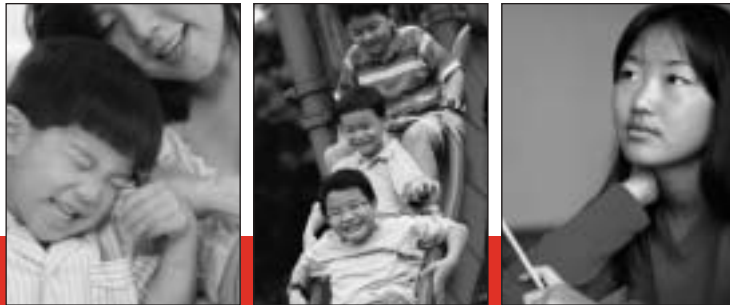


Promising Approaches in Youth Development and Risk Prevention for

ASIAN AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER YOUTH



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

PREPARED BY

Larke Nahme Huang

Yumi Lee

Girlyn Arganza



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Acknowledgments

Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans are a numerically small but rapidly growing segment of the United States population. They are an extremely diverse population in terms of ethnicity, language, socioeconomic and educational status, level of acculturation and residency status. Some ethnic groups have been in the U.S. for multiple generations, others are more recent immigrants and refugees and part of newly emerging communities. The needs, challenges and strengths of this population have been sorely overlooked by mainstream services and institutions and they have often sought help through alternative pathways, not necessarily accessing existing services or supports. The needs of AAPI youth have received little attention as they have been stereotypically depicted as either academic “whiz kids” or dangerous “gang members.”

In this document we have tried to “fill in the blanks” about this youth population. We have attempted to provide a richer understanding of AAPI youth, the developmental and social challenges they confront, the inherent strengths within their culture and communities, and the effective approaches of community programs to meet the needs of these youth and their families.

We would like to recognize and graciously thank the many knowledgeable and helpful people who made this project possible. First, at the Center for Mental Health Services, Ms. Kana Enomoto and Dr. Tiffany Ho provided the vision and leadership for the Asian American and Pacific Islander Mental Health Summit in July 1999 that led to the recommendation for this project. Mr. Michael English, the director of the Division of Knowledge Development and Systems Change and Dr. Anne Mathews-Younes, branch chief of the Special Programs Development Branch, provided the support and “home” for this project. Dr. Malcolm Gordon and Ms. Shelly Hara, the project officers, gave steady support, guidance and patience, persevering with us through the “long haul.”

The wisdom of a talented work group was essential in helping to define the direction of the study, identify promising approaches to youth development and violence prevention, and understand the various ethnic communities and best approaches for intervention. The work group reflected the diversity of the AAPI population, as described above, and included federal policy makers, directors of AAPI community-based organizations and national organizations, academic and applied researchers, AAPI ethnic family members and youth, practitioners and community evaluators. Their leadership and guidance was essential.

The individuals who participated in lengthy phone interviews and opened their sites to us provided the substance for this document. We learned from these individuals who are doing the hard work of addressing the needs of youth and families in their communities, sometimes struggling with daunting obstacles and often with limited financial resources. They told us what they were doing, why they were doing it and what was working. We have written this report in “their voices” to capture the richness of their information and experience. Their candid responses and thoughtful reflections are important advice to other programs and communities. We are very grateful for their time and commitment to sharing their experiences and wisdom.

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■ Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iii
Introduction	1
A Snapshot: Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI) Youth and Risk Behaviors	3
A Risk and Protective Framework for Youth Development	7
Adapting the Framework for AAPI Youth	9
Mapping the Framework onto Culturally-Focused Youth Programs	11
An Examination of AAPI Youth Development Programs: What Works?	13
The Study Approach.....	13
Voices from the Field: Findings from the Interviews	15
Do AAPI Youth Programs Align with a Culturally-Based Risk and Protective Framework?	17
What are Key Program Objectives in a Cultural Context?	25
What are Strategies for Implementing AAPI Youth Development Programs?	31
What are the Barriers and Challenges for AAPI Youth Programs?	35
What are Critical Factors for Sustaining Programs?	39
Policy Implications and Conclusions	43
Appendix A: Work Group Members	54

■ Introduction

Twenty-five percent of adolescents in the United States are at serious risk of not achieving “productive adulthood.” They face risks such as substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, school failure, and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2002). While public investments have made great strides since the late 1980s in increasing high school graduation rates and decreasing serious violent juvenile crime and teen pregnancies, there are other indicators of concern, such as increases in school violence, HIV infection, substance abuse, and suicidal behavior in youth. Current social trends have altered the landscape for developing adolescents. Informal community support and cohesion have been weakened by high rates of family mobility and greater anonymity in neighborhoods where more parents are at work. Schools have become larger and more impersonal. New forms of ongoing media have increased exposure to themes of violence and alcohol and drug use and a combination of crime, drugs and poverty has resulted in deterioration of neighborhoods and schools. Concurrently, the increasingly technical and multicultural complexities of society are placing new challenges on adolescents in terms of education, training and the interpersonal skills required in a highly competitive environment (IOM, 2002).

Adolescents face increasing challenges and many confront high risk situations on a daily basis. Many of these youth bring strengths as well as vulnerabilities into these situations. Some navigate the challenges successfully while others fall by the wayside or even worse, become involved in high-risk behaviors leading to poor outcomes, and self-injurious and destructive behaviors.

Youth of color from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds confront the same developmental challenges as all youth, however, they must also negotiate an additional set of developmental tasks.

Poverty and low socioeconomic status disproportionately affect these youth. Cultural differences give rise to clashes in values, behaviors and attitudes. Generational differences, compounded by different rates of acculturation, produce conflict and stress that ripples throughout these families. And minority status often generates discrimination, devaluing of the individual, and limited opportunities. Many of these youth draw upon individual, family, and community supports and strengths to successfully master these challenges. Others lack sufficient supports and adaptive strategies and experience poorer outcomes.

Concerns about adolescents have been the focus of numerous policy debates and many public and private sector initiatives. These initiatives have focused on reducing problem behaviors in adolescents. However, in the public policy arena, a broader approach that combines **preventing** problem behavior and **promoting** positive outcomes for all youth is gaining momentum and credibility. An exclusive focus on eliminating problem behavior is not sufficient to produce healthy, competent youth as they still need the development of skills, knowledge and personal and social assets to function competently (IOM, 2002). So, in addition to intervention programs for high-risk behaviors, such as drug prevention and anti-bullying campaigns, more organizations are offering positive development programs such as mentoring, school-based community service, and parenting skills classes.

Given the challenges confronting youth of color, local agencies, neighborhoods and communities are increasingly turning their attention to strategies to support youth of color at-risk for negative behaviors. A group that has received limited attention are Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth, one of the fastest growing youth populations in the United States. They are also one of the most ethnically, socioeconomically

and linguistically diverse with wide-ranging needs and concerns. Numerous youth-focused programs—including long-standing to newly-emerging—have been established to meet the unique needs of the AAPI youth population. These programs exist across the U.S. with a greater number of programs in high-density AAPI areas, such as the states of California, Hawaii and New York. Other programs have been developed in communities where there are fewer Asians but growing AAPI communities such as Colorado, Minnesota, Texas and Georgia. The objectives of these programs are sometimes similar, sometimes quite different; their strategies and programmatic structures are often determined by local needs. Many of these programs draw upon “mainstream” prevention and youth development models and make cultural adaptations to meet the needs of an AAPI community. Others are entirely “home-grown” building on cultural traditions and practices to strengthen youth and family development. Collectively, we know little about the successful ingredients of these programs, their unique strategies for outreach and engagement, and programming and sustainability.

As community advocacy and both private and public funding have given impetus to youth development programs, in the broader population as well as in diverse ethnic communities, there is increasing need to assess program effectiveness and the impact on youth and their communities. There is much diversity among the organizations that offer these programs with varying missions and objectives. In a time of limited resources, and budget deficits, program accountability is even more urgent in order to sustain promising youth programs. A recently released report of the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth calls for significant changes in the evaluation and funding of youth programs (Youth Today, 2004). More information is needed about these youth programs to guide future investments and understand the essential components that should be replicated across communities. This may

minimize the tendency to “reinvent the wheel” and highlight components of effective programs that warrant transporting to other communities.

This document focuses on programs that address the needs of the AAPI youth population. Its objective is to begin to identify the components of these programs that contribute to their effectiveness in serving AAPI youth and their families and in addressing the developmental challenges and risks confronting these youth. The overarching questions addressed are:

- How do youth programs address the key risk and protective factors of AAPI youth?
- What are key program objectives and essential cultural adaptations and components of these programs that make them effective in working with AAPI youth?
- What are barriers, facilitators and key infrastructure issues in the implementation and sustainability of these programs?

The approach to addressing these questions is built on developmental theory, practical field experience and qualitative research data. The report starts with a brief overview of AAPI youth and their involvement in high-risk behaviors. The next section presents a framework of risk and protective factors specific to AAPI youth. This framework expands upon the established risk and protective models for youth and theories of positive youth development. The main section of this report utilizes this ethnic-specific framework as one perspective through which the AAPI youth programs are examined. This section presents findings from in-depth interviews with thirty AAPI-focused youth development and prevention programs. The intent of this study is twofold: *(1) to understand how a risk/protective framework is addressed in these programs and the essential cultural adaptations that make these programs effective; and (2) to learn from real programs in the field, in their voices, about what works for these AAPI youth and their communities.*

■ A Snapshot of AAPI Youth and Risk Behaviors

The AAPI youth population is one of the fastest growing racial/ethnic populations in the United States. Almost one-third of the Asian American population is 19 years and under, and the Asian American youth population is expected to grow by 74 percent between 1995 and 2015 as compared to 19 percent for black youth, 17 percent for Hispanic youth and 3 percent for white youth (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). In reviewing demographic and risk data on AAPI populations, it is critical to keep in mind the diverse nature of this population which is comprised of over forty different ethnic and national subgroups. There is much variation in demographic factors within this population and data aggregated across all subgroups may be very misleading. While the AAPI youth population, in general, is thriving in the U.S., there are pockets of high-risk behavior among these youth that may appear across all or within specific ethnic subgroups. The intent here is not to paint an overly dismal picture of AAPI youth, but to acknowledge that not all AAPI youth are doing well and that programs and policies need to account for the diversity of behaviors within this population.

Socioeconomic Status. One of the dangers in using aggregate data for AAPIs is the tendency to view them as a homogenous population. This usually leads to an inaccurate picture, particularly in regard to socioeconomic and educational status. While the median income for AAPIs tends to be higher than other groups, there is a bi-modal distribution that encompasses many AAPIs at or below the poverty level. The percentage of people with incomes below the poverty level varies from 6 percent for Filipinos to as high as 63 percent for Hmong. While AAPIs are more likely to be employed than other ethnic groups, many work 10- to 12 hour days, six or seven days a week, in labor and service industries where they barely earn

minimum wage. Although more than one of six AAPI households lives in poverty, only one third of those who appear eligible actually receives public assistance (Coalition for Asian American Children and Their Families, 1999).

Educational Levels. Asian Americans are frequently stereotyped for their excellence in academics. Although an impressive 15.3 percent have an advanced degree, the high school graduation rates range from a low 31 percent for Hmongs to a high of 88 percent for Japanese (Randall, 1999).

Juvenile Crime, Delinquency and Arrest Rates. A number of demographic and social indicators prompt concern for AAPI youth in certain high-risk communities. Nationally, arrests of AAPI youth have increased at a far greater rate than for other groups. Over the last twenty years, the number of AAPI youth arrests has increased 726 percent while the number of African Americans arrests has decreased by 30 percent (API Center, 2001). Much of this dramatic increase may be accounted for by the fact that AAPIs have historically been counted as “other.” There is still a serious lack of accurate data but as such information is becoming available, certain trends are beginning to emerge.

