elements of cultural competence in youth programs. Camino (1992) reviewed research which indicated that the major task of adolescence is development of identity; however “by virtue of operating in at least two distinct cultures (dominant White and racial or ethnic minority), minority youth confront special challenges in constructing a personal identity” (p. 9). The research assumes that youth of color must develop competencies in two cultures, their ethnic culture and the dominant American culture, which increases the complexity and duration of the process.



AARS

One study indicated that American Indians that identified biculturally generally experienced greater psychological well-being (higher self-esteem, internal locus of control) and fewer behavioral problems. It was hypothesized that bicultural identification enhanced their stake in both the American Indian and the larger society (Sanchez-Way & Johnson, 2000). Other research shows similar results for Vietnamese and Mexican American youth who had orientations to both their parents’ culture and American culture (Camino, 1992). The findings from this body of research suggest that service providers might include components that acknowledge and encourage dual or multiple identities of the youth they serve to respond to the reality of the latter’s everyday experience.

Other articles indicated that oftentimes, qualities of youth of color are defined as deficits or oddities, whereas they should be celebrated as assets. Butler (1994) classifies the language, oral patterns, and other means of communication for African American youth in this way, but a similar comparison can be made with regard to members of other ethnic groups whose first language may not be English. This, in combination with the multiple identities they have, might serve to decrease youth’s alienation from mainstream processes and promote eclectic and healthy outlooks and behavior.

In the design of youth programs, not only the content of the programs must be attended to according to Camino, but “other structural features such as organizational philosophy, staff qualifications, staffing patterns, and the manner in which programming is implemented” (1992, p. 33) to achieve

culturally appropriate services. To summarize briefly, Camino indicates that a multicultural program that assumes ethnicity and culture to be core influences of identity and behavior recognizes White European-based culture as only one of many, and this perspective becomes incorporated into all levels of the organization. Programmatically, Camino states that traditional cultural aspects can be used in youth programs to integrate the individual, family, and community and to strengthen the ability of youth to operate successfully in the larger society. She cautions that cultural appropriateness varies depending upon how concepts such as autonomy and proper social relationships are defined by different cultures.

In addition, when working with Asian and Pacific Islander youth, the youth’s relationship to the family and the community must be attended to. Camino (1992) cites research that indicate that a family’s shared sense of ethnic identity can be threatened by a youth’s gravitation towards American values and behavior. At the same time, “research demonstrate that minority parents who actively instill ethnic pride in their children as well as provide practical information regarding prejudice and discrimination raise well-adjusted children. Conversely, adolescent children of minority parents who do not consciously socialize in such issues may be placed at risk for emotional distress” (p. 12). This suggests that youth programs could assist their clients by learning about family practices and by seeking ways to reinforce them.

Articles provided by Dr. Noreen Mokuau, a social welfare professor at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, focused upon critical elements for programs serving Pacific Islanders. For Pacific Islander youth, programs must reflect in prevention and treatment efforts, the traditional holistic world view that typically includes family members or the community. Otherwise, cultural incompatibility can thwart the efforts of medical and health facilities that focus on the individual. Other cultural values to be considered include a consensus model consistent with Pacific Islander world views compared to an individualistic and/or competitive one to resolve conflicts and awareness that traditional leaders (ministers and clergy, family leaders, community leaders) play significant roles in resolving conflicts in the community. Programs must respect the family and community.

The relationship between cultural competence and hip hop culture was explored because of its pervasive influence on today’s youth, including API youth (George, 1998). Hip hop music, although dominated by African Americans, is

surrounded by a culture that has, from its inception, manifested unique Asian/African connections that aggressively celebrated and challenged the “blaxploitation” and kung-fu genre of media prevalent in the 1970s. In hip hop culture, many African American emcees were influenced by their appreciation of Asian martial arts films and even adopted some of the nomenclature that are associated with these movies such as Grandmaster Flash and Wu Tang Clan. Likewise, Asian and Pacific Islander youth have appreciated and adopted many attributes of hip hop culture, such as dress and speech, to express themselves (George, 1998). The Boo Ya Tribe was a successful Pacific Islander rap group in the 1990s, and there are several Asian hip hop music labels promoting the “respect” of Asian and Asian American emcees.

In the Bay Area, many API families reside alongside African Americans and Latinos. Many API youth adopt the styles and cultures of those around them. Many also create strong friendships and other partnerships that celebrate diversity, where youth interchangeably share their cultures, leading to cultural adaptations of music, dance, language, and food.



EBAYC

Rather than place primary emphasis on the culture of their parents, programs must recognize the affinity of youth to subcultures in the U.S. (i.e., hip hop, rave) and how these subcultures differ from the traditional culture of their parents. For example, in the San Francisco Bay Area, many API youth identify with hip hop culture which often creates conflict with their parents who associate the dress, body language, and speech of hip hop to troublemaking and crime. Parental impressions are often based upon stereotypic media images.

BEST PRACTICES

Based upon criteria derived from the literature review, five organizations were selected for an in-depth review. In this section, notable culturally competent practices in service delivery are identified for each organization. All five organizations exhibited a variety of culturally competent practices, but the most salient of these practices for each organization is articulated below. For example, language accessibility for both parents and youth clients characterized every organization, as did having staff who reflected the ethnicity, gender, or other important cultural characteristic of their clients. Unless their implementation of a practice was unusual in some way, it is not highlighted at the beginning of the organizational analysis.

Asian American Recovery Services (AARS)

- ▶ Bridging intergenerational cultural gap
- ▶ Focus on the family
- ▶ Systematic cultural competence training

Discovery of a child’s substance abuse is a difficult experience for any parent. In many API cultures, the entire family shares both pride in every member’s accomplishments as well as shame in their failures. AARS staff assist in recovery from substance use by paying particular attention to family dynamics and the stigma attached to substance use in API cultures.

Substance abuse can often be a symptom of deeper problems. AARS tries to bridge the culture gap between American-born youth and immigrant parents by helping youth learn about their parents’ background and develop their own identity as an Asian American or Pacific Islander American. Youth workers are young and from similar backgrounds to the youth they serve, and although traditional one-on-one and group counseling is an integral part of their work with youth, participating in more casual activities such as basketball and billiards also helps forge trust between youth and staff.

AARS’s youth program in Santa Clara was based on the belief that cultural competence is an integral part of working with youth and their parents. Trainings on cultural competence, conducted by experts in the field, for all levels, helps ensure that AARS staff understand what it means to work with people from different backgrounds and worldviews. Line staff, management, and board members reflect the API community they serve. Hiring staff that not only speak the languages of the people they serve, but are from similar backgrounds, reinforces their commitment to understanding and respecting their clients and acknowledging the diversity of both their clients and staff.

East Bay Asian Youth Center (EBAYC)

- ▶ Partnering with parents
- ▶ Staff reflects community
- ▶ Respect for diversity

The EBAYC program has been designed with the entire family and the community in mind. Academic enrichment programs for youth are in the neighborhoods where they live and in the schools they attend. Staff are hired from the

community of Asians and Pacific Islanders within the Oakland community. Parents feel comfortable speaking to EBAYC staff because a member of their family may have been involved in the programs. Parents trust and respect EBAYC because they know someone who works there; when door-to-door outreach is done, it could be a neighbor knocking on the door. EBAYC engages community members as working partners and develops leadership in both youth and parents by encouraging them to become politically involved in the issues affecting their community.

The method of recruiting and hiring staff is integral to EBAYC's commitment to cultural competence. Located in Oakland, EBAYC hires APIs from the Oakland community, providing not only language access, but also an innate knowledge, empathy, and respect for the lives of clients. Interns that work directly with youth in the after-school settings were often EBAYC students themselves, so they are familiar with the issues of youth in their neighborhoods, schools, and families.

In recent years, EBAYC has broadened its targeted client to include youth who are not only Asian and Pacific Islander, but also African American and Latino. It also enlists parent participation. This change comes from having learned that issues that affect Asians in a multiracial community cannot be resolved unless conflicts with community members, regardless of racial or ethnic group, are resolved. Its programs are multiracial, both for youth and for adults, and respect for diversity is exemplified in meetings in which five different languages may be spoken by the diverse participants.

Filipinos for Affirmative Action (FAA)

- ▶ The Kuya/Ate (Big Brother/Big Sister) Relationship
- ▶ Incorporating Youth Culture in Programming
- ▶ Connecting Self-Family-Community Through Culture

FAA empower youth to be active change agents. They develop the self-confidence to do this through the relationship they build with their peers and adults in FAA—the relationships affirm their identity, allow them to trust others, and teach leadership and organizational skills to initiate change in themselves and in the larger community around them.

The Kuya/Ate (Big Brother/Big Sister) relationship between youth and their counselors is based on a common understanding of Filipino and Filipino American experience and culture. This principle provides the groundwork for youth counselors to help youth identify and explore options to risky

and negative behaviors, and to strike a balance between listening and providing guidance without judging youth. Youth counselors model a positive way to address life challenges by being open about making mistakes and continuing to learn and grow from them.

In FAA youth programs, youth feel free to be themselves and to voice their problems and concerns. Institutionalizing efforts such as “Check In” times and Community Agreements reinforce the idea that all voices will be heard. Youth are encouraged to share their issues with each other. The willingness to be vulnerable and receive group support teaches youth to trust each other and develop a support network. Through youth-led agendas, events and campaigns, the elements of their lives that are important to youth are reflected in the program.

The ultimate goal of all FAA activities and services—including the youth programs—is the empowerment of the Filipino community. Youth programming plays an integral part by developing the leadership to achieve this goal. Youth programs highlight the many positive aspects and attributes of Filipino history and cultural values. Because their culture is often not represented in the media and the public, affirmation of the youths' Filipino culture outside of home and family affirms their identity. The program shows youth that their culture is shared by many and bridges the gap between the traditional culture of their parents and mainstream American society.

The A&PI Wellness Center

- ▶ Respect and reflect diversity
- ▶ Organization reflects clients
- ▶ Involvement with community

The A&PI Wellness Center's culturally competent practices begin with a fundamental belief that in order to be “client-centered,” staff, volunteers, and peer leaders must all reflect an openness to the various cultures that comprise the identities of API communities in San Francisco. Located in a multicultural community that reflects differences in ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual preference—as well as other social cultures commonly attributed to youth (i.e., hip hop and rave), the A&PI Wellness Center makes every effort to engage in activities and services that meet the specific needs of these communities.

The idea that agency leadership should reflect the populations served is one that is embraced by the A&PI Wellness Center. From the Board of Directors to the agency executive director, program and support staff, and volunteers—all aspects of the

agency reflect the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of its clientele. The agency offers translation services in 19 languages spoken by Asian and Pacific Islander populations, and translates written materials into many of these languages. Additionally, the H.O.P.E. program offers its services through a family atmosphere that emphasizes the positive aspects of “difference” to allow individuals to express their personal preferences in a non-threatening, all-API environment. The staff are also open about their sexuality, so there is an atmosphere of support regarding the various lifestyles that are present in the San Francisco API community.

