

HEALTH through ACTION



NEW YORK CITY—Project CHARGE

New York State budget cuts for core services—including education, child welfare, and health care—will have a direct and disproportionate impact on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in New York City. Racial and ethnic disparities in access to quality health care are increasing. Low-income residents are especially adversely affected, because their need for services is increasing at the same time that fewer services are available.

ONE MESSAGE, MANY VOICES

Project CHARGE (Coalition for Health Access to Reach Greater Equity) is the first pan-Asian coalition for health care in New York City. Its 15 partner organizations work together to increase access to quality health care in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.*

One out of every eight New Yorkers is an Asian American or Pacific Islander.



About one in eight of these is uninsured



Eight out of 10 of these uninsured were foreign-born



New York City is home to almost a million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—more than in any other U.S. city. This large group is geographically dispersed in the five boroughs and includes people from more than 40 cultures and ethnic groups who speak more than 150 languages and dialects.

For Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, access to culturally competent health care is hampered for many reasons—some people are worried about their immigration status or have language barriers,

others lack health insurance or cannot afford care, and still others want to avoid the stigma of using public benefits. Many are self-employed, work for small employers, or work in cash-based businesses—such as restaurants, taxi driving, or domestic service—that rarely offer health benefits.

TOP PRIORITY: HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Increasing access to public and private, employer-based health insurance coverage is key for improving Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' access to timely medical care and necessary preventive services. Project CHARGE advocates expanded services for people enrolling in public plans, including culturally competent and language-accessible enrollment initiatives that are targeted to this community. For example, Project CHARGE partners have urged the New York State Department of Health and New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation to make their outreach and education campaigns for public health insurance (Child Health Plus, Family Health

Photos (l to r): Nailyn Abesamis-Mendoza, Project CHARGE director; Flushing, New York; Suki Terada Ports of the Family Health Project; and Henry Soliveres, community health worker. Photographs © Adam Stoltman

**A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM FUNDED BY WK KELLOGG FOUNDATION
TO CLOSE HEALTH GAPS FOR ASIAN AMERICANS, NATIVE HAWAIIANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS**

PROJECT CHARGE PARTNERS RATE THEIR ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROJECT AS "VERY SUPPORTIVE" (9 MEMBERS) OR "EXTREMELY SUPPORTIVE" (5 MEMBERS)

Reports project evaluator John Chin

Plus, and Medicaid) culturally and linguistically responsive to Asian American and Pacific Islanders' needs.

"Access to health care is a huge issue for all immigrants," said Noilyn Abesamis-Mendoza, Project CHARGE director. "Our coalition members see how health care access depends not just on insurance, but also on being able to understand and navigate the health care system."

REIMBURSEMENT NEEDED FOR "ENABLING SERVICES"

Americans with limited English and new immigrants have a hard time coping with the city's complicated health care system. For that reason, Project CHARGE seeks to expand critical "enabling services," such as language assistance, transportation, outreach, health education, and case management. If hospitals, clinics, and community health centers were reimbursed for such services, they could better serve the city's diverse communities.

BUILDING ADVOCACY CAPACITY

Project CHARGE actively promotes collective efforts to improve policies, funding, and pan-Asian interests in health care access and quality. Project CHARGE partners use their growing policy advocacy experience and leadership in the City's Asian American and Pacific Islander community to rally coalition members around issues plaguing the health care system.

The state's health budget will undergo significant changes because of health care reform and the gloomy fiscal picture. Project CHARGE partners work to make sure that the Asian American and Pacific Islander community participates in the decision-making process about these changes. Project CHARGE convened an Advocacy Institute to provide partners with information about the budget development and legislative processes. The Advocacy Institute offered interactive role-playing opportunities and strategy planning sessions.

Participating in the coalition has been a positive experience for Piali Basu, coordinator for the South Asian Health Initiative. "Other than the Coalition for Asian American Children & Families (CACF), none of the other organizations in the Project CHARGE coalition have had any formal advocacy training or experience," she said. Now agencies such as hers are joining forces to participate in "the advocacy world."

LOOKING FORWARD

"The program has evolved in response to opportunities," said Suki Terada Ports of the Family Health Project. "We will continue to monitor what is happening at a national level

regarding health care reform and how it will affect local health care programs and our communities."

Another goal, according to Abesamis-Mendoza, is "to address the widest breadth of Asians living here. To that end, we hope to expand our reach and work with organizations that can represent the Southeast Asian communities of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that are smaller in population size and expand our network within the growing South Asian communities."

The greatest organizational challenge Project CHARGE faces is the tight fiscal climate. Raising funds from private foundations, corporations, and individual donors is increasingly difficult, as is sparing staff to participate in initiatives that are outside an organization's core responsibilities. Despite these challenges, partners are committed to working toward their shared vision of health equity for the city's Asian American and Pacific Islander residents.

PROJECT CHARGE'S DIVERSE PARTNERS ARE:

- Asian Americans for Equality—a community development organization
- Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS—a pan-Asian HIV/AIDS clinic
- Center for Study of Asian American Health at New York University—a research center
- Charles B. Wang Community Health Center—a federally qualified health clinic
- Child Center of New York—a licensed mental health and substance abuse clinic
- Chinese-American Planning Council—a social service organization
- Coalition for Asian American Children and Families—a pan-Asian children's advocacy organization
- Family Health Project—a public advocacy and prevention education organization
- Henry Street Settlement—a provider of many health, behavioral, and support services
- Kalusugan Coalition—a Filipino health coalition
- Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York—a social service organization
- MAAWS for Global Welfare—a Bangladeshi community-based organization
- New York Asian Women's Center—a pan-Asian domestic violence organization
- NYU South Asian Health Initiative—an outreach and education initiative
- John Chin, Ph.D., Hunter College—the project evaluator

* The project, directed by the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), is one of eight coalitions in the four-year, \$16.5-million Health Through Action program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and developed in partnership with the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum.

PROJECT CHARGE

50 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004
Tel: 212-809-4675 Email: cafc@cafc.org

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