Arrest statistics in San Francisco County demonstrated the broad within group differences. Samoans and Southeast Asians have one of the highest arrest rates of any ethnic group in the county; among AAPIs they have higher arrest and recidivism rates; Chinese are responsible for one-third to nearly one half of all AAPI arrests. In the City of Westminster in Orange County, CA, approximately 17% of all juvenile delinquency and 48% of all Asian delinquency involve Asian gangs. There is also an increase in Asian female gangs (Wyrick, 2000).

Victimization. AAPI youth are not only engaging in delinquent behaviors, they are also highly likely to be victims of crimes. Between 1991 through 1997, the number of AAPI youth who were victims of robberies doubled (24.8 percent). In 1997, AAPI youth were the highest percentage of youth victimized (Lynch, 2002).

Emotional and Behavioral Problems. There are few studies of emotional and behavioral problems among AAPI youth and the studies that exist present mixed findings. A recent study of a clinical population of AAPI youth found that Asian American youth were less likely than other youth populations to receive diagnoses of depression and attention deficit disorders and more likely to receive diagnoses of anxiety and adjustment disorders (Nguyen, et al., 2004). Yet other studies, for certain Asian subgroups, have found high rates of depression. The Commonwealth Fund (1998) found that 30 percent of Asian American girls in grades 5-12 reported depressive symptoms, and as with adolescents in general, suicide was the third highest cause of death among AAPI youth ages 15-24. In Hawaii, Yuen and colleagues (2000) found that Native Hawaiian youth had significantly higher rates of suicide attempts compared to other adolescents in Hawaii.

Southeast Asian refugees suffer from high rates of depression (40 percent), anxiety (35 percent) and posttraumatic stress disorder (14 percent) (Nicholson, 1997). While most of these studies have focused on adult SEA refugees, parental depression has an impact on the academic, behavioral and socio-emotional functioning of their children (Beardslee, 2003; Riley & Broitman, 2003) thus potentially placing these youth at higher risk for emotional disorders. Eating disorders is another area warranting further research and attention. While there is limited information, there are increasing numbers of cases being reported.

Substance Use. AAPI youth as a group have very low rates of substance abuse, often showing the lowest rates of any major racial group in the United States. However, there are significant

differences in use among Asian/Pacific Islander ethnic populations. For example, Pacific Islanders have illicit drug rates sometimes equivalent to or higher than the other racial groups. At the same time, Southeast Asians and Chinese consistently report the lowest rates of drug use of all groups studied, although, over the age of 26, Vietnamese Americans have the highest marijuana current use rate (2.8 percent) among Asians, almost equal to Whites (2.9 percent). (National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, 2002.)

Among AAPI subgroups, Filipino youth have the highest past month marijuana use rate (5 percent) and Japanese the lowest (1.4 percent).

From 1999 to 2000, while hallucinogen use by AAPI youth is low, it is equal to the highest rate among any youth group, 1.4 percent, found among White youth, and is increasing. Rates for other population groups have either declined or stabilized. A California survey, the Student Substance Use Survey (CSS) study shows Southeast Asians ranking first of all Asian Americans in cocaine use and highest in amphetamine use in contrast to Pacific Islanders, who rank low in both categories but high in marijuana and inhalants. Although Asian American youth's abuse of prescription drugs is lowest of the major racial groups (2.2 percent current users), it has more than tripled from 1999 to 2000, the highest rate of increase of any group (NCADI, 2002).

Furthermore, the number of admissions among Asian and Pacific Islander adolescents reflects the rising trend of substance abuse, including stimulants such as methamphetamine, also known as "ice," among AAPI youth. In Hawaii, one of every ten adolescents treated for substance abuse is using "ice" (Hawaii Department of Health, 2002). The Drug and Alcohol Service Information System (2002) reports the number of Asian and Pacific Islander adolescent admissions, although small in absolute number, increased from 1,698 in 1994 to 2,587 in 1999 (52 percent), whereas the number of admissions among the total youth treatment population increased from 108,471 in

1994 to 129,787 in 1999 (20 percent) (Drug and Alcohol Services Information System, 2002).

Alcohol Use. The 2000 National Household Study on Drug Abuse (NHSDA, 2001) shows AAPI youth binge drinking (five drinks at a sitting at least once a month) at four percent the lowest of all ethnic groups, and just below the very low rate of African Americans, 4.4 percent, while Hispanic youth binge drinking is almost three times as high. However, Asians who do drink habitually drink more per day than any other ethnic group. A California survey, the Student Substance Use Survey (CSS) found a rate of 50 percent for Pacific Islanders (NHSDA, 2001).

Tobacco Use. Slightly over eight percent of AAPI youth ages 12 to 17 smoked cigarettes in the past month, half the rate of White youth (NHSDA, 2001). The only other ethnic group to smoke less

is African American (6.1 percent). However, among those habitual smokers, Asian American smoke more cigarettes per day (16.8) than any other group and have a daily smoking rate higher than African Americans and similar to Hispanics (NHSDA 2001).

While the emerging data show an increasing number of AAPI youth exhibiting behaviors that warrant early intervention from behavioral health and substance abuse prevention services, these youth often fail to connect with appropriate services and supports in a timely manner. Unfortunately, these issues are often not addressed until the youth have encounters with the child welfare and the juvenile justice system, two involuntary service systems (Yeh, et al., 2002). Thus, the need for culturally competent community-based youth programs is increasingly important.

■ A Risk and Protective Framework for Youth Development

Prevention experts have identified longitudinal predictors that increase or decrease the likelihood of problem behaviors (e.g., youth violence, substance abuse, socio-emotional disorders) for youth. Factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors have been referred to as “risk factors”; those that decrease the potential harmful effect of a risk factor are considered “protective factors” (U.S. DHHS, 2001). Empirical support for these risk and protective factors has been documented by prevention researchers. For example, Hawkins (1999), using a social ecological framework, documented risk factors in four domains—individual/peer, family, school, and community. It is the accumulation of risk factors across multiple domains that may lead to poor outcomes. Unfortunately, most risk factors do not occur in isolation, but in clusters (i.e., a child living in a poor neighborhood is more likely to be exposed to drug use, violence, and crime). Risk factors have additive negative effects such that youth who are exposed to more risk factors are more likely to engage in negative, antisocial behavior (IOM, 2002; U.S. DHHS, 2001).

While the relationship between exposure to risk factors and problem behaviors has been shown, there is also increasing evidence that protective factors decrease the likelihood of problem behaviors (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 1998; Luthar & Zigler, 1991). These studies identify the qualities of the individual or the environment that are associated with competence or better psychosocial functioning following adverse experiences or high risk exposure (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Studies of children at risk prompted studies on resilience, seeking to understand why some youth exposed to multiple risk factors managed to avoid negative outcomes (Garmezy, 1985; Werner, 1994). Sources of resilience are identified in the strengths that individuals, families, schools, and communities draw upon to promote healthy outcomes and positive functioning (Davis, 1999). Protective factors might contribute to resilience either by exerting positive effects in direct opposition to the negative effects of risk factors or by buffering individuals against the negative impact of risk factors.

Three clusters of protective factors consistently have been associated with promoting resilience in youth: (1) personal predispositions in the child (activity level, social responsiveness, autonomy in infancy and early childhood); (2) a family environment characterized by cohesion, closeness, and support; and (3) the presence of extra familial sources of support, including role models or mentors that model effective skills and competencies (Masten & Garmezy, 1985). As prevention experts have remarked, young people who are not drug abusers, dropouts, or delinquents may be “problem free”, but still lack skills, attitudes, and knowledge to be productive, competent, contributing members of the family or community (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997).

■ Adapting the Framework for AAPI Youth

Cultural factors inherent in AAPI communities may impede, or enhance, the effectiveness of existing models of prevention (Huang and Ida, 2004). AAPI youth and their families negotiate a different set of developmental challenges and tasks. These challenges give rise to adaptive strategies, socialization goals, and developmental outcomes for these youth that may be distinct from non-minority youth. AAPI youth and their families negotiate the usual developmental tasks; however, the cultural overlay and acculturation and generation status add complexity to these tasks.

Given the developmental challenges confronted by culturally diverse youth, what are the risk and protective factors that are most significant for AAPI youth? Are models derived from the broader youth population applicable to AAPI youth? In order to obtain a complete picture of risk for

AAPI youth, it is essential to include ethnic-specific risk factors in the general risk framework. Huang and Ida’s (2004) work on these issues provides a beginning framework of risk and protective factors for AAPI youth. This is presented in the following tables. In identifying risk factors for AAPI youth, this study built upon Hawkins’s four domains—individual, family, school and community—and included four cross-cutting risk factors, that is, risk factors that cut across all domains (Table 1). In terms of protective factors, these are not domain specific but represent strategies used across all domains of an adolescent’s daily life (Table 2). These strategies are derived from empirical and theoretical studies in the literature on ethnic, minority youth development (Harrison, et al., 1990) and from roundtable meetings of AAPI community leaders, families, youth, mental health and social service providers and researchers.

TABLE 1: RISK FACTORS FOR AAPI YOUTH

DOMAIN	RISK FACTOR	
Cross-Cutting Risk Factors (may be prominent in all domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acculturation stress • Reconfigured family role structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language difficulties • Racism
Individual/Peer Domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alienation and isolation • Devalued ethnicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of skills to negotiate different culture • Peer rejection
Family Domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural/intergenerational conflict • Low adult supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation • Low socioeconomic status
School Domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnection between family and school • School system rejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited cultural models and understanding
Community Domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of preparation for diverse cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor home-community linkages • Lack of cultural-specific institutions

TABLE 2: PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR AAPI YOUTH

PROTECTIVE FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Biculturalism/Bicultural Competence	Ability to negotiate successfully two or more distinct cultures, valuing various aspects of each culture, and experiencing positive outcomes and a sense of coherence
Family Extendedness	Use of multiple family members or kin for various functions (e.g., social, psychological, economic support; provision of regulatory guidance and supervision; transmission of cultural values, etc.)
Cultural Traditions and Worldviews	Cultural traditions and worldviews reflect the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the ethnic group. Recognizing the diversity within the AAPI population, this may include such principles of filial piety, harmony, interdependence, collectivism, saving face, indebtedness and sense of obligation, etc.

■ Mapping a Risk and Protective Framework onto Culturally-Focused Youth Programs

With the emerging understanding of the role of risk and protective factors in youth development, it would seem reasonable that these factors would be addressed in youth programs. For the most part, however, these have been two separate efforts in the field of youth development with only recent efforts attempting to map this framework onto existing youth programs. An example of a recent effort to integrate a risk and protective framework with youth development programs was the study completed by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth (2002). Their study, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* delineated critical features of positive development settings, then mapped these onto youth development programs. They highlighted the following essential components in their national study of youth programs.

- Physical and psychological safety
- Consistent structure and appropriate levels of adult supervision
- Supportive relationship with a caring adult
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building
- Integration of family, school, and community efforts.

Studying the components of youth programs helps to determine what makes a program effective, provides empirically-based guidelines for staff training and program development, and potentially strengthens the links between specific

program experiences and outcomes for the participating youth (Oden, 1995). Many youth programs have similar goals, such as enhancing adolescents' thinking skills and capabilities, increasing their sense of personal competence in various areas in their lives (school, family, and peer groups), and instilling a sense of community service and responsibility that ties them more to their communities. However, programs develop different strategies to meet these goals.