H.O.P.E. program leaders also make a regular, concerted effort to involve themselves in various community events in order to build trust in the communities that they serve. Because of the agency’s strong health focus, there are several health-related events that are well attended by agency staff. This trust translates into better communication between staff and clients, and fosters a climate that supports the idea that agency and community support cannot exist in a vacuum, that it must embrace the larger community of its clientele, and that cultural competence extends beyond the walls of the agency.

United Cambodian Culture Club (UCCC)

- ▶ Organizational philosophy
- ▶ Using traditional cultural aspects to integrate the youth, family, and the community
- ▶ Involving youth in program planning and implementation
- ▶ Development of identity

UCCC’s organizational philosophy promotes knowledge of youth’s culture and history as the foundation for intergenerational understanding, effective communication, and the development of skills, leadership, and trust. Cambodian youth in the U.S. grow up with very little understanding of the history and culture of their parents and elders in the community, and withdraw from an identity as Cambodian Americans. UCCC has constructed opportunities for youth to learn about Cambodian history and the circumstances under which Cambodian families arrived in the U.S., to create a context for Cambodian parental behavior from which youth feel alienated. Classes teach youth the Cambodian language, cultural values of collectivism and respect for elders, and the nuances of dynamics in the Cambodian community. Learning Cambodian songs and dances, and performing them at community events creates pride in both youth and adults. The genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge, the refugee camps, and resettlement are studied. The youth begin to identify as Cambodian

Americans. Over time, the Coordinator and Executive Director work with parents to make them aware of youth experiences, and parents begin to view youth more positively. All these factors contribute to a decrease in family conflicts, a greater understanding of Cambodian adults by youth, and parent willingness to begin to relax strict standards to accommodate the different environment their children are experiencing (compared to their own teenage years).

The program also works to integrate the cultural lessons with current issues of youth. Youth develop leadership and coordination skills as they plan and implement programs with the support and assistance of the coordinator and parents. Each member is expected to develop responsibility and leadership skills, and the interests of the members are integrated into the program activities, such as hip hop, tutoring younger children, and community service projects.

The approach taken by UCCC is particularly appropriate in the context of a community divided by generational and cultural differences, constrained by a hierarchical social structure based upon age, and in which many issues are dealt with implicitly rather than directly. It created a program with Cambodian culture as its foundation, but also responded to youth concerns and interests, to combat violence and school drop outs, and integrate the youth, family and community.



UCCC

METHODS

The preliminary steps in this project involved: 1) conducting an in-depth literature review of the cultural competence field, interviewing key researchers in the field, and conducting focus groups with Asian and Pacific Islander (API) youth and persons who work directly with them, to develop a set of criteria for assessing the level of cultural competence of programs serving API youth in the San Francisco Bay Area; and 2) surveying organizations serving API youth based upon these criteria. The third phase was an in-depth review of the policies, practices, and procedures of organizations identified as highly culturally competent in order to describe their effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The staff identified and reviewed over 150 articles on the general topic of cultural competence, and others focusing upon specific ethnic groups and cultures including newsletters of the Office of Minority Health (*Closing the Gap*), the Surgeon General's Report entitled *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity* (U.S. DHHS, 2001), and a commissioned paper by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (*Camino*, 1992). The staff also identified organizational resources like the National Center for Cultural Competence¹ and reviewed tools for assessing the cultural competence of organizations.



FAA

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The staff talked with community-based organizations in different parts of the country that were operating culturally competent programs to directly experience their philosophies, processes, and practices. We also looked at issues that have emerged or evaluations that were conducted on their programs. The programs included: the Southwest Key Program, a nonprofit agency that provides a continuum of services to troubled youth and their parents in several states and Puerto Rico, and operates an Unaccompanied Minors Shelter Care Program in Arizona; the Asian American LEAD Program in Washington, DC, that primarily serves Vietnamese

refugees; and Leadership Excellence that serves African American youth in Alameda County.

FOCUS GROUPS

Four focus groups were held with 24 youth, separated by gender and grade level. The purpose was to understand youth's views about their involvement in programs, the influence of family, schools and peers, the development of identity, and their hopes for their future. Several themes emerged in all groups: the need for clean and safe schools; an appreciation of diversity in their programs and schools despite ambivalence about some groups; conflicts with parents regarding appropriate behavior, attitudes toward non-Asian groups, and gender roles; and feeling the need to choose between cultures.

Two focus groups were conducted with 11 staff members of community-based organizations to identify issues related to cultural competence when working with API youth. Responses included:

- ▶ “. . . it was not enough to connect with youth, but imperative to earn the parents' trust;” providers stated that knowing the language was key to gaining parental trust.
- ▶ Organizations needed to create a multicultural safe place.
- ▶ Create a context for youth to function in this society and to “make it work for them”.
- ▶ Know a group's language, culture, life experience and have an all around sensitivity to a group's culture.

Some felt that true cultural competence came from speaking the same language, coming from the same culture, and sharing similar life experiences; others felt that that these were not necessarily the most important components but it was more important to really know the culture and be able to address the group's needs.

Focus group members noted that program staff should be aware of all the cultures influencing their youth. They indicated that financial considerations could influence how culturally competent an organization could be; organizations may not have the funds to hire staff that reflects the ethnic and gender composition of their clientele. These

conversations reinforced the notion that awareness, knowledge, and skills are the core of building culturally competent programs.

SURVEY

A list of 117 community organizations for a total of 135 programs serving API youth was identified as the pool of organizations to be surveyed. The organizations were all located in the San Francisco Bay area and included:

- ▶ 60 organizations that provide services to youth (women’s shelters, treatment facilities, youth leadership groups, organizations originally working with adults that developed a youth program)

- ▶ 30 religious entities (Buddhist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic)
- ▶ 17 educational institutions (museums, art, and historical societies, sports)
- ▶ 10 community advocacy groups

The organizations were screened using eight questions to assess the age of their clientele, program components, characteristics of youth in the program, services provided, and sensitivity to the culture of their clients. A total of 47 organizations completed this initial screening.

Organizational Details & Characteristics

Organization	AARS	EBAYC	FAA	H.O.P.E.	UCCC
Year Established	1985	1976	1973	1987 (A&PIWC)	2001
Primary client ethnicity	Multiethnic/racial	Multiethnic/racial	Filipino	Asian and Pacific Islander	Cambodian
Languages (other than English)	Cambodian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Tagalog, Vietnamese	Vietnamese, Cantonese, Laotian, Mien, Cambodian	Tagalog	19 languages*	Cambodian
Youth Clients (approx./year)	400	600	46 core youth/300 total	200	25
Youth Age Range	2 - 17	8 - 19	11 - 19	17 and under	13 - 21
Youth Workers	23	30	4	3	1
Management	6	10	2	9	1
Interns	3 (currently, but varies)	15 (currently, but varies)	2 (per site)	No	No
Volunteers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Board	13	7	11	13	13
Services		Academic Enrichment			
					Cambodian Language Studies
		Case Management		Case Management	Case Management
			Citizenship/ Newcomer Services		
		Civic Participation			Civic Participation
		Community Organizing	Community Organizing		
	Counseling	Counseling	Counseling	Counseling	Counseling
	Cultural Studies/Activities	Cultural Studies/Activities	Cultural Studies/Activities	Cultural Studies/Activities	Cultural Studies/Activities
		Employment	Employment		
				HIV/AIDS Services	
			Homebuyer Assistance		
	Leadership Development	Leadership Development		Leadership Development	Leadership Development
	Life Skills/Youth Development				Life Skills/Youth Development
	Parent Organizing				
	Substance Abuse Services				
Organizational Emphasis	Substance Abuse Prevention	Community Activism	Community Development	Alternative Lifestyles & HIV/AIDS Support Services	Community Development
Number of Offices	4	2	3	2	1
Areas Served	San Jose	Berkeley, Oakland	Richmond/Pinole, Oakland, Union City	San Francisco	Oakland
Web site	www.aars.org	www.ebayc.org	www.filipinos4justice.org	www.apowellness.org	www.ccdi.org

*American Sign Language, Cantonese, Cebuano, Chamoru, Farsi, Gujrati, Hawaiiana, Hindi, Ilokano, Japanese, Lao, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Visayan

We sent an eight-page questionnaire reflecting the issues raised by the literature, by youth, and by program staff to those willing to participate further. The questionnaire consisted of an organizational description; the number of years in operation; demographic information about the board, management, staff, and youth served; language accessibility; emphasis in the program regarding youth development; a description of programs and services for youth; parent and community involvement; recruitment of youth; staff recruitment and training; and evaluation and outcomes of programs.

To obtain an objective scoring of the questionnaires, we quantified the data, making allowances for misplaced responses and prior knowledge of the organization. Scores were adjusted in the direction of maximizing each organization's total.

From this analysis, five organizations that were among the top scorers were selected for an in-depth review: Asian American Recovery Services, Asian and Pacific Islander Wellness Center, Cambodian Community Development, Inc.'s United Cambodian Culture Club, East Bay Asian Youth Center, and Filipinos for Affirmative Action's youth programs. The table below provides a summary of each of these programs. The sections that follow describe the programs.

Footnotes

¹ The National Center for Cultural Competence is a component of Georgetown University Child Development Center in partnership with four Federal Agencies that provide technical assistance, products, evaluation, and training in the area of cultural competence.



FAA

ASIAN AMERICAN RECOVERY SERVICES (AARS)

“The purpose of Asian American Recovery Services, Inc. is to decrease the incidence and impact of substance abuse in the Asian and Pacific Islander communities of the San Francisco Bay Area. To accomplish this goal, Asian American Recovery Services, Inc. develops and provides innovative outreach, treatment, prevention, and research services for its target populations. Because there are multiple causes and effects of substance abuse, Asian American Recovery Services, Inc. also engages in ancillary activities to meet its goal.”

