

## Strategies for Behavioral Health Organizations to Promote New Health Insurance Opportunities

### *In Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities*

The **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** provides new health care options for Americans. The ACA brings affordable health insurance coverage and expanded access to mental health and substance use disorder services to millions of Americans. Community



outreach and enrollment efforts can play a vital role in making sure that uninsured individuals learn about new health insurance opportunities. Organizations, including behavioral health providers, working with Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) individuals and families face unique outreach and enrollment challenges. Some of these challenges include an insufficient number of trained bilingual staff, lack of staff with the language and cultural skills to do effective outreach and engagement, distrust of or lack of information about the western health care system, great diversity between AANHPI subgroups, and financial barriers such as high-out-of-pocket medical expenses and prescription costs.

This strategy brief provides **10 strategies** that your organization can use to help introduce AANHPI individuals and families to the new health insurance options. Examples are provided from organizations that have successfully used these strategies.

# Outreach and Enrollment Strategies

## 1 *Adapt Materials to Be Appropriate for Your Community*

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There are a number of federal and state resources available for educating individuals about health care enrollment and insurance plans. Determine if these resources can be more effective if they are adapted for your community. Translate resources into other languages or consider putting the information into a format that is more likely to be accepted in your community. The Montgomery County Asian American Health Initiative, Maryland, creates culturally and linguistically tailored health education materials for the Asian American community in English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Hindi.

## 2 *Provide a Personal Approach*

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Using fliers and pamphlets, particularly if they are not in the appropriate language, is not sufficient for engaging AANHPI communities. Instead, rely on trusted members of the community to answer questions and address concerns. The Asian Pacific Development Center, Colorado, and Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation, Inc., Louisiana, use trusted community members to schedule meetings outside of standard working hours and set up meetings in the community.



## 3 *Use a Behavioral Health Peer Model*

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Employing staff that reflect the diverse AANHPI communities can lead to increased trust, flexibility, and knowledge of the community needs. Peers are effective in doing outreach and engaging others because of their personal experience. Peers have a commitment to working with others who have similar lived experiences. The Asian Pacific Family Clinic, California, relies on bilingual peer staff to help educate and engage community members in their Health Wise integrated health and behavioral health program. Likewise, the Filipino American Service Group, Inc., California, uses a behavioral health peer model to assist homeless AANHPIs and others through individualized service plans, case management, and job training.

## 4 *Use Language Familiar to Your Community*

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AANHPIs represent over 30 countries and ethnic groups that speak over 100 different languages. Some AANHPI communities have few native English speakers. It is essential to provide bilingual staff to help individuals understand and enroll in health insurance programs. The Special Service for Groups, California, employs multi-ethnic, multilingual staff members who communicate in English, Cantonese, Hmong, Igarot, Ilocano, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Samoan, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Visaiyan.

## 5 *Incorporate Community Perspectives*

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Ensure that your staff are familiar with the community and aware of traditional customs, traditions, and sociopolitical histories. Develop strategies that take into consideration local politics, religious beliefs, immigration status, and historical experiences of the community. Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI), California, holds South Bay First Thursdays (SBFT). This is a monthly dinner/discussion to engage young AANHPIs interested in supporting community activities throughout the South Bay area. AACI invites panelists to SBFT to provide expert opinions to audience members, bringing professionals to

the community. SBFT provides a forum for incorporating community experiences and expert opinions into discussion about activities and strategies to promote health care.

## **6** *Partner With Community Organizations*

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Partner with community programs, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and cultural centers to maximize your outreach. Community Health for Asian Americans, California, has developed collaborative relationships with over 50 other local health and non-health organizations. Together these organizations work to improve access to culturally competent services and to encourage awareness about mental health services. Likewise, the Hale Na'au Pono, Hawaii, works closely with community organizations to support their Ka Wahi Kaiaulu-Wai'anae Neighborhood Place program. These programs engage community members in supporting each other and provide information, education, and resources.

## **7** *Integrate Your Message Into Community Events*

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Provide opportunities for individuals to learn about and enroll in health care programs. Incorporate your message into community events and celebrations. The Vietnamese Youth Development Center (VYDC), California, regularly hosts cultural events, such as the annual Autumn Moon festival. It provides community members with basic health insurance and Medicaid enrollment information. Similarly, Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Washington, brings its message to over 1,000 people through Walk for Rice. This annual 2.5 mile walk/run raises awareness and funds their food bank, which supports over 5,000 AANHPIs.

## **8** *Create a Central Location for Resources*

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Create a resource library for community members to access health care information. This could be an online library or could be located in the community where interested individuals can seek information and access your staff. The Center for Healthy Independence, California, is a self-help center focused on the AANHPI population offering culturally and linguistically appropriate information and services.



## **9** *Use Media As a Resource*

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To expand your outreach, use media resources such as local talk radio, television programs, church or temple newsletters, and community magazines. Electronic media such as a local websites, Facebook group pages, text messages, and emails can also be effective ways to reach your audience. Ethnic media outlets geared toward AANHPI audiences are especially effective. Hale Na'au Pono, Wai'aenai Community Mental Health Center, Hawaii, uses the Hawaiian Potpourri radio show and television program to share and disseminate information about the services they provide to a broad audience.

## **10** *Address Barriers*

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Be aware of challenges that can keep individuals from receiving information, understanding the information, and enrolling in a health plan. The Fu Yau Project of the Richmond Area Multi-Services, Inc., California, integrates a mental health consultant as part of the staff at a community child development center. In this familiar environment, families are more likely to talk about health concerns.

## **About the Strategies for Behavioral Health Organizations to Promote New Health Insurance Opportunities Series**

This strategy brief is part of a series that highlights strategies that behavioral health organizations can use to disseminate information on the Affordable Care Act and help individuals with behavioral health conditions learn about health insurance opportunities. Strategy briefs are available that address strategies for working with the following communities:

- **African American,**
- **American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN),**
- **Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI),** and
- **Latino and Hispanic.**

The content for each strategy brief was developed in partnership with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration based on case studies provided by the National Latino Behavioral Health Association, National Leadership Council on African American Behavioral Health, National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association, and National Council of Urban Indian Health.

Please visit the National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health NNEDshare website at <http://share.nned.net> for more outreach and enrollment practices or for more information about any of the organizations featured in the series.

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### **Additional Resources**

The Marketplace Call Center provides educational information about the Health Insurance Marketplace and assists consumers with application completion and plan selection. In addition to English and Spanish, assistance is available in more than 150 languages through an interpretation and translation service. Contact the call center at 1-800-318-2596; hearing impaired callers using TTY/TDD technology can dial 1-855-889-4325.

**HealthCare.gov** is the official website of the Health Insurance Marketplace, providing the latest information about health insurance coverage and enrollment.

Resources for individuals and organizations providing outreach and enrollment assistance are available at <http://marketplace.cms.gov/>.

The Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) provides regularly updated information on health insurance policies and regulations at <http://cms.gov/CCIIO/>.



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