A recent study evaluating fifteen youth development programs (Rodie, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster, 1998), delineated the following features of successful programs: flexible and innovative program staff who nourish positive, supportive relationships with youth; the view of youth as resources to be developed versus problems to manage; the creation of safe, caring environments; opportunities for active participation and real challenges, especially in creating a specific product (i.e., performance, newspaper, record, etc.), and organizational adaptability to the needs of local adolescents and the community. These features address key protective factors for youth in general: a warm supportive relationship with at least one caring adult; opportunities to contribute, and a sense of self-value and self-efficacy (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). For culturally diverse youth, additional risk and protective factors may need to be addressed in these youth programs.

Youth programs for diverse ethnic and racial youth must attend to culture-specific risk and protective factors in their program structures. Program developers must have an in-depth understanding of the cultures of the youth,

conduct needs assessments in culturally appropriate ways to learn about the concerns of the community, identify community leaders and collaborators, and engage community members and youth in the design of the program. A study of African American and Latino youth programs suggests that attention to the following topics is critical in culturally-responsive programming.

- Current circumstances of one's specific ethnic and cultural group in the U.S. and in its local context;
- Important historical events, achievements and leaders of one's ethnic or cultural group.
- Promotion of cultural values, particularly spiritual and community values
- Importance of cultural awareness, ethnic identity and assets education
- Opportunity for interaction with adults of their own ethnicity as role models
- Opportunity to foster bicultural competence
- Unique structure of mentoring programs (involving the children's families, including group educational components, and bringing families and mentors together for social/recreational events (Barron-McKeagney, Woody, and D'Souza, 2001).

A study of substance abuse prevention programs for African American youth found that Africentric cultural programming (e.g., using traditional, spiritual and community values) contributes to higher rates of satisfaction and perceived program importance to youth participating in the African American programs, compared to African American youth in other programs that lack this focus. This study substantiates the need for prevention programming that is culturally congruent with the cultures of the youth being served and packages ethnic traditions, values, history and awareness with concrete information about substance use, risk and protective factors, and positive prevention strategies (Chipungu et al., 2000.)

■ An Examination of AAPI Youth Development Programs: What Works?

The intent of this study was to (1) align a model of AAPI risk and protective factors with AAPI youth development programs; (2) identify important program objectives in a cultural context; and (3) understand some of the barriers, facilitators and infrastructure issues critical to the development and sustainability of these programs. This was an in-depth, qualitative, interview study with selected AAPI youth programs.

The Study Approach

The first step in the study was to determine, through a national scan, the pool of programs that addresses AAPI youth development and violence prevention. The study investigators utilized a nomination and snowball sampling approach to identify programs for this national scan. This is a multi-step approach based on key informants and experts in the field. First, an extensive list of stakeholders was compiled. This list included national AAPI organizations addressing health, behavioral health, and youth issues, AAPI community-based provider agencies and individuals, academic researchers, AAPI policy groups, and AAPI consumers of health, education and social services. It also included non-AAPI groups and experts that were associated with federal and state juvenile justice, education, and mental health programs, and youth development researchers and policymakers. These individuals and organizations were invited to nominate programs for the national scan.

Second, an expert work group was convened, which included a cross-section of AAPI experts (agency directors, youth consumers, academic researchers and policymakers), representatives from the White House Initiative on Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, the White House Council on Youth Violence, and federal

representatives from the Center for Mental Health Services, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Bilingual Education for Minority Languages Affairs. It also included representatives from mainstream youth advocacy organizations, such as the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, and AAPI-specific advocacy organizations, such as the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. These experts were asked to nominate programs and other key informants for the national scan.

The investigators then compiled an extensive mailing list of 180 individuals and programs that were also asked to nominate programs that included promising or innovative approaches to promoting AAPI youth development and violence prevention. The project was interested in both well-established approaches and newer, less established programs that focused on the needs of newcomer and emerging AAPI populations. The project received 53 nominations that were appropriate for the scan.

While this was a nationwide scan, a concerted effort was made to identify programs in at least the top ten states with significant AAPI populations. The study used census data to determine the top 30 counties ranked by AAPI population in 1997 (www.rinconassoc.com). These counties are located in 11 states. The project identified programs in 9 of these states plus programs in 7 additional states with more recently emerging AAPI populations.

Of these fifty-three programs, thirty programs from fourteen states and the District of Columbia were selected for more in-depth follow-up. The objective in selecting these programs was to obtain a broad spectrum of programs in terms of ethnicity-served, geographic area, and longevity.

The programs are based in various service systems ranging from schools to probation departments to mental health centers to churches and neighborhood community centers. For each program, a telephone or in-person interview was conducted with the agency director or the administrator or staff member most familiar with the youth programs. The interview time averaged about two hours.

Description of the Selected 30 Programs

The thirty programs interviewed shared the goals of enhancing youth development and preventing high-risk behaviors, particularly involvement in youth violence, gangs, and substance abuse. However, the structure of these programs was quite variable, ranging from after school programs with a broad group of youth not identified as at-risk, to support and life skills workshops for youth in detention or on probation. Some of the programs have been operating for ten years, while others were relatively new and implemented within the past two years.

Primary Ethnic Groups Served. While most of these program served multiple AAPI ethnic groups, and a few served non-AAPI youth also, each program usually had a primary ethnic group of focus. The programs selected served a wide range of AAPI ethnic groups. This is illustrated in Graph 1. These programs served established ethnic groups that have been in the U.S. for multiple generations, such as Chinese, Filipino,

Hawaiians, and recently migrated groups such as Cambodians, Hmong, Lao, Thai and Vietnamese. Southeast Asian youth—Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong and Cambodian—were identified as the primary group served by the most programs.

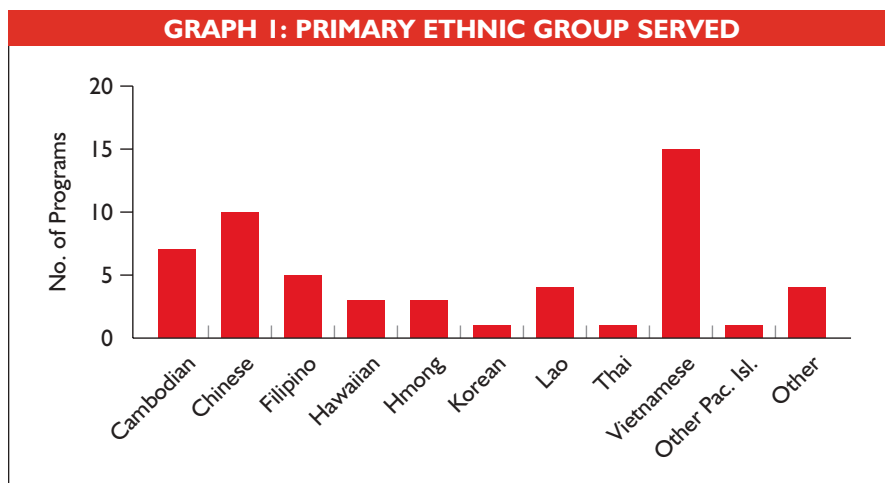
Language Capacity. The majority of the programs provided services in English and at least one other Asian language. About one-fifth of the programs had the capacity for English and three or more Asian languages. One-third of the programs provided services only in English. The language capacity of the programs is indicated in Graph 2.

Target Age. The target age of the programs ranged from six years old to eighteen years with the largest number of programs focusing on the middle school and high school years. About one-third of the programs also targeted parents of the youth in their programs.

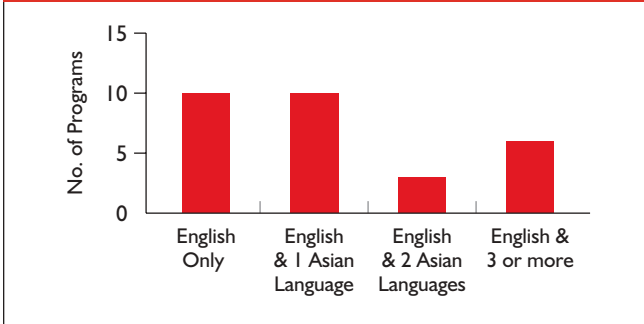
Primary Source of Referral. Youth in these programs were referred by a variety of sources with the primary referral source being schools, followed by word-of-mouth, as indicated on Graph 4.

Number of Youth/Families Served Per Year. The number of youth and families served by these programs ranged from ten to more than 200 per year. This varied according to the nature of the program. Case management programs generally served fewer youth than after-school programs. Graph 5 shows that about one third of the programs served 100-200 youth/families per year; only six programs served more than this in a year.

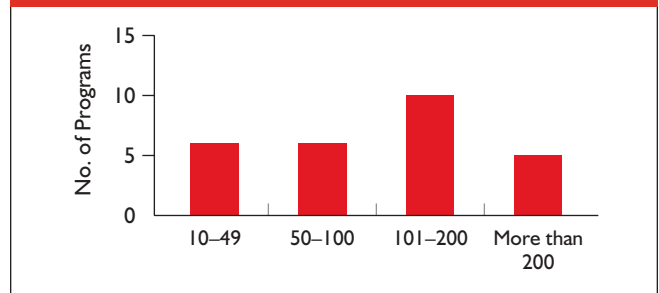
Annual Budgets. Annual budgets for programs are reported in Graph 6. The largest number of programs operate on an annual budget of \$50,000-\$100,000 per year. However, slightly over one-third of the programs have annual operating budgets ranging from \$100,000 to over \$500,000.



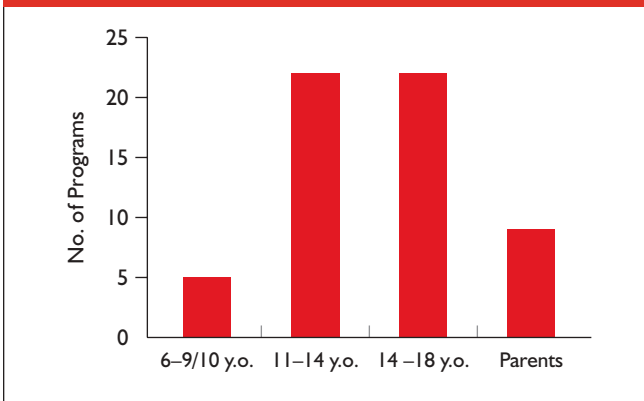
GRAPH 2: LANGUAGES USED IN PROGRAMS



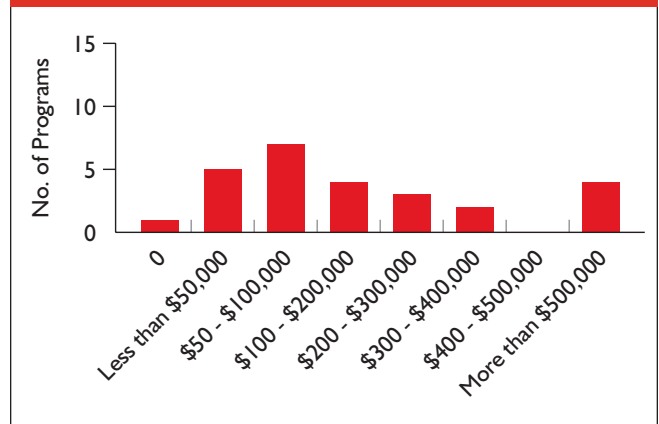
GRAPH 5: NUMBER OF YOUTH/FAMILIES IN PROGRAMS PER YEAR



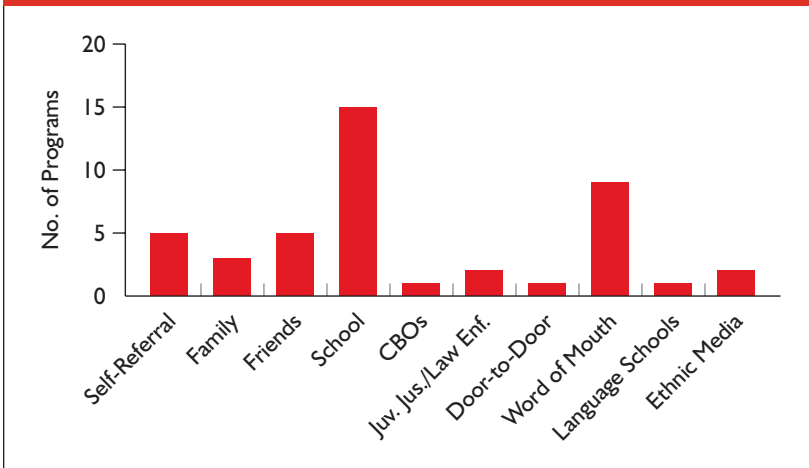
GRAPH 3: TARGET AGE



GRAPH 6: ANNUAL BUDGET FOR PROGRAMS



GRAPH 4: PRIMARY SOURCES OF REFERRAL



was most familiar with the youth program. The interview included questions about the population served, the development of the program, the components of the program, barriers and obstacles, infrastructure issues such as location, staffing, budget, program evaluation, and critical factors in establishing and sustaining the program. Transcripts from these interviews were entered into ATLAS ti, a qualitative data management software program. A coding system was developed and two raters coded the data.