Asian American Recovery Services (AARS) was founded in 1985 due to a growing unmet need for substance abuse services in the Asian community. Mainstream services weren’t providing culturally sensitive programming and didn’t have the language capabilities needed to serve this diverse population. The main office is in San Francisco, with additional offices serving youth in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Milpitas, however, this study will focus on the Santa Clara and Milpitas offices. Achieving cultural competence was a condition of the original proposal for the Santa Clara office, which opened in 1994 and was the first federally funded substance abuse prevention agency geared towards Asian and Pacific Islander youth. The Milpitas office is an extension of the Santa Clara Office and where the Restorative Justice Program is located.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AARS provides counseling and support groups, psychological education classes (i.e., sexual education, cultural identity, gender), and substance abuse services for youth in a number of languages including: Japanese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Cambodian. Translation and interpretation services are provided primarily by staff or volunteers. Depending on the program, AARS clients are referred by friends, word-of-mouth, counselors, schools, and parents. Referrals for youth in the juvenile justice system, such as the Aftercare Program and Restorative Justice, are made by probation officers or the courts. Although some services, such as Project Reconnect and Aftercare, are directly related to substance abuse treatment, other AARS programs are geared toward prevention. Following is a list and description of programs provided through the Santa Clara and Milpitas offices:

- ▶ *The Aftercare Program* also provides counseling, leadership training, and substance abuse education, but is geared toward youth who have been recently incarcerated and are coming out of Juvenile Hall or the Ranches.
- ▶ *Project Crossroads* is similar to Project Reconnect in that it provides outreach and intervention as well as counseling, leadership development, and substance abuse education. However, Crossroads is for youth who are just experimenting or are at-risk. Crossroads was targeted to this group of youth that are not yet clients, but often find out about AARS through friends who have participated in Reconnect or Aftercare and, as a staff member explained, “If nothing is done, these are the kids we’ll be seeing in a year.”
- ▶ *The Restorative Justice Program (RJP)* is a collaboration between the county’s juvenile probation department and contracted community-based organizations (CBO). Aside from AARS, there are six other CBOs in Santa Clara County working with the probation department in a similar capacity. There is no outreach involved as all referrals come directly from probation officers. RJP is a voluntary program for youth aged 11 to 17. Participating youth are usually referred for misdemeanors—youth referred for serious offenses would not be eligible. The probation officer talks to the youth and the family, and they agree to meet with a youth intervention worker from RJP/AARS and a neighborhood accountability board that has been trained in the RJP philosophy and community-based solutions. A contract is drawn and, if fulfilled within 90 days, the youth’s name is not entered formally into juvenile probation records. The contract is based on the strengths of the youth from the family’s and youth’s perspectives, and might include: a letter of apology, 25 hours of community service and, researching a program the youth is interested in, or anger management, if appropriate.
- ▶ *Project Reconnect* is designed specifically for youth who have substance abuse issues. The services include: counseling, leadership training, and substance abuse education for youth in the San Jose area. Youth entering this program can be referred through schools, family, friends, or the juvenile justice system as a condition of probation.

- ▶ *The Leadership Program* is a component of the other programs for youth who use substances experimentally or more heavily. The program was developed to help youth build leadership skills and self-esteem. The leadership groups are seen as a way for youth to explore their capabilities. During group meetings, youth select projects that they would like to complete and outline the tasks that are needed to reach their goals. Although staff are present and facilitate the groups, the youth take responsibility for managing the group and keeping projects on task. Youth can use staff as a resource, but they are expected to actively participate by arriving on time, fulfilling their commitments, and providing peer counseling.
- ▶ *Comprehensive Asian Prevention Services (CAPS)* is a prevention program that integrates substance abuse and mental health services for at-risk families. They provide counseling, parenting classes (Saving Families Program), health education, and substance abuse education to parents of preschoolers. Having formed a collaboration with two preschools in the area, CAPS service providers are at the schools in the morning when parents drop off their children and in the evening when they pick them up. CAPS staff work closely with teachers to formulate goals and a plan on how to best serve the families and involve children. They spend time with the preschoolers, hoping that through the children they can identify parents who are most in need of help and services. They also have events such as the parent orientation dinner, a family event to which parents are encouraged to bring their children, where CAPS staff present their program and the type of services offered. The ultimate goal is to provide services to everyone that wants them.
- ▶ *The Girls Conference* is a yearly conference that is coordinated by a group of AARS girls.

Programs are assisted by paid staff as well as interns, persons assigned community service, and volunteers. Paid staff include youth workers who manage each of the programs and facilitate groups, as well as management and support staff. Currently, interns assist with both substance abuse treatment and intervention services. The number of volunteers fluctuates, because many work on specific events and on an “as needed” basis. Community service usually involves people that were referred through probation and that assist staff in a variety of areas. Additionally, AARS board members provide guidance and financial planning in accordance with



AARS

organizational goals. Most AARS staff and board members are of Asian descent: Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Cambodian, Indian, and Vietnamese. However, there are also a number of White, Latino, and biracial staff.

AARS serves a multiethnic and multiracial clientele. While AARS will accept clients of any age, most youth clients in the Santa Clara and Milpitas offices are between the ages of 12 and 19. The recent CAPS program, which works with preschoolers and their families, has added a much younger (ages two to five) clientele.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The AARS offices convey a sense of family. Doors are left open as staff comfortably walk from one office to another. During staff meetings, everyone—from administration to youth workers—is actively encouraged to speak and convey opinions. Staff have regular meetings in which they are encouraged to share stories that emphasize cultural differences, discuss how their week has been and what have been the high and low points, as well as problems they have encountered and how they have dealt with them.

In addition to site-specific weekly staff meetings described above, which include all staff at each site, there are program-specific meetings. Here, staff running new programs modeled on established programs at other sites can discuss issues as they arise with more experienced staff and learn how to manage them. The information exchanged during these meetings is helpful, because sites are modeling each other. Staff also understand that they are dealing with different populations—whereas the clientele in Santa Clara is mostly Southeast Asian, in San Francisco it is mostly Chinese. Although both groups are part of the API community, they have different languages and cultures.

AARS staff feel strongly that part of their work is to bridge the culture gap, especially between youth and their parents. There is a broad sense that, although they specialize in recovery services, they must look at the causes and precipitating factors of substance abuse. For many adolescents, periods of difficulty in communicating with their parents are considered part of a normal progression to adulthood. However, staff noticed that cultural difficulties were aggravating adolescent troubles and causing alienation between parents and children. For example, many young clients are English-speaking while the first, and sometimes only, language of the parents may be Chinese, Vietnamese, or Cambodian. The youth may understand the parent, but may not be fluent in the Asian language, and respond in English—which the parent does not understand.

“Part of what our staff does is bridge the culture for the youth and the parents—they are ‘culture brokers.’ They will explain to the youth that for Asian parents, saying ‘I love you’ is not customary, but that there are other ways in which they show their love. To Asian parents they explain that while it is not their culture [and they are neither right nor wrong], their children see American parents saying ‘I love you,’ and it could be confusing for the youth.”

Cultural difficulties also led staff to develop the CAPS program, which works with the family while children are still in preschool, effectively “nipping the problem in the bud.” They felt that by helping parents that are new to this country adapt to the stresses associated with learning a new culture and helping them understand the context of their children’s lives, they could prevent future conflict and lessen misunderstandings. This can be particularly helpful in placing their children’s behavior, attitudes, and even clothing, in the context of American culture, showing parents that their children are not meaning to disrespect them, but are participating in the local “youth culture.”

Language and cultural difficulties have left many parents at a loss in navigating through the education and court systems. AARS staff observed that minority youth will often suffer harsher consequences than other youth for the same behavior, due to cultural misunderstandings between juvenile justice personnel and youth or parents. These differences in communication styles and limited knowledge of the system

often make it difficult for parents to effectively advocate for their children. Therefore, when parents and youth are summoned to court, AARS staff may be present to assist in clarifying issues as they arise and to offer translations when needed.

RECRUITMENT & STAFFING

Staff is recruited through schools, the community, word-of-mouth, and other community-based organizations. In general, staff believe that children will bond with a caring adult regardless of ethnicity. However, they also feel youth should have people they can relate to—someone that looks like them—to act as a role model. AARS management feels that by having bilingual and bicultural staff, they’re better able to identify and assess the needs of their diverse clientele.

Aside from having staff that reflect clients linguistically and culturally, AARS places a high degree of emphasis on staff training. All AARS staff are required to attend workshops and trainings on cultural competence. They may also be invited or required to attend formal workshops and trainings on other subjects depending on the program they work with and the needs of their clientele. For example, staff members may attend trainings on domestic violence and mental health

issues such as substance abuse and depression. The prevention program staff may take a parenting class to learn how to communicate with children. In addition, depending on the grant, program funding may be tied to training requirements, for example, all staff members must attend trainings through the Department of Alcohol and Drug Services.



AARS

DIVERSITY & CHANGE

AARS conducts quantitative research that looks at immigration trends, community demographics, and prison populations as well as qualitative research, such as open dialogues with community stakeholders, to understand what these trends mean. The AARS staff dynamically adjust the program according to the trends they see. For example, if they see the number of Vietnamese youth arrested in one year increased dramatically, AARS will make special outreach efforts to that population.

Among the ways that AARS reaches out to the community is through cultural events and festivals, often tying substance abuse to related issues, such as health. Presentations at

churches, temples, schools, and other neutral places, as well as community collaborations in which several CBOs get together, are additional methods of outreach. AARS also has a yearly potluck that has become an Asian New Year celebration with an altar representing each ethnicity among its clientele, including Latinos. The more visible AARS is, the more it becomes a household name, so that when someone has a problem related to substance abuse, that person will think about AARS.

One of the primary examples of AARS' willingness to change has been their switch to multiracial services. Santa Clara and Milpitas have large and growing Latino populations and two programs in particular—CAPS and RJP—have brought this population to AARS. Although the organization continues to focus on Asian groups (preschools for the CAPS program were chosen for their large Asian populations), these preschools also have large Latino populations. The RJP program has also received a large number of referrals of Latino youth from the court.



AARS

CLIENT-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

Ultimately, for the program to be effective, it must be geared towards youth interests and development. Many AARS staff members are young and have faced similar issues as the clients. They are able to concentrate on youths' positive aspects and strengths and focus on activities that interest youth, such as spoken word, open mike, and hip hop or rap. Youth in the program like the fact that counselors "have been through the same experiences, so they understand what we [the youth] have to say...the good and the bad." The youth feel that they are not being judged and that AARS is a place they can come to just hang out and "chill." Many youth in AARS felt that ethnic and racial differences did not matter there because they are all dealing with the same issues.

Youth are encouraged to use the AARS facilities, such as the pool table or basketball hoop, bring friends, and take advantage of services offered. Youth workers are available to talk to youth one-on-one and in scheduled group sessions. Aside from recreational facilities, there are snacks available daily that are donated by local organizations. Although there is no formal way to include youth input, staff do conduct surveys to gauge feelings in groups about what's "hip" and "new" and bring ideas back from youth groups to the general

staff meetings where those ideas can be incorporated into program planning.

Like many community-based organizations, AARS is funded through contracts with other organizations such as the probation department or the federal government. These contracts include specific obligations that must be fulfilled for all kids in each program. However, there are many ways for staff to be creative and to implement programs and activities that are needed, but not directly funded, such as the leadership program and self-exploration activities that may help the youth communicate better with their parents. For example, AARS counselors may give youth assignments to explore their ancestry and the circumstances that brought their family to this country. Although supervisors and managers make the major decisions, everyone participates in the process.

