



Priorities for Action for the Michigan Asian Pacific American Community

A summary of findings by the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission
May 2016

The Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (MAPAAC) is a 21 member statewide commission focused on advancing the full and equal participation of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in the building of a greater Michigan.

In 2015, MAPAAC hosted 11 town hall meetings with partner organizations across Michigan to listen to and document the prevailing needs and concerns of APAs in Michigan.¹ In addition, MAPAAC conducted its own needs assessment survey, collecting 207 responses.²

Three main areas of concern emerged from town hall participants and survey respondents: (1) difficulty navigating a new system, culture and language; (2) difficulty accessing public services; (3) lack of resources for community centers.

In the following section, we expand on these areas of concern and present our initial recommendations, which we plan to explore in greater depth in 2016 with our APA partners, elected officials, and community leaders.

APAs face major hurdles navigating a new system, culture and language

1. APA seniors that are limited English proficient struggle to find resources and services that assist with learning English.
2. APA students in K-12 schools experience bullying based on their appearance
3. International students and recent immigrants from Asia report difficulty in navigating and understanding American social and business etiquette; the legal, financial and political systems; and social services.

Our initial recommendations are:

¹We focused our town halls to the prominent ethnic nationalities in that location to target our outreach and draw larger crowds (we averaged 50 in attendance across town halls). We held town halls in Southfield for the Filipino and Korean communities, Farmington Hills for the South Asian community, Ann Arbor for the Chinese, Korean, South Asian and Taiwanese communities, Sterling Heights for the Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Laos, Thai communities, Grand Rapids for the at-large APA community, Battle Creek for the Burmese community, Troy for the Laos community, Northville for the Chinese community, and Madison Heights for the Chinese community.

²89% of survey respondents were in the 40-59 age group, 11% were in the 18-39 age group; 40% were male, 57% were female, 3% did not report; 69% foreign-born, 25% US-born, 6% did not report.

1. Expand the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in APA locations with high concentration of new immigrants and/or senior citizens.
2. Train school teachers and school officials on how to identify and respond to bullying toward APA students.
3. Increase resources and opportunities for international students and recent immigrants to learn how to navigate various social, professional, legal, financial, and political environments.

APAs face difficulty accessing public services

1. APAs report being unaware of or uncertain of how to access available public programs and services, such as health and human services, public safety programs, and information on legislative activity.
2. APAs report lack of awareness around elderly and disabled related to home care benefits and services, Medicare/Medicaid benefits, and on-call transportation, and issues that are critical to their quality of life.

Our initial recommendations are:

1. Provide outreach materials covering public service programs and service to APA community leaders and coordinate APA open forums with state program representatives.
2. Partner with APA organizations to distribute materials and report other barriers to accessing programs and benefits.

APAs lack resources for community centers

1. APAs see community centers as hubs for providing services, such as youth mentorship and mental health programs, and preserving cultural identity; however, many APAs report lack of assistance and resources in launching and sustaining community centers.

Our initial recommendation is:

1. Provide information on existing funds available to support community centers and provide more grant and loan opportunities to operate community centers.

Questions or comments? Please contact MAPAAC at mapaac@michigan.gov

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