Voices from the Field: Findings from the Interviews

A semi-structured telephone or in-person interview was conducted with the agency director, a program director or managing staff member that

The findings can be grouped into two main categories: (1) aligning program content with a risk and protective framework and (2) identifying program objectives, barriers and critical features in a cultural context.

■ Do Programs Align with a Culturally-Based Risk and Protective Framework?

Youth development programs encompass a wide array of approaches and activities. Different communities are facing different issues with their youth. This, in conjunction with the complexities of culturally diverse adolescents, makes the heterogeneity and flexibility of programs both a norm and a challenge. The programs identified in this study differed in their objectives, design, approach and focus and some chose to emphasize certain features or issues over others.

Twenty-five different activities were included in the selected 30 programs. Among the activities in these programs were tutoring, mentoring, life skills training, alcohol, tobacco and drug prevention, gang prevention training, peer advocacy, parent support and activity groups, community development, youth leadership training and job skills training. Most of the programs included multiple activities. For example, many of the mentoring programs also incorporated tutoring; case management services often included parent support groups.

The most frequently cited activities (and the number of programs conducting these activities) were:

- Recreational group activities (15 programs)
- Tutoring (14)
- Youth leadership training (14)
- Mentoring (12)
- Gang/violence prevention (11)
- Cultural awareness and assets education (11)
- Life skills training (10)
- Counseling for youth (10)

Except for the “cultural awareness and assets education”, the types of activities in these AAPI programs were similar to those found in mainstream youth development programs.

A major objective of the study was to see if the program content addressed risk and protective factors for AAPI youth. An in depth analysis of program content indicated consistency with a risk and protective framework.

The risk factors that emerged from the data were:

1. Lack of knowledge about one’s cultural heritage
2. Reconfigured family role structure and low adult supervision
3. Intergenerational conflict
4. Acculturation conflict
5. Experiences of racism
6. Cultural values that deter help seeking for high-risk behaviors and mental health concerns.

These factors align well with three of the four cross-cutting risk factors in our framework for AAPI youth, e.g., acculturation stress, reconfigured family role structure, and racism; with one of the individual domain risk factors, e.g., devalued ethnicity; and with two family domain risk factors, e.g., low adult supervision and intergenerational conflict. The sixth theme, cultural values deterring help-seeking, is not specified as a risk factor in the current framework.

In terms of protective factors, the following themes emerged from the data:

1. Strategies to deal with racism and prejudice
2. Development of a healthy bicultural identity
3. Establishing camaraderie with peers

4. Empowering parents through parenting skills and language and communication skills with children and external systems
5. Assisting communities maintain a vibrant ethnic culture
6. Providing education and advocacy skills for ethnic communities.

Developing a bicultural identity and promoting an ethnic culture are consistent with the protective factors in the AAPI framework. The other themes address risk factors pertinent to AAPI youth that were not specifically targeting the individual domain. Thus, the themes that emerged from the data fit with the framework of AAPI risk and protective factors presented earlier. What emerged as risk factors tended to cluster in the “individual youth domain” whereas the protective factors addressed factors in the family, school, and community domains. The themes that emerged are briefly discussed below and are illustrated with verbatim quotations from the interview data. The “voices” of the interviewees convey, in a compelling manner, the nature of their programs and the challenges they confront. The voices were kept intact, rather than summarized or paraphrased, to capture better the realities of these programs.

Risk Factors that Emerged from the Interview Data

Lack of knowledge about one’s cultural heritage.

Valuing of one’s culture is an important component of positive self-esteem for ethnic minority youth. It is also a critical component of a bicultural identity. Culture plays an important role in a youth’s development, and is considered an important factor contributing to positive adjustment, ego identity, and self-esteem, particularly for diverse ethnic and racial youth (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Havira, 1992). For some youth, minority status may be potentially devaluing and stress producing.

“We needed to program education about their culture so they could learn to value their culture and not be so ashamed of their parents and their culture. This was very much connected to the youth self-esteem.”

“We realized that [kids] don’t know their own culture. Kids who are engaging in risky behavior, when confronted with issues of culture, they totally turned off, at least in terms of face appearance. Usually they knew nothing and felt intimidated and shamed within the community.”

“...children who haven’t lived as a member of a majority culture that is not American...don’t have the validation that the parents do. During the college years, ethnic minorities have more positive sense of cultural origin, cognitively more mature.”

Reconfigured family role structure and low adult supervision.

Uneven rates of acculturation and the language facility of youth as compared to adults often leads to a reversal of roles in some AAPI families. This alters traditional family dynamics, often results in more power and decision making authority for the youth and the gradual erosion of parental authority and responsibility. While this may be a source of strength in some families, in others it may lead to ineffective parental control and family confusion and conflict.

Parents often lose their capacity to serve as role models for their children. This can have a devastating impact in a culture that places a high value on the role of the parent in the family structure.

For example, due to parents’ limited English skills and unfamiliarity with school procedures, AAPI youth may assume many of the adult roles such as talking to school officials and making decisions. The use of the children as interpreters changes the power differential in the family and often places both parents and youth in an awkward position.

Many parents also have long working hours, are away from the home for long periods of the day or night and are unable to provide ongoing supervision. For refugee families, in particular, federal programs to expedite them into jobs and vocational training often overlook the need to provide programs or childcare for their children who are often left home unsupervised. The “welfare to work programs” also frequently place adults into low paying jobs before they have had a chance to improve either their language or vocational skills. This practice locks them into low level jobs with little chance to improve their financial situation.

“At home, only person with English skill is expected to be making decisions, and youth usually play a role as the head of household, and they are missing a large part of American adolescent life. They are still viewed as child yet they have adult responsibilities.”

“In Asian culture, kids listen to parent. Here in US, parents don’t have power, control over their kids. This leads to role reversal. Because parents do not have sufficient English skills, they use kids to do adult jobs such as speaking to school officials and other activities.”

“Parents work long hours to support the family, and they have no time for school, and kids adapt and learn more and sometimes use their knowledge against their parents.”

Intergenerational conflict. Programs identified the lack of communication, language barrier, and lack of cultural understanding between youth and parents as the source of intergenerational and intercultural conflict. Teens report that they have no adult interaction and cannot communicate with parents about their problems. Migration to the U.S. is often motivated by the desire to provide the children with a better future. When these children begin to express dissenting views and make choices inconsistent with their parents’ desires, the parents often feel betrayed and angry.

“Intergenerational, intercultural gap occurs which may result in mental health disturbance and difficulties for both parents and children. These difficulties arise because they don’t understand each other well and attribute difficulties to personal rather than cultural differences. Parents may think ‘he’s just a bad kid.’”

“For all the programs, not just the teen adolescent issues, big components are family, the cultural gap, and language barriers. Biculturalism is a specific issue for the youth. For example, with the girl empowerment program, dating violence was hard to do because girls are not even supposed to date, so how could they talk about abusive relationships? Also, kids can’t speak home language very well, so language, generational, and cultural gap are important issues to address in the programs.”

Acculturation conflict. For many AAPI youth, being a youth of color in a non-Asian community leads to confusion over where they belong and where they fit in. A sense of belonging is an important factor in the development of adolescents. AAPI youth often have a poor understanding of their role in the community and to which community they belong. Many AAPI youth feel torn between different expectations, values, attitudes and behaviors in the mainstream and ethnic communities. In the family domain, tension and conflict often exist due to varying acculturation levels of family members, with the youth more readily adapting to American culture, attitudes and behaviors than their parents.

According to the 2002 Census, 88 percent of AAPIs are either foreign born or have at least one foreign born parent. Adolescents who are not fluent in the native language of their parents and are not familiar with many cultural norms may not be perceived as being “real” Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, etc. by the community. They are also not completely accepted by the majority population who view them as outsiders.

“Students have problems, because they encounter pressure from parents and schools to behave a certain way. Cultural pressures, family issues, high expectations from parents and schools can put a lot of stress on youth.”

“Cultural differences dictate that youth are not given status of older people, especially the older men. The older the child becomes, the more respect he’s given. Youth in general do not receive attention or respect. This is a challenge.”

Experiences of racism. Youth often experience racial tensions among their peers in schools and in their communities. This may be felt on an individual level or on a more institutional level where they experience inequities in opportunities. Ethnic and racially diverse youth learn early that their ethnic identity may not be respected in the larger society and, in fact, may be the target of hostility or exclusion. Depending on the composition of the community, this racism may be experienced from mainstream populations as well as other groups of color. Real and perceived prejudice and discrimination can isolate and discourage AAPI youth and their families from interacting with key institutions, other families and other youth. Many youth have reported being unfairly treated by school personnel, police, security personnel and the larger community (API Task Force, 1993).

“Kids are experiencing a lot of issues, like discrimination and racism in schools between their peers.”

“Kids were talking about racism, and how tough school is. Racism between Asian and Latino kids is an impetus, yet challenge to address this issue.”

“We got involved in a school because of racial tension between Latino and Vietnamese. Vietnamese moved in Latino neighborhood, and it was bad blood from day one.”

Cultural values that deter help seeking for high-risk behaviors and mental health concerns. AAPI youth and families are often reluctant to seek help outside of their families or extended families. The strong cultural values of shame and “losing face” often prevent families from seeking professional or any type of outside help. The stigma associated with risky social behaviors and socio-emotional problems is particularly intense in these families and communities as children are believed to reflect directly on the parents and represent the family name. This cultural value places youth that are involved in high risk behaviors or suffering from mental health or substance abuse problems at even greater risk. The longer families wait to seek help or appropriate services, the greater the probability that the child’s problems will be more severe.

“Social services [is] not part of the Asian culture because we believe in [taking care of] our own children—that’s your property, your social security—in their countries.”

“By the time AAPI kids are referred and are at a stage of getting diagnosis, much more severe problems are going on with them. For an AAPI kid to be identified and referred early in the process, they need services but [they] usually don’t get them. One reason given for this is that there isn’t enough opportunity to do outreach, which is typically not considered a reimbursable service if providing mental health services.”

“We find recently that more girls are dropping out of school and becoming involved with gangs. Among children within the Hmong culture, girls have far less status than boys. Parents did not feel this program was necessary for girls.”

“Lack of awareness and acceptance of dating violence in Asian culture is a problem among many Asian girls. The issue is not talked about in most Asian families, because it’s taboo and could bring shame to family. More girls are dropping out of school and becoming involved with gangs. Among children within the Hmong culture, girls have far less status than boys.”