AARS staff encourage parents to be a part of the program but also have respect for the youth's privacy. They explain to parents

that AARS is a community center and what support services are available. If AARS cannot provide the services they need—financial, child care for younger siblings, legal issues—they will refer them to those services. Dealing with family and related issues is a cornerstone of the AARS model because there are so many underlying factors to substance abuse. One way AARS builds trust with parents is by providing events that include the family, like potlucks and picnics, so they can see what and how their children are doing. Southeast Asian families are especially targeted due to the traumatic circumstances and experiences that many faced prior to becoming refugees. Some still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and their children show remnants of that disorder called "secondary PTSD."

Finally, AARS staff feel that, to function as a substance abuse prevention program, there must be a mental health component to their programs. Mental health services are provided for both the children and the parents.

CHALLENGES

One of the major roadblocks AARS staff have come across is the stigma attached to substance abuse and mental health issues. In API cultures, admitting you have a substance abuse problem is not just shameful for the person, but for the whole

family. This becomes a problem not only when recruiting clients, but also when recruiting Asian experts as board members because many would rather be associated with another type of organization. Therefore AARS has had to educate the community about substance abuse and that it is acceptable to seek help.

EVALUATION

A formal evaluation component is included. AARS hires independent evaluators that have considerable experience with the topic or the culture to perform assessments for each of the programs. Evaluations include pre- and post-tests, studying recidivism, and conducting surveys. Many staff members mentioned anecdotes about youth surviving and returning to visit after finishing college.

EAST BAY ASIAN YOUTH CENTER (EBAYC)

“The East Bay Asian Youth Center’s mission is to inspire and empower young people to become life-long builders of a just and caring multi-cultural society.”

EBAYC was started in 1976 as a community club in Berkeley by Asian activists. These activists felt that, while Asians were growing in number in the community, they still had no voice. The organization expanded to Oakland in 1990 due to the needs of many Southeast Asian refugees who live in the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland. EBAYC grew to include more services such as academic enrichment and counseling, while continuing to grow its advocacy for the API community.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

EBAYC provides academic, counseling, employment, and recreational services to youth in the Oakland community. Leadership development is incorporated into all of the programs and is directly related to youth’s future in advocacy. Depending on the program, services are provided through school sites or at the EBAYC offices. Youth are recruited through classroom presentations, teacher referrals, probation referrals, parent referrals, and self-referrals from the youth. EBAYC staff have the ability to translate materials and communicate in Vietnamese, Cantonese, Laotian, Mien, Cambodian, and Spanish.

The EBAYC program emphasizes academic skills among school-age children as well as community service and collective action for youth and adults. Parents are expected to actively participate in their children’s education by volunteering their time, attending meetings and events, and participating in community outreach. The program hopes that by mobilizing parents to make changes in the community and the schools, they will improve their children’s academic performance and the overall well-being and health of the community. Recreation and arts programs attract youth and keep them active and safe in the community. Program components include:

- ▶ *Higher Learning* is an after-school academic enrichment program available through Roosevelt Middle School, Garfield Elementary School, and Franklin Elementary School. High school students provide assistance with homework and tutor elementary school students in reading and writing. The program seeks to generate growth in academic achievement and provide a clear understanding and appreciation for education to younger children as it strengthens high school students’ civic values and underscores what it means to give back to the community. At the same time, the experience teaches youth to manage a group, work as a team, and explore different career path options.
- ▶ Sports activities are available in all three school sites as well in the neighborhood parks. Staff organize soccer and basketball leagues for youth from the community. Youth in the neighborhood are encouraged to participate, even if they do not attend the neighborhood school.
- ▶ *Streetside Productions* is a media literacy program available to high school youth. The program consists of Real Peeps Video, which produced Everyday Eastlake—a merit award winner at the San Francisco International Film Festival. The film, about a few days in Oakland’s multiethnic Eastlake, was researched, edited, directed, and acted in by EBAYC youth. In addition, youth produce NeXGeneration, a news and nonfiction magazine available online. Streetside Productions also provides vocational training and job search assistance for community probation youth in Alameda county.

- ▶ *The Parent Action Committee (PAC)* organizes parents at Higher Learning school sites to improve conditions in their children’s environments, both at school and in the community at large. PAC groups meet once a month at each of the school sites and are conducted in English, Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Mien. Facilitators discuss current and future advocacy issues and follow an agenda that is agreed on during previous PAC meetings. Although many of the agenda items at PAC meetings are directly related to the schools, there are also action items such as community safety and funding for after-school programs.
- ▶ *The San Antonio Village Collaborative* consists of the following programs:

- *East Side Arts Alliance* promotes different forms of art, such as performing arts, graffiti arts, digital story telling, and graphics, for youth in the Oakland area. Participating youth collaborate with EBAYC and other programs.
- *Cycles of Changes* is based at Roosevelt Middle School. Youth repair and maintain bikes one day a week, then go for organized rides on other days.

EBAYC has paid staff positions that include direct service, management, administrative, and support staff. Youth workers and managers for each school site include program directors and coordinators that develop the curriculum and hire academic mentors and high school interns that are paid a stipend to assist with the Higher Learning programs. Credentialed teachers are hired to assist in Higher Learning staff development and training. Most EBAYC volunteers come from the community and are, for the most part, high school students who volunteer to work on summer sports programs with youth, and parents involved with the program either through the PAC or community outreach. There are seven EBAYC board members actively involved in the decision making process and direction of the organization. Most staff and board members are of Asian descent, but as the organization has grown to include a multiracial clientele, there is also a growing number of Latino and African American staff members.

EBAYC annually serves approximately 600 students through the after-school programs and 300 parents through the Parent Action Committee. In 1998, EBAYC shifted from a predominantly at-risk population of mostly high school

students, to a youth development model geared towards third to eighth graders. Currently, about 80% of their clients are between the ages of 9 and 13. Although high school interns aren’t considered clients, per se, they are expected to develop management and leadership skills and a sense of civic duty.



EBAYC

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: RESPECT & CIVIC DUTY

Respect—for parents, youth, staff and community partners—is one of the central philosophies of the organization. EBAYC wants to inspire the community to be more accepting of different cultures. EBAYC staff work to instill in both children and adults a sense of responsibility to build society—by working together, they can transform the community, bettering the life and status of the children they serve, and giving a voice to the parents and

young people. Overall, they want youth to make academic progress and develop leadership skills while empowering parents to face problems in the community, whether prostitution, drugs, violence, safety, or educational issues.

EBAYC staff and counselors participate in their clients’ lives with respectful and personal attention. They try to understand parent expectations in addition to finding common ground. There is a sense that program success is largely dependent on the organization’s ability to hire staff that is culturally competent, one of the reasons that so much emphasis is put into recruiting and staffing. “...especially when making a home visit, parents will be more comfortable and understanding if the staff are of the same culture in addition to speaking their language.”

Schools are hard to penetrate, according to EBAYC, because it takes time to earn respect and trust. EBAYC has developed close relationships with the teachers and schools in the community and knows the importance of working collaboratively within the school culture. One staff member described how getting into the schools was like dating: you have to court them. She explained that at first, the schools were skeptical because so many organizations would come one year and offer services, then never return. But with time, and by being there year after year, EBAYC proved its dependability and earned the schools’ and community’s respect. “The first year EBAYC started working with the schools, they didn’t give us any classrooms or support, the next year they gave us one tiny classroom...now we work together as a team and have access to almost any rooms we need.”

EBAYC builds trust by understanding its clientele. EBAYC staff feel that this same dedication and commitment earned the respect of parents too. This is demonstrated by the fact that parents elect to have their children participate in the program, because they know their children are in good hands. For example, EBAYC staff understand that “things happen,” and parents know that their children will not be left alone, even if they are late in picking them up.

For EBAYC to actualize its goals, parent involvement is critical, “because changes cannot be made if people are not united in their goals.” As one EBAYC staff member explained, “parents sometimes do not believe they can initiate change, but it was they who raised \$150,000 to start the program at Franklin Elementary School.” EBAYC management believes that advocacy from parents can dramatically improve the organization. Some parents work directly with the after-school program, and parent retreats and training sessions help recruit others. Because many South East Asians are not familiar with the school system, the organization also helps parents to understand how to help their children.

EBAYC staff reflect the community ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically. EBAYC puts a great deal of effort in recruiting the right staff, and they are expected to participate and contribute on many levels—from staff meetings to advocacy and outreach efforts. Staff are encouraged to bring their own culture (“We don’t have to feel bad speaking our own language...sometimes people in a room will be speaking five different languages.”) and experiences to the organization so they can learn from each other. Permanent staff need to have experience, legitimacy within the community, cultural understanding, respect others, a focus on teamwork, and motivation.

EBAYC personnel policies allow staff to utilize four hours per week to go to school as a part of on-going staff development. For a coordinator or counselor position, a bachelor’s degree is preferred, but not required. EBAYC also gives people who were involved with the criminal justice system a second chance at giving back to the community by hiring them as staff if they show enough dedication to the community. While some may criticize EBAYC for insisting that staff come either directly from the Oakland community, or from a community with similar issues, EBAYC management feels that its hiring criteria have given them the respect and credibility of the community they serve and have enabled them to accomplish the organization’s broader goal of community change through active participation of its members.

STAFF RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

EBAYC never advertises job listings in newspapers because it maintains that staff come from the community, care about the community, and know the community. Most staff are recruited through schools such as UC Berkeley or internal contacts and “word-of-mouth.” By recruiting within the community, EBAYC staff bring a network of relationships and a degree of credibility to the organization. They hire individuals that are capable of reaching out to the diverse range of children being served by the organization and look for people with life experiences similar to their clients, such as refugee or immigrant status, as well as extensive knowledge of the public school and juvenile justice systems, skills in counseling, case management, academic advising, and a long-term commitment to the field of youth advocacy. EBAYC prefers to promote from within the organization. Therefore, staff in all positions are encouraged and expected to grow as the organization grows.



EBAYC

The recruiting process is unique to each individual program; however, it usually consists of two phases. In the first interview, prospective staff are questioned about their experiences working with youth (for youth counseling positions) or working with parents (for parent organizer positions), how they would handle different scenarios such as destructive behaviors and attitudes (for program manager and counseling positions), and how they would handle scenarios in group counseling (for counseling positions). The second interview focuses more on the individual’s commitment to the position—EBAYC requires a minimum commitment of three years for permanent staff positions. Besides these questions, recruiters also

inquire into their experiences working in a multicultural setting.

EBAYC recruits high school students to work as interns for the Higher Learning program (descriptions precede this section). Interns are expected to motivate kids, lead by example, and understand the importance of their responsibility. They are trained to understand the mission, personnel policies, and work environment of EBAYC. They start training two weeks before the Higher Learning program begins for two hours per day, learning to manage classrooms and conduct group activities. The students practice cultural competence in dealing with the diverse backgrounds of youth and are expected to impart these world views of respect in a multicultural society to the youth that they are tutoring.

DIVERSITY & CHANGE

While EBAYC serves mostly South East Asians (which includes Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mien, and Laotian) and Chinese, in responding to the needs of the community, they have recently added services for African American and Latino youth. As the number of youth from different cultural and racial backgrounds has increased, EBAYC has hired staff that reflect these cultures, languages, and communities. The rationale for expanding the diversity of EBAYC's staff and clientele was that Asians in a multiracial community must work to resolve conflicts with other community members, regardless of ethnic group. From this perspective, becoming multiracial was a critical step to better the community as a whole. For example, one staff member explained, "if we have kids that are drug dealers, it doesn't matter what their background is, if they're standing on a corner in Oakland selling drugs—it is going to affect Asian kids [in the neighborhood]."

EBAYC emphasizes academic excellence, family empowerment, community empowerment, collective action to create social change, and parent organizing. The program has shifted from an intervention model to a youth development model in the last 10 years.

CLIENT CENTERED PROGRAM PLANNING

Youth input is very important at EBAYC. Satisfaction surveys are given to youth to learn about their opinions of the programs—with older kids generally wanting more leadership or employment programs and younger kids more likely to express their opinions about the food provided. Decisions for events and field trips are made by the youth as a group. Many youth say they come to EBAYC because they feel safe

and it keeps them off the streets. EBAYC staff are like "family" and help them with homework and issues they are facing at home and in the neighborhood. Indeed, when asked how they became involved in the program, a number of youth stated that their siblings had been members or that an auntie or uncle worked there. And when asked if their parents were involved in the program almost all said their parents talk to EBAYC counselors on a regular basis.



EBAYC

EBAYC is also sensitive to parents. Parents are accommodated by providing access to materials in their native languages and keeping programs in the community so program staff are easily accessible if any questions or problems arise. Furthermore, because many EBAYC programs are located on school grounds, they don't have to go out of their way to pick up their children. PAC facilitators also reflect parents at each of the school sites, giving parents someone they can relate to and making it easier for them to participate in their children's education.

EBAYC builds trust among its youth and parents by listening to their needs and ideas. They try to help youth learn about their culture, with less focus on historical aspects (i.e., the Khmer Rouge) that may be too traumatic for elementary school children and should be explained by their parents. However, when differences arise between what the children want to learn and what their parents want them to learn, EBAYC works to find a balance between the two. Therefore, they offer programs centered on youth culture, such as the multimedia projects and graffiti art, as well as the Higher Learning program.

Program design and planning is a group process. Youth workers provide insights from working with kids as well as from their own experiences, and are able to build programs that are both suitable and appealing to EBAYC's young clients. EBAYC has also extended themselves into the

community through community contacts and networks to meet the needs of their clients. There are meetings in which the program manager, executive director, community based organizations, and/or other stakeholders come together to discuss how the programs are run.

EBAYC staff are continuously attuned to the details of their operations—making sure staff are in place, supplies are provided in classrooms, and evaluations are completed for program improvement. The constant improvement of programs by EBAYC is crucial to helping children succeed. Academic programs, such as after-school tutoring and homework assistance, are geared towards improving grades and helping students to obtain skills and knowledge they will need as activists in the community.

CHALLENGES

Convincing some API parents that there is no shame in their children participating in youth counseling has been a challenge for EBAYC staff. Often, when youth are referred to EBAYC for counseling, API parents are resistant because of the stigma attached to mental health issues. They may consider their children to be misbehaving and disrespectful, but not “crazy.” Presenting ideas in ways that are understood in a nonthreatening context has enabled EBAYC to address sensitive issues.

Becoming a multicultural agency has also held some challenges. For example, some long-term clients might feel that, by becoming multiracial, EBAYC has lost sight of its original clientele. To help overcome this challenge, EBAYC has set guidelines to ensure that youth in the programs reflect youth in the schools while maintaining loyalty to its original API clientele. This has been especially critical because some smaller API groups, such as Cambodians, may be overlooked. By making special outreach efforts to these groups, EBAYC can continue to serve its original constituencies.

Funding has become a major issue at EBAYC. Unlike many programs that are unable to remain at capacity, EBAYC has the unfortunate distinction of turning away youth and family that would like to participate in the program. Although the program raised the funds it needed, through parent and community advocacy, to expand

the Higher Learning program to Franklin Elementary School last year, next year it will have to cut the number of students in the program by half. In fiscal year 02-03, Streetside Productions, another example of a popular EBAYC program, was requested by many youth, but was available only to youth on community probation, due to limited funding.

EVALUATION

EBAYC program success is measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. Their long-term goal is to help youth develop skills and power to help contribute to the community. Qualitative aspects include: the relationships between youth and staff; program safety for youth, both physical and emotional; meaningful opportunities for youth to contribute to the program; longevity of the program; parent participation; and collaboration with schools. Quantitatively, EBAYC measures the number of youth it serves; student attendance and detention; proficiency in skills youth learn in the program; progress in school such as grades and standardized tests; and indicators of anti-social behaviors, including arrests, and behaviors that result in suspensions and expulsions.

One of the most recent evaluation reports of the after-school academic and recreational programs at Roosevelt Middle School and Garfield Elementary School show that about two-thirds of program participants at each school increased SAT 9 Reading scores (70% and 66%, respectively) and Math scores (62% at both schools), held an average school attendance rate of 95% and 97%, and an average program attendance rate of 80% and 78%, respectively.



EBAYC

FILIPINOS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (FAA)

“To Build Community by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable through direct service and volunteerism, and by strengthening our community’s capacity to participate as equals in the larger society.”

FAA was created in 1973 in response to discrimination of Filipinos. Eventually it evolved into a multi-service and civil rights advocacy organization to better serve the needs of the growing Filipino population in the San Francisco Bay Area. FAA’s mission is based on the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model, which promotes community self-help by bringing a community’s assets, talents, gifts, resources, and skills to bear on the needs of the most vulnerable.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The FAA approach toward youth work is based on the belief that a strong Filipino American community is built by developing the individual resiliency of youth through cultural pride, familial cohesion, and leadership through community service and organizing. Community involvement is a key feature of the three youth programs: Building Adults Through Awareness (BATA), based in the Union City and Richmond sites; Regional Alliance for Community Empowerment (RACE), based in Union City; and Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL), based in Oakland.

Union City

FAA opened its Union City office in 1982 to serve the tri-city area of Hayward, Union City, and Newark for general information and referral services. Services to youth began in 1987 as a result of increasing tensions between school staff, the police, and Filipino youth. BATA is offered at James Logan High School, Alvarado Middle School, and Cesar Chavez Middle School. The focus of this program has been alcohol and other drug prevention and education, and family

support services. The Union City office also sponsors and advises the Pilipino Youth Coalition (PYC), an independent youth organization that has a membership of approximately 60 youth ranging in age from 14 to early 20’s. PYC began in 1996 and is currently working with its seventh generation of youth.

Richmond/Pinole

In 1998 the Richmond office opened its doors to serve West Contra Costa County and began offering the BATA program at Pinole Valley High School. The focus of the Richmond/Pinole youth program has been prevention and education about teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and safe sex issues, through in-school and after-school settings, an annual youth-led conference, and peer outreach.

Oakland

The youth program in Oakland, called Kasama—Kaibigan Samahang Malakas (Companions on A Journey)—has been part of AYPAL’s six-agency collaboration since 1996¹. AYPAL’s focus is on youth violence prevention through youth empowerment, leadership, organizing, and the arts. Each year, youth from all six agencies recruit their peers to work on a youth-led campaign. In the past, these campaigns have included opposing the expansion of a juvenile detention center in Alameda County and protesting immigration legislation to deport Cambodians residing in the U.S. The Kasama group is made up of six to seven core interns who plan activities and act as spokespersons for the program. Weekly youth leadership orientations (YLOs) hosted by each AYPAL agency draw in an additional 20-50 youth members per site.

FAA staff is comprised of an Executive Director, a Citizenship/Newcomer Services Coordinator, two Community Organizers, four Youth Program Counselors, an Administrative Assistant, and two interns. Staff work together and in collaboration with other community-based organizations to provide citizenship assistance, employment services, an annual homebuyer’s fair, legal clinics, youth programs, and community organizing and advocacy for such issues as the recent firing of Filipino airport screeners and other immigrant rights issues.



FAA

FAA serves approximately 300 youth per year and 46 core youth through the Oakland, Union City, and Pinole sites. Youth clients are between the ages of 12 and 19.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A culture of collaboration and support permeates all FAA programs. To address what she calls “the volatile and ever-changing arena” of youth work, the Executive Director promotes collectivity among the youth counselors, whose program areas vary according to funding streams, personal skills and interests, and the unique populations that they serve. All youth programs benefit from the collective talents and interests of the youth counselors, who conduct presentations in their fields of expertise. The Executive Director counsels the youth workers and encourages them to collaborate: “My role is to help youth workers use the system we’ve developed at FAA.” Although the collective problem-solving approach is more time consuming, the Executive Director believes that it works, because the youth all eventually face the same issues.

A unique aspect of the FAA youth program is its connection to a broader youth collaborative, Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL). FAA is one of six AYPAL sites and benefits from the added training and support provided by AYPAL. Their staff development philosophy is one that prioritizes collective decision making. Even though it requires more time, AYPAL site coordinators are encouraged to share what is going on at their respective sites. FAA youth programs also benefit from being part of a larger infrastructure of services and organizing within the Filipino community. Youth services are connected to other youth organizing efforts through a broader network involving college campuses and other Filipino youth groups.

Despite the differences in populations served by the three youth programs, two themes unite them under FAA: the Kuya/Ate relationship and connecting self, family, and community through culture.

KUYA/ATE

The Kuya/Ate (Big Brother/Big Sister) relationship between counselors and youth builds on the familiar idea of depending on extended family networks for support. In Union City, college-aged former program participants continue to attend meetings and participate in events with high school youth. Giving a youth a ride home becomes an opportunity to get to know the individual’s family and personal issues. “I try to be that person who isn’t like their teacher, but not quite their friend either...someone they can go to and that they sort of know can help them and they can feel safe with.”

Counselors and youth also have the common bonds of cultural background, history, and pride. Cultural affirmation has been key in creating an environment where youth feel safe to talk about issues that are deemed taboo, such as depression and suicide. “When we talk about the traditional stuff, music, the kulintang (Filipino percussion instrument similar to a xylophone) or the ganzas (Filipino hand percussive instrument) or we’re talking about clothing and we’re talking about malongs (sarongs, versatile cloth used for dress) and barongs (shirt made of pineapple fibers often worn during formal occasions), that’s stuff that they really enjoy and can claim it and say it’s mine.”

Creating a space where youth feel safe to freely express and share their problems also means explicitly setting guidelines to do this. Community Agreements such as “Step Up Step Back” ask youth to speak up and actively participate while also being mindful that others need room to speak as well. Other Community Agreements include confidentiality and respect. In Union City, youth have become willing to talk about difficult, stigmatized topics.

One way the youth programs encourage open dialogue is by setting aside time at every meeting for each youth to talk about what is going on in their lives and how they are feeling that day, called “Check In” or “Word!” A sense of humor is also essential to creating a safe space for youth.