“There are community leaders who are not so aware of the issue. They do not believe in substance abuse themselves.”

Protective Factors That Emerged from the Interview Data

Capacity to anticipate and cope with racism and prejudice. Youth programs provide opportunities for AAPI youth to form a support group where they can more openly discuss issues of racism and prejudice that they encounter in their schools and communities but have difficulty discussing in their homes. Inter-ethnic and interracial peer groups may often provide a forum for discussing inter-group relationships and strategies to diminish tension and the potential for hostilities. Allowing youth from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to interact directly with each other helped break down barriers that previously resulted in racial tension and fighting.

“The youth enjoy the camaraderie in the group-based discussions. Group is a safe place for issues of racism in the community. Can’t solve racism, but talking about it can be therapeutic.”

“Youth gain better understanding and how to deal with racism and prejudice and how to handle issues in confident and nonviolent ways.”

“Sometimes have white youth involved in the group discussions, if they request and are friends with a group member. We don’t turn anyone away.”

A sense of belonging with peers. AAPI youth often seek camaraderie from their fellow youth who share similar experiences.

“All school-based programs address the needs because they give AAPI youth space to be with others like them.”

“We have some programs that are female only so that they have safe place to share their thoughts and issues.... Girls can teach other girls.”

A bicultural identity. Cross-cultural awareness can help clarify the differences between the youth’s ethnic culture and mainstream American culture and identify the sources of struggles and conflicts that these youth experience in straddling two cultures. Bridging the intercultural and intergenerational gap between parents and children may also advance a sense of bicultural identity and competence. Learning to value their culture is a crucial component of developing a bicultural identity and may contribute to a more positive self-concept.

“To promote healthy emotional and social development of AA youth. Objectives are to increase self-image, ethnic identity and pride as well as to build character development and communication skills for AA youth.”

“Through our discussion groups and other activities, building cultural sensitivity is one of our main objectives through enhancing one’s self-esteem, discovering the value of culture and history, and shaping a greater understanding for others.”

“The focus of these projects are: to develop healthy identity and strong foundation which emphasizes bicultural strengths...”

Meaningful engagement of parents with their children and with youth-serving community institutions.

For adolescents, a strong sense of bonding, closeness and attachment within the family is associated with better emotional development, stronger school performance and engagement in fewer high-risk activities such as drug use (Klein, 1997). In general, parents who are warm and involved, provide firm guidelines and limits and have appropriate developmental expectations tend to be most effective. Additionally, healthy adolescent development is facilitated when there is meaningful interaction and communication among the different settings of an adolescent's life and among the adults who oversee these settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; NRC/IOM, 2002). For example, when there is good cohesion and communication between systems, such as the family and the school, there is a greater likelihood that the youth will stay on track. It is important, however, to keep in mind that there are different communication styles and levels of expressing emotions that must not be misread as lack of warmth or caring on the parents part.

For parents of different cultures and particularly for newer immigrant parents and those who have limited English proficiency, establishing these parenting approaches may be a daunting task. A study of Southeast Asian immigrant parents in Minnesota found that parents have difficulty asserting themselves with their adolescents in a social setting they do not understand. This was then connected with increases in delinquency, juvenile arrests, and gang activity (Hughes and Chen, 1999). Thus, helping parents develop engagement and communication strategies for interacting with their often more acculturated children and with mainstream institutions such as schools may be critical to protecting their adolescents from participating in high risk behaviors.

“Identifying values helps families to examine their current family life, determine if they are living by their values, and decide what areas to strengthen. Strengthening strategies within the program include skill building in areas such as parenting, communication, discipline, decision making, problem solving, and coping with anger.”

“Cross-cultural awareness [is] helping to identify differences between the two cultures and see why there are these struggles; this is what your teenagers grow up like.”

“Focuses on dealing with language issues and bridging communication gap between families and the school. By participating, parents learn about the schools and get more involved.”

Ethnic community actively engaged with youth.

The ethnic community also plays an important role in the lives of young people. The community's participation in developing youth programs, and increasing their involvement in community services can enrich the sense of community ownership and develop important connections between the youth and the ethnic community. Programs need to engage the community in the early planning stages. This is particularly useful for communities and populations that are mistrustful of outsiders and externally imposed programs. Youth programs can also assist communities in maintaining a vibrant ethnic culture.

“The community should be involved in tailoring the curriculum, recruitment and outreach, facilitation, and evaluation...”

“In the Hmong community there has been a generational disconnect, so the goal is to connect youth to an adult to whom they can use that relationship to rebuild relationships with those adults already in their life.”

“The Action team had the broad mission of ending violence in the Hmong community through the active engagement of community members in violence prevention. The team produced a community action plan to address root causes of violence in the Hmong community over the next ten years and suggest solution.”

Ethnic community engaged in education and advocacy. Ethnic minority communities are often struggling with multiple stresses within their communities, including poverty, job loss, deteriorating schools, and poor attention to safety concerns. Learning to preserve and value their culture and develop social engagement and activist strategies to secure equal opportunities is essential. Raising the level of awareness to address such issues as diversity, identity, and community ownership can influence the behaviors and attitudes of ethnic, minority youth.

“Our program coordinates available school and community resources in order for these immigrant families to be effective in protecting their children from engaging in the risky activities.”

“The goal of our program is to promote the safe and healthy community by providing services to children, youth and families in their own language, within an understanding of their cultural values and with a focus on their strength rather than their problems.”

■ What are Key Program Objectives in a Cultural Context?

The second part of this interview study elicited the key program objectives in these youth programs and the culturally-based adaptations made for the specific ethnic populations being served. The program objectives addressed the various domains in a child's life: individual development, family and parental functioning, and community involvement and collaborations.

Promoting Personal Development. This component primarily focused on the individual youth, emphasized skill-building and developing a sense of responsibility, competence and positive motivation. In general, the objective of this program component was to foster self-esteem and guide youth in responsible decision-making. Opportunities for skill building included physical, intellectual, psychological and social skills. Leadership development was included in some of the programs and was combined with the opportunity to apply these newly learned skills in a selected project.

Various activities were used to implement this program component including information sharing, self-exploration activities, individual and group projects focused on positive learning experiences and application of decision-making and problem-solving skills. A number of programs included "life skills" training and either adapted existing curriculum or developed their own.

Cultural adaptations to these training curricula focused on cultural identity, communication across cultures within the family, acceptance of diversity, and developing positive cross-cultural relationships in school and in the community. Some curriculum and training experiences also focused on cross-

ethnic relationships as AAPI youth are increasingly living in neighborhoods with Latino and African American youth. Several programs also focused on healthy alternatives to violence and prevention of substance abuse in this program component.

"Provide a safe nurturing environment for youth to achieve self-sufficiency, through leadership development and academic advancement by means of exposure to opportunity, education, counseling and recreation."

"The long-term goal is to assist youth to remain in high school, continue higher education or training and to help them to become productive, well-adjusted, economically and emotionally self-sufficient members of the community."

"Develop identity and strong foundation which emphasizes bicultural strengths; to facilitate bonding and connections between Asian Pacific Islander youth and their families, peers, schools and communities."

Enhancing Cultural Understanding and a Sense of Belonging. For all youth, the importance of a sense of belonging is critical to healthy development. Whether it is feeling actively involved in the family, the school, the community or peer group, research has substantiated the relationship of sense of belonging to decreased likelihood of involvement in high-risk behaviors, increased sense of responsibility and improved self-competence, school attitude and performance (Catalano et al., 1999; Grotevant, 1998; Blum and Rinehart, 1997). In a multicultural society, the issue of belonging, being connected to and

accepted by a group, is even more challenging yet equally important. Almost on a daily basis, minority youth confront issues related to a sense of belonging. Many of these youth enter a setting wondering if they will fit in, if they will be accepted, and if they will be comfortable.

Youth from diverse ethnic cultures often question the value of their culture of origin. Some prefer to shed this connection and tend to know little about their own culture, feeling this is a deterrent to being accepted in the mainstream American culture. However, cultures provide meaning and meaning is fundamental to social and psychological well-being (NRC/IOM, 2002). Youth with stronger ethnic identity have more positive self-esteem and greater school involvement (Phinney et al., 1997) and are less likely to engage in violence (NRC/IOM, 2002). But a sense of involvement in one group may mean exclusion from another group. Thus, a more desirable outcome is “bicultural competence” which is the ability to function and be comfortable in multiple cultural settings (LaFomboise et al., 1993).

Most of the programs in this study include educating youth about their culture of origin and encouraging a sense of pride in their culture. This program component, focusing on cultural understanding, facilitates building a cultural identity, developing social and communication skills to bridge the gap with their parents arising from cultural conflicts, interacting with role models from their own ethnic community and learning the history of their cultures. Hearing and sharing personal stories is a major activity within this component. Guest speakers from the cultures of origin are invited to share their life experience. Youth also engage in a group discussion sharing their experiences of being Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander in this country and occasions when they felt connected or disconnected with the competing ethnic and mainstream cultures.

“We found that the kids didn’t know much about their culture. We needed to have an education program about their culture so that they could learn to value their culture and not be so ashamed of their parents and their culture. This was very much connected to the youth’s self-esteem as they begin to value their culture.”

“[We] Promote a safe and healthy community by providing services to children, youth and families in their own language, within an understanding of their cultural values and with a focus on their strength rather than their problems”.

“We had two women with life experiences in Hawaiian culture. We used this as a basis to encourage others from other cultures to explore their own values. The three key aspects are place (where you came from and where you are today), time (history and current), and people (who you are as a person, your ancestors, culture, and community).”

Engaging Parents. For adolescents, the quality of relationships with adults is a critical feature of healthy development. Parents are generally in the position to provide important emotional support, caring, responsiveness and guidance. Parental support contributes to positive school motivation, better mental health and lower rates of drinking, drug use, delinquency, and school misconduct (Furstenberg et al., 1999; Eccles et al., 1992). Good communication with parents and a sense of feeling connected to parents similarly contributes to these positive outcomes (Blum and Rinehart, 1997; Steinberg, 2000). For parents of diverse backgrounds who are less familiar with mainstream culture, have limited English skills, and are less available to their children because of long work hours, the challenges of parenting in an unfamiliar society may add to an already stressful daily existence.

The programs in the study, understanding the important benefits of engaging parents, often provide a parent component. The primary objective of this component is to engage parents and build relationships that would enhance their cross-cultural parenting role or support them in negotiating mainstream organizations and activities. Multiple strategies are used to work with parents.

Programs have employed numerous strategies to engage parents including doing home visits, having discussions on topics that include challenges of raising American born children, drug prevention, gang violence, and other social issues that they are hesitant to talk about given the social and cultural stigma attached to these topics. Giving parents the opportunity to be part of the program by putting an emphasis on the importance of their involvement in children's lives is a motivator for parent involvement. They are invited to participate in planning activities for their children at the youth programs and contribute as experts on cultural and historical events. Some programs implemented systems changes that increased communication between parents and schools, e.g., having bi-lingual staff on site, having materials translated into the appropriate language, etc.

It has usually been more difficult to engage fathers. For some, working two or three jobs makes it almost impossible for them to find the time to participate in program activities. For others, the loss of face associated with not being able to speak English as well as their children and their discomfort at not knowing about American customs makes them hesitant to interact with teachers and staff.

“Bilingual Readers Theater: parents were involved in planning stages and involved throughout the program. They do quarterly presentations and can get involved as much as they want, like prepare food, teach cultural dance, and help with youth presentations.”

“Parent groups focus on children's education issue by providing summer school, math, English, Chinese language but add substance abuse and prevention issue. They don't come here because they have concerns about substance abuse. First we meet their needs, and then we go to them and talk about on-going support.”