CONNECTING SELF-FAMILY-COMMUNITY THROUGH CULTURE

Youth counselors at FAA see their work in fostering positive, healthy individuals as a way of developing leadership for a stronger Filipino community. The staff frame the day-to-day issues with the larger picture in mind—strong/resilient individuals will be better equipped to positively contribute to the community. The belief is that community activism is driven by self and community awareness, groundedness in one’s identity, and practical leadership skills. “Health takes on a more important role, not just physiological. A healthy community means that youth know not only the consequences of certain actions but they can also stand up for themselves.” It is the long-term goal of community empowerment that guides their dedication to youth.

Youth counselors seek to help youth relate the issues that directly affect them to a broader context in order to reach the agency goal of community development by using, for example, the widely known genres of rap and hip hop music to help youth make connections to other social justice issues. “I juxtaposed underground hip hop stuff that’s more on a

[politically] conscious level—they can get that beat, that cool style and not have to be working towards putting women down, or putting people of color down, or trivializing your life to have that Hum V.” Another technique is to have the youth discuss images of women by looking at advertisements in popular women and girls magazines. In this way, the knowledge the youth gain while in the program provides a foundation for continuing to analyze things around them

Shared cultural background is a clear asset to FAA youth programs. Youth are given the skills to negotiate a strong sense of identity and their place within American culture using their Filipino culture as both a guide and anchor. “When doing social services, you need to build connections with youth. I’ve faced many of the same struggles. There are things that I can relate to. Filipino youth have a tendency to gravitate toward people who look like them,” says one youth counselor.

Youth counselors are able to relate to youth and make programming relevant to youths’ lives by being in tune with the elements of youth culture. The staff visit the schools and directly observe the environment, the dynamics between different groups and between students and teachers. At one school, a youth counselor found that she had to alter the way she framed issues according to the group she was speaking to:

“For example at [a school], there was a lot of immigrant students, Filipinos, etc., so I would phrase it a little different because they didn’t understand all the slang, but when I went to [another school] there was total slang, hip hop culture, baggy jeans—you know that whole scene. I was able to learn that.”



FAA

RECRUITMENT & STAFFING

FAA’s youth programs bear the fruits of youth leadership development—most of the staff were former participants or interns with the program. Former participants who officially graduated from the program attend youth meetings regularly. In Union City, for example, a college-aged brother who went through the youth program has recruited his younger, high school-aged sister to follow in his footsteps. After a year in the program, she is now one of the core leaders of the group. As the executive director explains, “It’s because we’ve been doing youth work so long that there is a pool of people we intercepted early on in their lives.” The advantage of hiring former youth participants is that they have a familiarity with the nature and requirements of the work. Another advantage of “staffing from within” is sustainability and consistency of

program goals despite changes in staff and funding.

The executive director has found that, generally speaking, effective youth workers share the same background as the youth, including attending the same schools. She says that many applicants for the youth worker positions often have a romanticized notion of what the work entails. To address this, the executive director looks for individuals who can articulate their commitment to young people and to the broader community. Youth workers are involved with the entire agency, not just with youth programming.

CLIENT-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

FAA youth programs are tailored to youth needs and issues. Programs give youth the tools to navigate through “hot spots” in their lives, learn organizational and public speaking skills, and help youth graduate from school. Youth become more confident in themselves, feel more rooted in their history, and build trusting relationships with caring adults and peers.

Each youth program is designed with the youth from that region in mind, taking into account socio-economic factors and geographic location (urban vs. suburban). Youth counselors are mindful that the needs and characteristics of the youth vary from site to site. In urban Oakland, there is a social justice orientation to programming that builds on a history of activism in the city. Youth in this program are usually from working class families; their efforts are fueled by their familiarity with capitalism and an unequal educational system. In Union City, youth are organizing around racial profiling by the school and police, and more effective solutions to school violence.

Youth feel that the FAA program has a familial atmosphere, especially during a stage in their development when they have problems communicating with their parents, adjusting to high school, and forming their individual identities. Youth develop trusting relationships and are free to be themselves without being judged. Counselors gain trust from youth because of their sincerity, ability to relate, and sense of humor. They talk to youth; they share their own thoughts and problems, which helps kids trust them and share issues in return. Counselors model positive behavior, and show they are also continuously learning. They give youth options, but let them make choices—“They don’t tell me what to do.”

Youth immediately apply what they learn in the youth program to their daily lives. One female youth learned refusal skills

and applied them to her situation when being pressured into sex. Another youth has become a resource for her friends on issues like teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, STDs. One youth compared regular classes at school with what they learn at FAA:

“You know how [regular classes] just teach you U.S. history and basic things, you don’t really learn much about your culture, Filipino culture. [The youth program] just opened my eyes to that. And things like my parents wouldn’t talk to me about, like sex...I think that it makes going to high school a little bit easier, because it’s a little bit of a tension reliever because you get to come in and speak your mind and you just have fun. You’re with people who have the same ideas and feelings as you. The presentations...it’s never really lecture style so it makes it more fun, so you’re learning and you’re not bored at the same time.”



FAA

Many youth like the fact they’re learning new things and doing something for a purpose. One youth went from being involved in drugs and gangs to attending classes regularly and improving his grades. He is now one of the main recruiters for the program and helps coordinate events.

CHALLENGES

In Union City and Pinole, youth counselors are challenged to get youth engaged in examining and discussing social issues that are not so obvious in a suburban community. “With single family homes, fences...the community is pacified [to think] that things seem okay.” This environment makes it difficult for youth counselors to illustrate the connections between youths’ immediate realities and broader social issues. In contrast, in an urban center like Oakland, social unrest is a reality, such as the disturbances that ensued after the Raiders lost the Superbowl.

The issue of “burn out” is a major challenge in being able to retain good staff, particularly in the dynamic environment of youth work. The Executive Director walks a fine line between letting youth workers have ownership over their work and providing adequate oversight. For example, one youth counselor’s prominent role and involvement at the high school where he was based prompted the school to call upon his voluntary services to work with students in danger of suspension. As a result, the youth counselor found himself at the center of an ad hoc project committee that demanded

more time than he was funded to provide. The Executive Director stepped in and is working with him to find ways to sustain those efforts, with additional support from staff, as a formal, funded project of his program. Much as the youth workers are with their youth, the Executive Director is flexible and supports youth workers’ needs and issues as they arise.

EVALUATION/OUTCOMES

Accountability is another priority within AYPAL. Evaluation results are regularly reviewed and applied to practice. Although each staff person measured success differently for youth, one outcome was the same for everyone—youth to continue to be involved in the community after the program.

For the Executive Director, the lowest common denominators of success are promotion to the next grade level and retaining prevention education information of the various youth programs.

Another indicator of success is youths’ ability to resolve conflicts and build healthy relationships with their family members.

Though this is difficult to measure, the Executive Director hopes that experiences in the program help youth to see the family as a resource. Preservation of the family is key—in the Filipino community, familial networks are a structural safety net for the whole community.

The youth program counselors at all sites agree that, although success is slightly different for each individual, in general it means to have a confident and self-aware youth who knows about alternatives to risky behaviors and has critical thinking and verbal skills that they can use throughout their lives. Critical thinking helps a youth see, for example, a No Hats policy at school is part of a bigger issue of school administrators having negative stereotypes about youth.

From 2002 to 2003, 32 youth in Union City’s BATA program were surveyed about the program’s impact on their attitudes toward alcohol and other drugs: 75% of the youth surveyed said they would think of a non-violent solution to a problem first; 82% said their knowledge of alcohol and drugs increased after being in the program; 94% said their knowledge of pregnancy and STDs increased after being in the program; and 100% said that they appreciated learning more about their culture.

For fiscal year July 2002 to June 2003, the Richmond/Pinole office reported outcomes that surpassed expectations for providing HIV/AIDS education and prevention services for youth living in Contra Costa County. Their objectives of providing 250 information and referral contacts, 213 youth contacts through a youth-designed presentation and 410 contacts through support groups, were exceeded by 176%, 112% and 113%, respectively.

"I learn a lot from here. I learn about subjects that never really mattered to me and now I'm more aware of it. Like for example, teenage pregnancy, HIV."

"Instead of just learning, it gives you a sense of purpose and you have to do stuff too, like community building."

In Oakland, AYPAL administers pre- and post-Youth Self-Efficacy Surveys each year to all AYPAL site interns and YLOs, including FAA's youth program. In October, 2002, 154 pre-Surveys were collected, and 78 post-Surveys were collected in May, 2003.² Results showed that in general, AYPAL youth significantly improved in the following areas: attitudes toward drugs (37% decrease in numbers who view

drugs as *not harmful* and 28% decrease in youth who *did not know*), actual drug usage (55% reduction in casual users and 67% reduction in habitual users), attitudes toward violence (33% reduction in youth who view violent activities favorably), use of violence (36% decrease in youth involved in violent situations, and 59% decrease in frequent engagers), and avoiding other risky behaviors (42% reduction in numbers who engage in other risky behaviors, and 62% reduction in frequent engagers). AYPAL also administers a pre- and post-Youth Leadership Surveys to the interns at each site that ask them to rate themselves in three leadership areas: ability to address community needs, ability to work with other people, and ability to lead groups and build inclusion.

Footnotes

¹ Other AYPAL sites are: Asian Community Mental Health Services, Korean Community Center of the East Bay, Lao Iu Mien Culture Association, Oakland Asian Students Educational Services and Pacific Islander Kie.

² The participation rate in May was lower due to a shorter period of collecting surveys.

HELPING AND OUTREACHING TO PEERS EVERYWHERE (H.O.P.E.) PROGRAM

"Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center's mission is to educate, support, empower and advocate for Asian & Pacific Islander (A&PI) communities, particularly A&PIs living with or at-risk for HIV/AIDS."

H.O.P.E is a youth program of the A&PI Wellness Center. Founded in 1987, it is the oldest and most comprehensive HIV services organization in North America that targets Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Based in San Francisco, California, A&PI Wellness Center was the first Asian and Pacific Islander program to provide volunteer support, case management, and mental health services to people in the API community living with HIV/AIDS.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

At the core of the H.O.P.E. program is a youth-centered focus. Workshops and rap groups are planned and facilitated by the H.O.P.E. Program Coordinator and the Youth Peer Leaders to discuss youth-identified issues. The Peer Leader program provides opportunities for youth to be role models and leaders

with their peers and the larger Asian and Pacific Islander community. Ultimately, H.O.P.E. enables youth to strengthen and increase life development skills. Through this comprehensive model, young people take ownership of their goals and are provided with the skills needed to achieve those goals.

The program places a strong emphasis on individual achievement, assertiveness, team work, community service, and verbal skills. To meet the needs of their clients, who are often immigrants or refugees, A&PIWC's staff members speak 19 languages: Tagalog, Vietnamese, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Thai, Urdu, Gujrati, Visayan, Cebuano, Portuguese, Spanish, Farsi, Chamoru, Lao, Ilokano, Hawaiiana, and American Sign Language. Specific services provided include:

- ▶ *Individual risk reduction counseling and prevention case management.* This program includes counseling sessions for at-risk youth referred from the Youth Guidance Center (San Francisco’s secure detention facility), school teachers and counselors, probation officers, other youth service providers, word-of-mouth, and peers of current and previous clients.
- ▶ *Sexual Health Rap Groups and Education Workshops.* H.O.P.E. staff and trained Youth Peer Leaders facilitate sexual health rap groups on HIV/AIDS, sexual health practices, and the challenges of engaging in healthier behaviors. Educational workshops cover topics such as sexual diversity, juvenile justice, runaway issues, substance use, gang violence, and relationships.
- ▶ *Life skills events.* These outdoor recreational activities are planned by Youth Peer Leaders and implemented with the assistance of H.O.P.E. staff. These activities provide an alternative venue to discuss decisionmaking and risk-taking within the context of outdoor activities.
- ▶ *Peer Leader Program.* Youth Peer Leaders are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent, are bi/multi-lingual or bi/multi-cultural, and are recruited from the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco and the Youth Guidance Center. Youth Peer Leaders receive a stipend and are trained to provide peer counseling, to conduct rap groups, and to present educational workshops.

A&PI Wellness Center has 13 Board Members, most of whom are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. There are nine management staff (five females and four males), and three staff members that work with youth. There are nine administrative and clerical staff (three females, five males, and one transgender), all of whom are of Asian and/or Pacific Islander descent.

Four hundred youth are served through the H.O.P.E. Program, 70 percent of which are male, and 30 percent female. Ninety-five percent of the clientele served is under the age of 17.



H.O.P.E.

Clients have the following ethnic affiliations: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Hmong, Cambodian, Thai, Samoan, Vietnamese, and multiracial A&PI youth.

RECRUITMENT & STAFFING

In the recruitment process, A&PI Wellness Center looks for specific skills, including: sensitivity to marginalized populations, especially Men Who Have Sex With Men, transgender, women working in massage parlors, queer youth, and HIV positive clients. A&PI Wellness Center celebrates its diverse staff composition, and staff members look for candidates that demonstrate openness in learning about others. Clients are asked to be members of the hiring teams that give feedback on candidates. A&PI Wellness Center assesses the biases, attitudes, and body language of candidates as shown in the applicant’s resume, the interview process, and reference checks. The hiring team’s feedback plays a major role in assessing the applicant’s level of awareness.

Staff are open—“out”—and willing to process with youth, issues of sexual health in an environment that both supports and normalizes the experience of being Asian and Pacific Islander. The youth focus, in addition to the competencies in youth and API cultures, gives the staff and the organization an expertise in the “industry” of promoting and delivering sexual, physical, and emotional wellness.

A&PI Wellness Center staff members participate in a series of ongoing training and supervision activities that enhance their professional development. All new staff members are required to attend the agency’s two and a half day volunteer training, which consists of sessions in sexual diversity,

cultural diversity, an HIV positive panel, peer counseling, prevention and outreach philosophy, among other areas. Additional training is provided for staff through multiple forums, including:

- 1) weekly program staff meetings,
- 2) bi-weekly meetings with supervisors,
- 3) monthly in-service trainings,
- 4) monthly case-sharing conferences with the Deputy Director,
- 5)

semi-annual staff retreats focused on development, teamwork, and self-care, 6) the provision of a \$300 allowance to participate in external trainings, workshops, and conferences, 7) annual staff performance evaluations and development

plans, and 8) certification as HIV testing and counselors through a five-day training offered by AIDS Health Project, funded by San Francisco's Department of Public Health.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Individuals have different abilities to process race and ethnicity issues in the H.O.P.E. program, especially those coming from other countries that are ethnically stratified. Youth who participate in “check-in” processes may not be clear about the differences between “race” and “ethnicity.” This population of youth needs room to process, at their varying levels, their own interpretations of race and ethnicity. As professionals, A&PI Wellness Center counselors allow room for these variances, without being judgmental, academic, or political, and instead, give youth the space they need to articulate their ideas about what it means to be Asian or Pacific Islander. Sometimes “processing where the youth are at” involves not having a specific answer about where they should be—part of that work includes examining power relationships.

The Peer Leader Program, operated out of San Francisco's Juvenile Hall (Youth Guidance Center), as well as the program that convenes at the A&PI Wellness Center have a familial atmosphere. Youth and counselors convene in a series of informal settings—roundtables and lounges—to engage youth in comfortable conversations in which they share their feelings on a variety of topics, including, in some instances, their court cases.

DIVERSITY & CHANGE

A&PI Wellness Center has gone through several changes since its inception to better serve the changing Asian and Pacific Islander communities in San Francisco. Along with changing demographics, part of what guides the program's emphases are the issues that are articulated by youth. For example, API youth who participate in the program differ in how they define being an “American.” Many youth are quick to associate being American with being a “White American,” while many others claim America as their own, regardless of their ethnic affiliation and background. This has led to the program and its counselors remaining flexible and willing to engage youth in multiple learning environments. For instance, for Women's Wellness Day, A&PI Wellness Center brings in acupuncturists and others who practice non-Western traditions.

Having an all-Asian and Pacific Islander setting and staff is therapeutic to youth who have not had that in other agencies. In this context, the issue of racial identity is somewhat

normalized, and youth are free to address other issues. In the Youth Guidance Center, Asian and Pacific Islander youth are a “minority.” At A&PI Wellness Center, they like being in an environment where they do not have to address some of the racial and ethnic stereotypes that they battle in juvenile hall—they feel safer.

A&PI Wellness Center also demonstrates its celebration of diversity through its participation in the larger API community. The organization is involved in the following ways:

- ▶ Participates in street fairs, health fairs, HIV prevention Planning Councils, and cultural festivals.
- ▶ Publicizes in multi-ethnic media outlets (such as the Filipino Guardian, BaySpo, and Asian Week).
- ▶ Provides technical assistance to Asian and Pacific Islander agencies nationally and locally.
- ▶ Coordinates Asian and Pacific Islanders Pride Stage as a part of San Francisco Pride festivities.

In addition, the agency established a Cultural Competency Task Force to address issues of cultural competence within a culturally and sexually diverse agency.

CLIENT-CENTERED PROGRAMMING

The H.O.P.E. program philosophy is that all services are “client-centered.” Program approach is to take the lead from clients on prioritizing issues to address, even if they fall outside the scope of HIV issues. Because the program serves youth, it is important for the agency to reach out to Asian and Pacific Islander youth at many levels in the community. H.O.P.E. recruits participants where they live and socialize, including coffee houses, bowling alleys, and pool halls. Asian and Pacific Islander youth in high-risk situations tend to share information via social networks. Youth clients have shown that they are comfortable using A&PI Wellness Center and sharing information about these services with their friends or partners. Additionally, a regular staff presence at social venues builds trust and facilitates service access. This is critical, especially for immigrant youth, whose isolation and daily survival needs commonly prevent them from actively seeking services.

The approach that is taken with Asian youth with non-traditional sexual orientations includes using generic terms, such as “partner,” in reference to a loved one or intimate. Given that there are no cultures that openly embrace gay/

lesbian/bisexual/transgender youth, it is challenging to provide them with the space to feel comfortable with “queer people.” People do not have to be totally comfortable, but they have to be willing to try. When youth express some discomfort, or when they have questions about why they might be putting together condom packages for the Gay Pride parade, API counselors remind them of the ongoing relationship between A&PI Wellness Center and members of the gay community. For example, youth might not have been aware that someone who is gay donated furniture to their program, or that the Yosemite trip was funded by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a gay social activist group in San Francisco. In addition, when youth are interviewed to become peer leaders in the H.O.P.E. program, they are asked how they feel about working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people so that they can be informed early on about the diversity of sexual orientations in the workplace. This allows youth to feel safe expressing themselves with others who might be experimenting, gay, or bisexual.

Asian and Pacific Islander counselors work with youth to overcome racial and ethnic stereotypes through discussion groups and workshops, as well as guest presenters that talk to youth about other ethnic groups in San Francisco. Specific talks have targeted the strained relationships between African American and Asian American youth in the city. These issues are treated as ongoing topics of discussion; resolving racial and ethnic conflicts is an extremely difficult task.



H.O.P.E.

EVALUATION

The program has three articulated goals and a series of process and outcome objectives. The specific goals of the program include: improving the mental well-being of clients and imparting knowledge on healthy sexuality among Asian and Pacific Islander youth; building leadership within the Asian and Pacific Islander youth community; and developing life skills among H.O.P.E. Peer Leaders and other program participants.

Specific process and outcome objectives state that by June 30, 2003:

- ▶ The H.O.P.E. Coordinator will have provided individual risk reduction counseling services to 20 unduplicated clients at the Youth Guidance Center

and on-site at the A&PI Wellness Center to discuss issues of HIV/AIDS, STDs, sexual relationships, and other health-related concerns.

- ▶ Sixty-five percent of the individual risk-reduction counseling services clients (n=20) will have reported a 50 percent increase in knowledge on sexual health and/or an increase in decisionmaking skills as documented in behavioral risk assessments at intake and after three months.
- ▶ The H.O.P.E. Coordinator will have conducted weekly two-hour sexual health rap groups and educational workshops reaching 60 clients.
- ▶ Sixty-five percent of workshop participants (n=60) will have reported a 50 percent increase in knowledge on sexual health, sexual diversity, and related health issues as documented in session notes.
 - ▶ The H.O.P.E. Coordinator will have trained and deployed five clients as Peer Leaders through weekly two-hour peer leadership training sessions.
 - ▶ The H.O.P.E. Coordinator and Peer Leaders will have reached 40 youth through peer leader contacts and presentations.
 - ▶ Eighty percent of trained Peer Leaders (n=5) will have a 50 percent increased awareness of HIV/AIDS-related health issues, and will have gained skills to facilitate three presentations and trainings to youth and adults (at venues such as schools, youth agencies, and conferences, as documented in workshop agendas and session notes.
- ▶ Sixty percent of youth (n=40) will be reached through peer leader contact and presentations and will have a 50 percent increased awareness of HIV/AIDS and related health issues as documented by session notes and evaluation forms.
- ▶ The H.O.P.E. Coordinator will have conducted three Life Skills Events for 15 youth.

After completing the Life Skills Events, 60 percent of the participants (n=15) will report a 50 percent increase in knowledge of sexual health and sexual diversity, and develop two life skills (such as decision making, trip planning, risk taking) as documented in internal agency units of service forms before and after the Life Skills Events.