“Parents learn English and they set the agenda. On occasion, we had special meetings. We talked about child protection laws and what constitutes child abuse in the U.S.; training on how American school systems work; parent-teacher conference; vacations; attendance, and report cards. Basically, our focus was to make them more competent regarding school issues and experiences of their children.... Police came and talked about gangs.”

“Had good turn out with potluck. ...Important not to give power to youth over the parents. Give them opportunity to be part of the program, always extend information and outward communication.”

“We must provide 4-6 parent workshops to the parents' of our youth participants. We require that parents of kids, in any of our programs, must attend parent workshops. We are required to provide parent training to 30% of parents of youth in our programs.”

“It is very difficult for men at this point to understand what their role is in family and to feel comfortable.... We struggle with involving male family members. We wonder about their need for more didactic approaches.”

Addressing Cultural Conflict between Parents and Youth.

It is not uncommon for parents and children to acculturate to American society at different rates which often leads to intergenerational conflict. In addressing these problems, programs must be careful how they respond so as to not perpetuate the perception

that parents are “inadequate”. Several programs talked about the problem of having “parenting classes” as this implied that the parents did not know how to be proper parents. Instead, strategies such as discussion groups that talked about challenges they faced were utilized. This provided a forum for them to talk with other parents in similar situations and allowed them to openly express their opinions. Staff could then address American customs, laws and social practices which may come in conflict with traditional Asian behaviors and customs.

Educating the youth about their parents’ experiences as immigrants and refugees coming to a foreign country helped foster a better understanding on the part of the youth. In this manner, they became less judgmental of their parents and began to see them in a different light.

“Chinese-American adult talking about experiences growing up in immigrant family. Share experiences that parents can hear without being emotionally involved, as with their own children. These powerful experiences made parents feel much more real in terms of how their kids may be feeling.”

“Have a family worker whose job is to provide monthly parent workshops...raising children, intercultural conflict issues, the ways children grow and learn.”

“Outdoor simulation [negotiating their way through an unfamiliar forest] gave them an idea of what their parents went through [escaping from Laos]. After the simulation many Hmong kids said they could understand better what their family went through and how their parents were risking their lives.”

“They have seen the importance of staying calm and working through problems with teens. Two points in particular, 1) idea of negotiation they latched on to (i.e., kids spending time away so how can you work with them, and 2) idea of praising their kids. An example is if stop lecturing their kids at dinner time, [they’re] more apt to come to dinner and talk to the parent.”

Language Assistance. In nearly all the programs, the need to address language barriers was a critical issue. Students were tutored in English and English as a Second Language, and ESL classes were provided for parents. These classes were a good way to attract parents. After bi-lingual staff were also considered indispensable. Without their help, many programs would not have been able to adequately work with parents. Workshops and printed materials were translated into the appropriate languages for parents.

Some programs also offered classes to the students to teach them the native language of their parents. This helped build a bi-cultural identity and pride in their ethnic background.

Programs offer language assistance to parents. They provide bilingual family advocates, translation services, and accompany parents to official meetings (e.g., school meetings) as translators.

“Emphasis on ESL and the academic and bilingual focus. Hiring of staff so that most of AmeriCorp can work bi-lingually.”

“The magazine is 80% English and 20% Hmong—to promote their Hmong literacy. Each magazine contains an article only printed in Hmong so that youth can practice their own language skills or connect with someone who can help them read/interpret.”

“The two counselors are bilingual Vietnamese so they can communicate with parents. Many parents do not speak English. Having a bilingual counselor is useful, especially when there is an issue at home, domestic violence, family blow-out, etc.”

Preventing Gang Membership and Violent Behavior.

Asian gangs have become a growing problem. It is difficult to gather accurate data on the prevalence rate as many juvenile justice systems still record AAPIs as “other”. But in areas such as southern California, San Francisco/Oakland, Dallas/Ft. Worth and communities throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin, the number of Asian American gangs has been on the rise. The need to address violence prevention has thus become an important issue.

Programs not only address the dangers associated with gang involvement but also provide activities that are considered healthy alternative to delinquent behaviors. Successful programs teach youth how to make healthy decisions and provide them the skills that are necessary to lead healthy life styles.

Education about gangs and root causes of violence and gang membership are discussed with individual youth, families and community groups. Some programs target AAPI youth at risk for delinquency and gang membership and focus on strengthening their relationships with family and school and developing positive peer relationships. For adolescent girls, programs use an empowerment strategy to prevent gang membership and dating violence and strengthen identity and self-concept. A key strategy for some programs is connecting these girls with a female role model from the AAPI community.

“We advocate for the youth especially in school with issues of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. Sometimes we try to help school staff understand the complexities of racial conflict. We also get involved in national and local conferences and present [about] the Hmong people and culture.”

“We give both individual and group counseling, truancy, conflict management, academic performance, etc. Some programs are specifically for youth gang prevention. Also work with youth who are incarcerated and those out in the community.”

Promoting Community Involvement and Collaboration.

Youth development requires collaboration among many partners: families, schools, churches and community leaders. Rarely, can a single organization provide the range of supports and services needed for youth to grow into successful adults. Community programs must integrate their activities with the broader community to maximize their impact (NRC/IOM, 2002). Educating community leaders about the youth program and encouraging their support help the visibility and community backing for these programs. Buy-in from community leaders enhances support and participation of parents.

Collaboration between stakeholders increases the likelihood of identifying shared needs, gaps in services and availability of resources. For example, many programs use cultural experts identified through these networks to train program staff or to engage in joint community projects. Efforts are also made to inform other non-AAPI ethnic organizations and mainstream organizations about the AAPI programs and foster similar collaborations.

“You need an outreach person who is known and trusted in the community. [someone to] bridge the university-community gap.”

“Many of the cultural experts come from the communities and it is beneficial for us to tap their shared experiences with implementation of certain topic.”

“Chinatown paraprofessionals loved the intervention; seemed to do it well. Taught the staff, and gave additional readings and discussion.”

■ What are Strategies for Implementing Youth Development Programs for AAPI Youth?

The preliminary steps in developing programs for AAPI youth involves the identification of the target population, the necessity to change some behavior, belief or attitude and the identification of gaps in the current service delivery system.

Several key factors fueled the start-up of youth development programs. Some of these factors pertain to youth programs in general, while others are more ethnic-specific.

Recognizing a Need or Creating Awareness Within the Community. In many of the communities a “critical mass” of un-served or underserved youth is recognized and can no longer be ignored. Occasionally, a critical, high-profile incident occurs that ignites action in the community. Several programs started their development with a community needs assessment and talking youth, parents and community leaders. In a few sites, legislation was created to provide financing specifically for the program.

“Lack of services for Asian youth gangs in the area. The problem was rising at the time but there were no mental health services.”

“Saw a lot of high risk kids getting into trouble. A lot of high crime in the community, saw kids hanging out. There was no other program going on, no services. No recreation services for the Village.”

Identifying Program Champions. There may be a wide spread belief that there is a need for services but there is usually a key individual, a “champion” within the community or agency, who is in a position of authority that either takes the lead in making change or is able to provide the impetus

for others to do so. These individuals often amass official leadership support and community advocacy, and provide direction and leadership.

While program champions were cited most frequently as the major reason a program was started, others factors such as identifying youth as facilitators and advocates of the program, sharing success stories and developing collaborations were also mentioned.

“The School Superintendent was the KEY. Must have cultural sensitivity and understand the needs and have big vision. The Superintendent was very supportive of our community needs and efforts.”

“Must also give credit to the Mayor of P.... Through all these efforts, Mayor and Superintendent, Police Dept., came to truly understand the needs of the community.”

“J.H. at county Juvenile Services, who had the foresight to see the Hmong community agencies needed to be part of the planning, development, and implementation.”

“The Congresswoman for our district is a great champion for this project. She has worked hard...to keep us funded.”

Establishing Advisory Boards or Councils.

Advisory boards are important governance features of these youth programs and provide guidance and strategic planning. Many of the board members were chosen because of their unique stakeholder perspective, their networks within the ethnic and mainstream communities, or their capacity to raise funds for the program.

“The advisory board was key to the smooth transition to an independent organization with a minimum of tension within the Vietnamese and Asian American communities.”

“There was an advisory board for the planning phase. There is a Youth Advisory board comprised of kids in the program and former AmeriCorps members—total of 10 individuals. They meet quarterly and work on program development.”

“Idea stemmed from AFPC Planning Council...growing concerns of members who consisted of police chiefs, parents and school board members.”

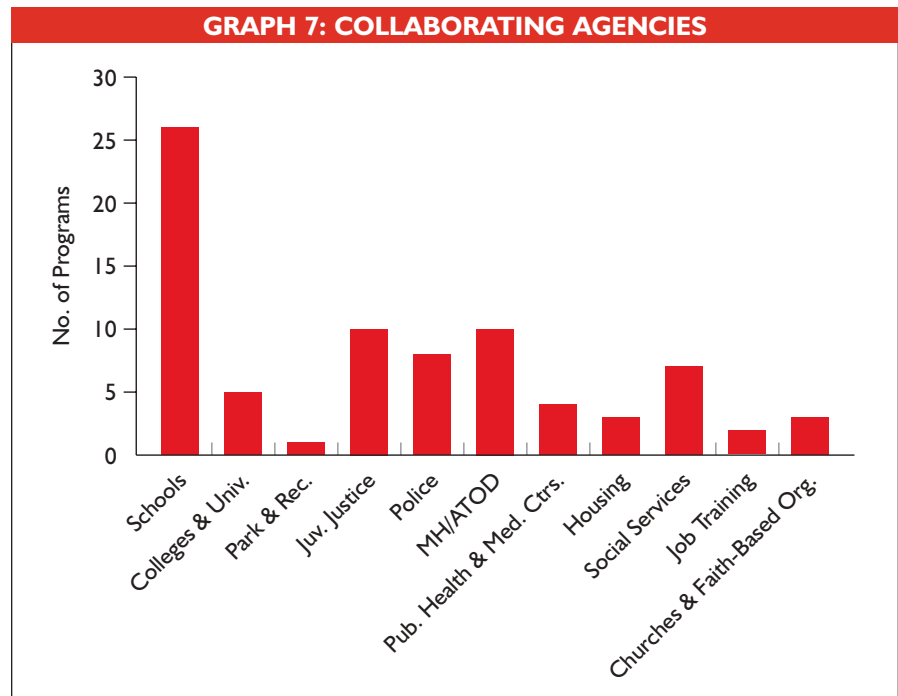
“Need a lot of understanding among providers of services and elected officials of the needs of the community.... Town hall meeting with the Mayor, community, and agency leaders. This is how the program was initiated.”

“Much collaboration as with other agencies that contribute to the youth’s plan. Formal interagency agreements with the County schools.”

“Had Cambodian and Asian police and judges. Cambodian police officer who can translate, Vietnamese and Samoan police officers or court persons that talk to parents and provide forum for education.”

“Closer communication between program’s parent organization, the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, and the police on issues involving youth has led to better collaboration. Improved cultural sensitivity and awareness of refugee concerns has helped diminish tensions between Asian community and the police.”

Developing Cross-system, Cross-agency and Cross-cultural Collaborations. Key collaboration with agencies, organizations, state or local government, communities, and other youth-serving systems help initiate and sustain these programs. Collaborations ranged from formal interagency memorandum of understanding to informal word-of-mouth agreements. These collaborations could be with ethnic community-based organizations, mutual assistance associations, or with organizations and agencies external to the AAPI community. Schools were the most frequently cited collaborators, followed by ethnic community-based organizations (CBOs), youth agencies, juvenile justice and mental health. Endorsement or support from the collaborating organizations could potentially provide financial support and links to a wider range of human and fiscal resources. Graph 7 indicates the range and frequency of cross-system collaborative arrangements.



Enlisting Support from the Ethnic Community.

For many of the programs, the community is involved in the process from the beginning. The programs often play a critical role as the liaison between the schools, parents, and community by bridging the needs of parents and students with those of the school. Most youth programs must establish connections in the community in order to get support for the program and ongoing participation of the youth in the community.

“The community group helped us do promotion or use their location.... They [the community] are the ultimate stakeholders and have the best ideas of what they want and how to do it.”

Gaining Endorsement from Larger Parent or National Organizations Representing AAPI Communities. National ethnic or mainstream organizations that shared a similar focus or mission as the local program were mentioned in the interviews. Occasionally, the national organizations provide financial support; but more importantly, they provide an opportunity to network and link to resources and people that the local program could not access on its own. Programs identified more with national organizations that targeted AAPI populations. Many programs felt it was important to attend AAPI conferences at the national level to obtain guidance and lessons learned from other communities.

“...talking to larger communities, they might not understand their issues. There is a difference between cities with many programs and those that only have a few programs. I meet smaller communities through NAPAFASA [National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse] conferences.”

“Asian American Federation is the umbrella group...their goal is to support organizations serving Asian American communities, especially many CBOs that are very small.”

“National level funding is part of the annual budget. Budget comes from scouting memberships, contributions, and sales of items. National council is support mechanism for them.”

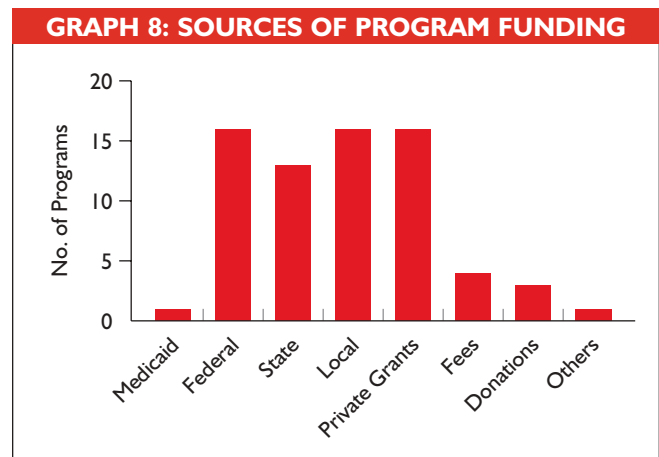
A few programs, however, indicated that their local concerns were not understood or responded to at the national level organization.

“Collaboration becomes difficult when working with national organizations that are ignorant of cultural issues to Hawaii. Their expertise may not be applicable in Hawaii’s cultural climate.”

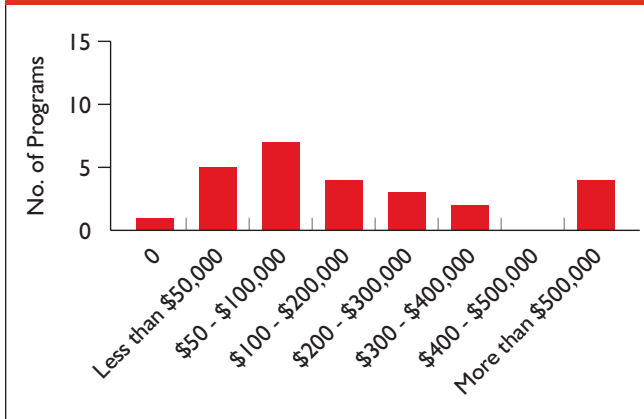
Obtaining Funding. Consistent funding is often a challenge for youth development programs. Funding should be diversified so the program is not dependent on any one source. Many suggested seeking more corporate funding and individual donor solicitation. Shared or pooled funding from different agencies is becoming the norm rather than the exception. Main sources of funding include grants, private donations, tobacco settlement money, and state funds.

Sources of program funding are detailed in Graph 8 and annual budgets for programs are reported in Graph 9, which shows that most programs run on a limited budget of \$50,000-\$100,000 per year.

“Continuous fundraising activities are conducted to support the programming.”



GRAPH 6: ANNUAL BUDGET FOR PROGRAMS



Developing Innovative Recruitment Strategies.

Recruitment strategies need to be tailored to the particular community and mindful of the stigma associated with mental health, substance abuse or gang involvement. Effective recruitment strategies draw upon naturally existing social networks or entities serving the ethnic population such as language schools, churches, or recreation centers. The message used in the recruitment or advertising must appeal to the parents and the youth.

“Couldn’t just focus on violence prevention, so did college night [and provided] SAT and financial and scholarship information [about local universities and colleges].”

“Most parents don’t speak English, so parents will come to the agency with questions about TANF and green cards, and they will attract people to their programs that way.”

■ What are the Barriers and Challenges for AAPI Youth Programs?

Infrastructure and programmatic barriers were described in the interviews. Some of these barriers are generalizable to all youth development and risk prevention programs. Other barriers are more culturally-determined and signify the need to address these issues from a culturally-based perspective. Infrastructure barriers included: lack of funding, staffing, space, transportation, and cross-agency collaboration. Programmatic barriers included language issues, difficulty with recruitment and retention of participants, resistance and stigma of being involved with a program for “problem youth”, difficulty communicating between evaluation and program staff, challenges in developing programs that adequately addressed cultural issues for AAPIs, and tension between prevention and intervention.

Infrastructure Barriers and Challenges

Lack of funding. Funding is an ongoing issue for all programs. Increased budget deficits and cutting of social programs threaten the very survival of many programs that focus on prevention.

Additionally, without advocacy from the AAPI community, which historically has not engaged in political and community advocacy initiatives, there will be little awareness of the needs of AAPI youth. Consequently, these issues will not be part of the budget discussions at the local, state or foundation level.

“Currently we are in a budget crunch in the state and the Department of Education will suffer its cuts with all other programs nearing the cutting block in the future.”

“Unfortunately, no one pays for outreach and networking. Probation won’t pay for it; law enforcement thinking about paying for it. There is also the view that API kids don’t need this.”

Staffing issues. The staff of the programs, both paid and volunteer, are often cited as the most valuable component of the program. Staff commitment is a critical ingredient of these programs. However, programs are confronted with high turnover, staff burnout, lack of trained staff or staff with specific expertise in working with youth or prevention programs. Without appropriate training, staff often have difficulty setting limits with youth and empowering families.

“Very difficult work, have to love what you’re doing, especially when working with young people. They can burn you out quickly.”

“In the prevention services, it was noted that families that had high dosage of participation in the program dropped their participation in their young people’s school lives. This raised the question of whether the family surrendered their issues to the staff, and the need to take a look at staff over-involvement.”

“We did get funding for a mentoring program but have been unsuccessful in recruiting mentors.”

Space and transportation. Securing a place to house the program was a consistent barrier faced by many programs. Staff had to frequently borrow space on a temporary basis which undermined the sense of stability. Programs had difficulty finding transportation for the youth as their parents often worked long hours and were unavailable to transport them.

“Having it housed in a school is both a strength and deterrent [as there is] competition with other school activities.”

“Space [is a problem]—we had the college across the street, but we had to move out in the middle of the summer program.”

“For community agencies, transportation was big issue.”

Cross-agency collaboration. Collaboration between agencies, including schools, often made implementation of programs difficult. Turf issues, community politics, competition for resources and lack of understanding about the necessity for programs focusing on AAPIs were all obstacles experienced by programs. Different policies regarding confidentiality and sharing information also caused barriers between programs.

“Biggest challenge is having them (schools and other sources of referrals) understand our program, what we can offer and where we are limited.”

“Our community connection. We have limited way of getting into the community. Not able to get to know community members.”

Limited outreach and retention of participants.

Outreach to parents and sustaining their involvement was a major challenge for these programs. Significant time and effort was necessary to connect with parents who were more responsive to personal contact and word-of-mouth than flyers or other written materials and announcements. Outreach efforts needed to be in the language of the parent and culturally-appropriate incentives needed to be presented in order to compete with other pressing demands and workloads. A focus on educational improvement, language training or cultural enrichment was more appealing to parents than the concept of “youth development” or prevention of risky behaviors. For some programs, retaining youth in their programs was also a challenge.

“Parent involvement is our biggest challenge and pinpointing the best strategy. Most families are in ‘survival mode’ and working multiple jobs. It is hard for parents to set their involvement as a priority.”

“Time commitment: hard for youth because they had so many extra-curricular activities and part-time jobs that they had to schedule around.”

Program growing faster than staffing capacity. In some programs, youth participation grew rapidly. This was both a strength and a challenge for programs in their early stages of implementation.

“...the program has grown significantly. There are capacity-issues in serving so many youth and being able to track/monitor the relationships with a primarily volunteer and extremely busy staff.”

“Experienced exponential growth in the program. Been hard to do something meaningful like developing materials to promote. Hard to do good program assessment.”

Programmatic Barriers and Challenges

Language Barriers. A general lack of bi-lingual staff or sufficient trained staff to speak the numerous languages required by the parents is a major barrier in these programs. It is a challenge to find someone who has the language, cultural and professional qualifications and is willing to work part time, as some programs do not need full time staff in all the different languages.

“Language continues to be a barrier, even with the parent advocate. May have Vietnamese, but not Cambodian or Hmong [speakers].”

Resistance from mainstream organizations and community. Some programs felt that the surrounding community and the local school leadership were not invested in understanding AAPI culture or helping these ethnic groups.

“We heard from the mainstream community, there are services all over the community, why do we need special services for Southeast Asian youth?”

“School district has slow pace in responding to the size and unique needs of the Hmong population...in our area about 35 percent are Hmong with some individual schools at 40 to 50 percent Hmong.”

Stigma and resistance from within the AAPI communities. A heightened sense of stigma in many AAPI families regarding youth violence, substance abuse, mental health issues or other risky behaviors often prevent them from seeking information about or engaging in youth programs. Many of these problems are denied or covered up by the families for fear of stigma, shame and loss of face in the ethnic community. Depending on their residency status, some parents are concerned that revealing negative behaviors of their youth may harm their status as immigrants or efforts toward citizenship. Many AAPI parents do not

understand how these youth programs can help their children or their community. Another difficult challenge is the lack of support from community leaders who do not recognize the risk for substance abuse or youth violence among their youth. Without this support, parents are reluctant to allow their children to engage in these programs. Many parents won't get involved unless the problem is related to school performance and most parents didn't feel programs are necessary for girls.

“There was stigma attached to the program. If kids were involved some felt it was saying the child is a bad child.”

“Older immigrants have political divisions with the new immigrants as well as economic, age, race and gender differences (e.g., less acceptance of women in leadership), and feel threatened by community-based approach instead of a hierarchical structure.”

“We saw community politics at its worst. A Vietnamese person active in the [local] system tried to sabotage the program and turn parents against this program.... He especially attacked the concept of drug abuse prevention. He felt it labeled Asian American kids as drug users. As a result we lost some parents who might have been involved.”

Dissonance between program curriculum and the AAPI culture. Existing youth development programming is not culture-specific. General youth curricula, whether prevention or life-skills development, are not usually developed or tested with an AAPI population so often there is a mismatch between the programming and the culture of the participants. Some programs, particularly those supported by grants, were required to implement a specific prevention program. Maintaining fidelity to the intervention was often a challenge for these programs given the lack of cultural fit.

“Such little research done on issues affecting youth in Asian-American culture. Hard when trying to develop program for your community.... Would like to see more research that is sub-group specific and overall Asian in general.”