UNITED CAMBODIAN CULTURE CLUB (UCCC)

UCCC is a youth program of Cambodian Community Development, Inc. (CCDI), a grassroots, volunteer-based organization founded by a group of concerned community activists in 1997 to assist Cambodian refugees in Oakland, California, to overcome social, cultural, and economic barriers to independence and self-sufficiency. The youth program began in 2001 when CCDI's adult clientele wanted a program for their children. It was designed to address several conditions within the Cambodian youth community:

- ▶ Cambodian parents and youth were experiencing conflict, with neither having the tools to mitigate the situation.
- ▶ The traumatic experiences of the adults in Cambodia, refugee camps, and resettlement to Oakland prevented them from fully engaging with their children, and youth were not receiving the support and guidance that they needed, e.g., bonding between youth and parent, encouragement, and the ability to discuss issues important to them.
- ▶ Several Cambodian youth had been killed in gang conflicts, and there was a fear within the community that gang members would become role models for youth.
- ▶ Cambodian youth were not graduating from high school.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Youth in the United Cambodian Culture Club (UCCC) are provided leadership development, opportunities to be involved in advocacy and civic participation, cultural classes and activities, language study, case management, and recreational activities. In addition, as part of their community service, the youth provide academic tutoring to about 20 children aged 7-12 years on a weekly basis. They plan, raise funds for, organize, and implement various activities that they collectively decide upon, including camping trips and events for disadvantaged families. Members of the organization are recruited primarily through the youths' personal contacts.

One of the responsibilities for youth is to complete school work before participation in programs. Youth's progress is constantly evaluated by asking them about exams and

schoolwork and helping them prepare, if necessary. This is a program element because the majority of Cambodian parents are disconnected from the lives of their children, don't look at report cards, and possibly do not know how to help their children.

The United Cambodian Culture Club has a full-time Coordinator of the youth program, and the Executive Director (ED) of CCDI works with UCCC on a part-time basis. Both staff members are Cambodian Americans who are bilingual, in their 20s, and ethnoculturally similar to the youths in the program. Twelve unpaid youth leaders identify needs of youth in the Culture Club through conversation with the other youth, and plan and implement the activities for the Club. Parents volunteer in a number of ways, including providing transportation or food for youth activities, but do not wish to be involved in any systematic way. The Board of Directors for CCDI is comprised of 13 members: seven female, six male, all Cambodian, with the exception of one White person.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The philosophy of the program holds that, knowledge of their own culture and history provides youth with the foundation to promote intergenerational understanding, effective communication, and development of skills, leadership, and trust. The ED of CCDI and the Coordinator of the UCCC program believed they needed to bridge the generation gap within the Cambodian community and educate youth about Cambodian culture, the values of their parents, what it means to be Cambodian American, and how to incorporate American values into their lives. This process included learning about the Khmer Rouge era in Cambodia—the genocidal period during the 1970s—why their parents left Cambodia to enter the refugee camps in Thailand, and then eventually, their resettlement to the U.S. by the Office of Refugee Services. Another focus is a literacy program to ensure that the Cambodian language remains alive in this country, and to improve communication between parents and youth. Also included is an emphasis on arts and culture; youth learn Cambodian folk dances and songs, such as the coconut dance, as well as hip hop, and perform at community events such as Cambodian New Years.

UCCC emphasizes Cambodian cultural values, such as collectivism, helping others, respect for elders, and doing things for the good of the community. This translates into



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programmatic activities such as group decision making about projects or activities, tutoring younger children at New Hope Church, discussing the nuances of communicating intergenerationally (use a different tone, different language), reinforcing respect, developing trust with parents, and initiating community service projects.

Communication with parents, with elders in the community, and with peers in school are skills that are cultivated in UCCC. The ED and Coordinator believe in bridging the generation gap in the Cambodian community at several levels. Youth listen to rap, dress like other American youth, are taught to be assertive, to seek challenges, and to think for themselves by American values taught at school, through the media, and peers. At home, Cambodian parents try to inculcate a conflicting set of values: do as you're told, don't ask questions, show respect to elders (don't talk back even though they're wrong), and bring honor to the family.

Cambodian parents complain that their children stay out late, don't talk to them, slam doors, and are rude. Cambodian youth say they want more communication with their parents—they want their parents to ask rather than make assumptions about their activities outside of home. The Coordinator encourages youth to have nonconfrontational conversations with their parents. He wants to dispel the image among parents that youth culture is bad, therefore, the program focuses on homework, and community service. He suggests that parents be flexible, that they reward good behavior, and that they maintain a balance between strictness and indulgence. The Coordinator keeps in constant contact with the parents, informing them about activities that are scheduled and how they can be involved—key to parental trust. Parents tell the Coordinator that youth behavior is changing—they don't slam the door anymore. He notes that a generation of Cambodian parents had no parental role models themselves due to the conditions in the refugee camps, and to earlier conditions in

Cambodia, when parents and children were frequently separated during the Khmer Rouge period.

Youth say that participating in UCCC has taught them how to handle disputes and “drama,” and to talk out disagreements among their peers. Several indicated they were scared to speak up at first, but they learned to do this through their close-knit group of friends and not through their families.

The ED says the program's strength is that the adult staff members always speak the truth to the youth, and as a result, the youth trust the staff.

In addition, an important element of the program is to have staff that have the “heart” to help the community. This is exemplified in the coordinator's statement that, “You help people out of respect, that's an unwritten rule.” Individuals become culturally competent by “entering situations with an open heart, seeing things with clarity and unlearn what you have learned.” Trust is important for program success in the Cambodian community and is built over a period of time as the organization consistently meets the needs of the community members.

Youth say the organization functions “almost like a family—sometimes a dysfunctional family,” but they work their way through it. The youth see the Coordinator as a mentor, a guide, the “older brother you never wanted.” They perceive him to be their representative to the “big boss” (ED). He teaches them to be more organized, pushes them to get things done, and keeps everyone calm.

RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING

Twelve youth leaders are responsible for communicating with the other youth and the Coordinator; together they plan the program. The organization has a President, a Vice President, and committees on recreation and sports, research and policy, and website and graphic arts. Each member is part of a group and everyone is expected to develop responsibility and leadership skills. In this way, issues germane to growth and development of youth are at the heart of UCCC's program. In the past these have included: Southeast Asian history; Cambodian American identity; political education (for instance, how the phobia about different sexual preferences came about); gang issues in the Cambodian community; resources and programs for youth; deportation of Cambodians; traditional aspects of Cambodian dances and language; improving family relationships; and organizing community service projects.

CLIENT-CENTERED PROGRAM PLANNING

Although the ED and Coordinator collaboratively guide the program, the activities are based upon ideas generated by the youth. The youth plan and execute every aspect of their projects, including raising money for their activities, developing timelines and work plans, and organizing work groups to achieve their final goals. Youth develop financial, planning, and organizational skills as well as knowledge of established systems. The ED and Coordinator assist as needed, including coordinating with parents if appropriate.

The ED and Coordinator are in their 20s and are considered youngsters by many in the community. The staff model behavior that the elders in the community consider to be appropriate. For example, they work with trusted elders rather than to confront or advocate directly, which would be considered disrespectful. Both the ED and the Coordinator are bilingual.

The Club focuses upon Cambodian history and relevant contemporary issues. Because their families don't celebrate Cambodian culture, youth say that the Club helps them understand more about their community, their parents, and themselves, and to become involved politically in the community. The youth indicate that newly found awareness on some issues has given them political views different from those of their parents, but has not resulted in conflict. The club endorses issues and events and supports other groups in the larger community.

Members of the Club can be of any ethnicity as long as they accept the cultural basis for the program; the Club doesn't force Cambodian culture on the youth. Youth state that they try not to be "too Cambodian" and to be open to other cultures.

EVALUATION

The intended outcomes of the program are that the youth:

- ▶ Develop pride in being Cambodian.
- ▶ Keep their history to impart to the next generation.
- ▶ Develop and keep a commitment to the community.
- ▶ Respect different cultures.
- ▶ Develop responsibility.
- ▶ Prevent involvement with gangs.
- ▶ Prevent teen pregnancy.
- ▶ Graduate from college.
- ▶ Get a good education and good jobs.

To date, no formal evaluation has been conducted of the program, but the ED, Coordinator, and youth evaluate the program every several months to ensure that it stays on track. They discuss what is happening, future plans, and the needs of the youth. The first year that the program will have pre- and post-scores on several measures as part of an informal examination of outcomes is 2003. A measure of program success is that the youth continue to attend regardless of monetary incentives. In addition, five members of the Club graduated from high school in June and were accepted at various campuses of the University of California for the fall of 2003. None are involved with gangs, nor have any youth become parents.



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ENDING NOTES

Cultural competence is characterized by careful attention to the dynamics of difference between values, beliefs, and experiences of the diverse groups of people in our society. It involves accepting and respecting those differences, continuing to self-assess with regard to culture, and expanding of cultural knowledge to better understand the needs and strengths of different cultural groups. These elements must be present in every aspect of service, evaluation approach, and methodology (REFT Institute, 2002).

The programs for youth described in this publication are firmly grounded in the principle that youth's best resources are in the communities from which they come. This is starkly different from non-culturally competent models that reinforce the idea that youth of color must go outside of their communities for services. For example, in many mentoring programs, a "match" is often emphasized where a working professional (often White and middle-class) volunteers to work with populations that are neither White nor middle-class. Although these partnerships can produce positive results, they reinforce in the minds of youth that their role models are not from their own communities and not of the same ethnicity or gender (Hodge, 2002).

Cultural competence for Asian and Pacific Islander youth is multi-layered and includes an array of influences on the development of their lives: some traditional, others contemporary; some conscious and others unconscious; some clearly articulated, others still evolving. As the population of youth who are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent continues to grow and change in the San Francisco Bay Area, it will be increasingly important to understand their cultures and develop appropriate models of working with them. The models will be aided by learning about their complex lives in the United States, their ethnic backgrounds, and their social and cultural affiliations, which may or may not mirror those of their families. National and local political climates that are increasingly anti-immigrant and anti-People of color negatively impact API youth's and families' adjustment and feeling of acceptance in American society, making it a critical time for program staff to support the healthy and creative development of youth through culturally competent policies, procedures, and practices.

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This report has been prepared by the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, a collaborative effort between the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The API Center is a gathering place for researchers and API communities to engage in dialogue about issues relevant to violence prevention in API communities. This collaboration has grown to include fifteen community partner organizations from a variety of disciplines including public health, medicine, sociology, ethnic studies, psychology, women's studies, criminal justice, and community-based and grassroots organizations providing direct services to APIs in need. The API Center is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The aims are: 1) to mobilize and collaborate with community-based organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions, and juvenile justice agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy and community plan to reduce API youth violence; 2) to develop and conduct research on prevention of API youth violence using sophisticated methods and state-of-the-art technology, in collaboration with social and human services agencies; 3) to disseminate research findings and provide a national resource for prevention research and promising and effective prevention programs on API youths; 4) to train and develop new researchers in the area of violence prevention research; and 5) to develop a training curriculum for health professionals on API youth violence prevention.

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