Prioritizing prevention vs. treatment. Due to the lack of resources, many programs were faced with the challenge of trying to provide services to youth with varying levels of need. Some were appropriate for prevention programs while others required more intense intervention strategies. Obtaining the right balance of services and the appropriate staffing and referral patterns to provide a range of services was often a challenge for these programs.

“The program currently does not have the staff capacity for young women who have journeyed through juvenile justice and thus include them in the prevention program.”

“Ongoing funding is hard to get because this is not service delivery. Is more prevention.”

“...we have such a wide range of youth participating in our programs, find it difficult to serve them well. Have American-born gang members who have sex parties at 14 and 14-year old immigrants who are afraid to talk to anyone.”

Program evaluation and administrative reporting. Evaluation continues to be a major challenge faced by most agencies serving AAPI populations. Many do not have the expertise to provide formal appropriate evaluation and research efforts. Only one third of the programs reported an evaluation of their activities. Of these, only a few used a systematic evaluation strategy or standardized measures to document program outcomes. The lack of capacity to conduct outcome evaluations made it difficult for programs to show systematically their impact on youth and their families. Programs also described the burden of administrative data collection and the need to comply with grant requirements that did not address some of their local needs and goals.

“Because of education level, had difficulty doing the [outcome] questionnaires. Questionable validity of responses. More anecdotal reporting they found [to be] helpful.”

“...the grant provider requires tons of paperwork and the reporting requirements take away from program time and add onto administrative time.”

“Funders have specific outcomes and target numbers to reach. That’s hard. [because our] contracts can only target certain schools or certain ages, certain ethnicities.”

■ What are Critical Factors for Sustaining Programs?

When asked about features essential to the success of a youth program, two thirds of the programs indicated staff. This is consistent with the research on protective factors for high-risk youth which underscores the importance of bonding and a warm, caring relationship with an adult. The research on resiliency in youth similarly identifies the importance of a positive adult relationship as one of the differentiating factors between youth who “make it” in high-risk circumstances, and those who don’t.

One third of the programs indicated cultural relevance of the program as the most salient feature contributing to its success in working with AAPI youth. Emerging research on youth development and prevention programs highlights the importance of building on cultural values and content in the programming.

Other features included youths’ sense of ownership of and leadership within the program, consistency of funding, gaining buy-in and support within the ethnic and mainstream communities. Also mentioned to a lesser degree, were building an evaluation and data component, customizing the program to the community, and demonstrating flexibility in terms of needs of participants.

■ **Bicultural and bilingual committed staff.** In all programs, staff was viewed as the most critical factor for an effective program. In most instances, hiring staff from the community that reflected the ethnicity of the youth population was considered essential to the program. Many staff bring relatively good engagement skills with adolescents but need more training in working with parents. Staff are often younger and need to deal with being in a position of authority vis-à-vis older,

more senior parents in a culture that is very hierarchically age-determined. Programs often hired an outreach person who is a known and “trusted messenger” in the community.

“STAFFING! Staff should reflect the target group. Staff needs to be able to communicate in the same language as clients and parents. Need Southeast Asian language especially with parents.”

“Relationships between the staff and the participants. But also between participants and each other. Staff must be from the community and reflect the population. Able to establish positive and caring relationships.”

“Our staff make it work—their dedication, hard work, ability to relate to the youth, ability to communicate well with parents, a great combination. Young line staff work extra hard to meet the challenge of being perceived as young and inexperienced. Staff also comes from the community in which we work. The understanding of the community is essential, especially for acceptance and engaging families and youth in the services they need. They share the same cultural, ethnic backgrounds.”

■ **Inclusion of cultural traditions and cultural values.** Most programs included cultural values, traditions and content specifically tailored to the AAPI ethnic groups they were serving. They also included translation of materials in workshops for parents and provision of bicultural and bilingual staff members. For youth and parents, the programs often began with an educational orientation (which is less threatening and stigmatizing), then moved to peer social and

emotional support. This also included clarifying what these values and traditions mean to them and what they want to keep as part of who they are as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Education is seen as a cornerstone to success by the parents and was woven throughout the program.

“Develop program that meets the needs of the community. For example, 12 step [substance abuse] program [is] not right for this population—works better in Christian communities and is guilt-based, while AAPI culture is more shame-based.”

“Six weeks of the year were devoted to further understanding of their culture, what involvement led to their resettlement and cultural differences. May seem strange but find it is a necessary element. In working with gang kids, acting out and criminal behavior, lots of times this has to do with confusion of where they fit in, not understanding roles at home and in the community. They gain better understanding of how to deal with racism and prejudice and how to handle things in confident and nonviolent way.... We tackled the issue of valuing culture many times and many different ways...”

“In the Hmong language, the word “violence” does not exist. Therefore, the team decided to bring awareness of violence to its community by focusing on peace, rather than through the concept of violence. Hmong people do have words for peace. Like the name Hmoob Thaj Yeeb, which means “Hmong Peace.” Want to prevent violence in the community by teaching their community about how to achieve peace.”

Differential acculturation between parents and their children was addressed in these programs along with discussion of new behaviors to enable one to function competently in a bicultural situation.

“Address normative behavior in immigrant and refugee families where parent is not American-born, acculturates much slower. Children acculturate faster because of exposure and schooling.... The objective is to address intercultural, intergenerational conflict by focusing on parents and helping them understand why the gap develops and how to prevent this.”

“Not like white suburban youth, like in Orange County, California. We bring the program to them as part of the Asian community...program is where parents have to join, too.... Stress the benefits of being involved in young kids program, also create recognition for parents, too.... Say this is a ‘supplemental education’ program, utilize leadership skills, group dynamics, and team-building that school is not doing. Kids get opportunity to lead here, when they may not get that [leadership] chance in their own schools.”

“In the parent-training component, it is really critical to understand American systems: education, law enforcement, the school system is different and adjustment is so difficult. We address this in parent training, using this training to teach [parents] how to help their kids in school...parent workshops provide information to parents on how to be successful in working with school officials, working with children at home and how to prepare children [for these new systems].”

■ **Youth leadership and sense of ownership of the program.** In order to sustain participation and ongoing development, these youth programs had to cultivate leadership among the youth and a sense of buy-in and commitment to the program. This theme emerged as an essential ingredient of successful programs. The youth must feel they have input into the program. Programs described attempting to establish a safe, structured yet fun place for them. As a member of an ethnic minority

group, these youth needed to have a safe, accepting place where they felt valued and were able to share their culture and their struggles, and to talk freely about issues that other youth may not encounter. Enabling youth to decide on the issues they wanted to deal with and actions to address them strengthened their commitment and leadership within the program. Their commitment to the program also began to build a sense of attachment and belonging to their community.

“Group is a safe place for issues to be discussed on content and issues of racism in the community.”

“Activities that are team-building, like retreats, bowling, and movie nights. [Teens] need a sense of ownership.... Make it a place they want to be, not just another school-type place.”

■ **Champion or program leader.** Several programs attributed their existence to a dynamic, committed community or agency leader who championed the issues of AAPI youth in key political arenas or to a program director who was able to identify resources and build a network to establish and sustain the program. These types of leaders were able to motivate not only the ethnic community but the broader mainstream community as well.

“Strength of the Executive Director, [who was] willing to ask for help, to learn and advocate, [showed] openness to collaboration, and [had] personal refugee experience and understanding of the Vietnamese community.”

“Must also give credit to the Mayor.... Through all these efforts, Mayor and Superintendent, Police Department, came to truly understand the needs of the community.”

■ **Consistent funding and adequate resources.** Many of these programs discussed the need to develop a financing strategy to diversify funding sources. The most frequent sources of funds were

city and county funds. Some programs began with seed money from a local agency or foundation and most supplemented with grant funds. Some programs tapped into substance abuse or community development block grant funds to states. A critical feature was having some dedicated staff or time to develop an intermediate to long term financing plan especially given the unstable nature of the current funding streams.

“Consistent funding and adequate resources are crucial.”

“Support from Foundations and other funders would be very helpful.”

■ **Community visibility, engagement and commitment.** To effectively functioning within the ethnic and broader community, these AAPI youth programs needed to have visibility, engagement and support from AAPI and non-AAPI communities and organizational entities. The program needed to have a positive presence and publicize how it was meeting a community need. Some programs publicized this through ethnic newspapers, multi-ethnic community fairs and gatherings and involvement in other agency advisory boards and projects. Programs had to be sensitive to communicating about risk factors and behaviors to ethnic communities who often did not want to know about this or felt it brought shame to their families and communities. AAPI communities often do not want to know about or publicize a substance abuse or gang problem in their neighborhoods. The relevance of these programs had to be established sensitively among the multiple generations in the AAPI community.

“The reality is that to have success it really required community building up front.”

“Needed community involvement in the organization, both greater community and the Vietnamese community in the project.”

“Offered free SAT classes and have college instructor who comes in, so parents want kids to be there and parents get more involved because it’s academic tutoring.... Do SAT tutoring in conjunction with alcohol and drug prevention curriculum.”

■ **Collaborating and partnering with organizations that work with Asian youth, and bridging the cross-agency relationship are critical factors.** The formation of partnerships with organizations that work with AAPI youth was very helpful and enabled sharing information and pooling resources instead of competing for limited funds.

“Professional cultures are deeply entrenched.... Often the reaction is ‘don’t work with schools because they are too close-minded; police are too paramilitary.’ These reactions/attitudes limit effectiveness of work with adolescents.”

“Closer communication between [the program]’s parent organization, the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, and the police on issues involving youth has led to better collaboration. Improved cultural sensitivity and awareness of refugee concerns has helped diminish tensions between the Asian community and the police.”

■ **Incorporating program evaluations and utilizing the findings.** Having evaluation helps the staff determine what program strategies and activities are working effectively and what areas of the program they need to improve. Such information lets program staff and funders track and document if they are achieving their intended goals.

“Success of the program will depend on how information is absorbed and utilized; how they interact with one another; how they develop their problem solving skills.... To have success, we think it’s important to retain involvement at least 1-2 years, so we can see some results.”

■ Policy Implications and Conclusions

This study represents a beginning effort toward increasing knowledge about programs serving AAPI youth. Respondents were eager to discuss their programs, interested in knowing about other AAPI youth-serving programs, and convinced that their programs were having an impact on the lives of AAPI youth, even though they lacked systematically collected evaluation and outcome data to substantiate this.

While these programs were quite heterogeneous in structure and content, there were recurrent themes in this sample of thirty programs that have important policy implications.

Program content is tied to culture. The need for cultural adaptation and responsiveness in their programs emerged consistently across programs, as did the need to incorporate cultural teaching and valuing in order to build the youth's sense of attachment and positive attitudes towards their cultures. Implementation and structure needed to be culturally-driven. The critical role of bicultural and bilingual staff was emphasized in the majority of the programs. This was most often cited as the critical ingredient in the programs.

The role of collaboration across youth-serving systems and with communities was identified as an important strategy to address the sometimes complex needs of high risk youth. For these youth, their issues often transcend the domain of any one service system or community organization. Cultural education and understanding need to be a part of these collaborations. The cultural interface makes it different from usual interagency collaborations. Added to this is the minority status of these AAPI youth and their AAPI programs which needs to be considered in the balance of power in these collaborations. Interagency collaborations are extremely difficult to begin

with and become more complex with the added overlay of cultural minority status.

Unstable or time-limited funding and the difficulty of locating funding streams that support prevention work limited the capacity building of these programs. This was a major challenge for most programs and restricted their potential growth. A major facilitator identified by these programs was a particular “champion” or dedicated individual who spearheaded the program. The ethnicity of this champion was variable, sometimes an AAPI individual, sometimes not. These champions were critical in the initial development of the program, but the need for a stronger infrastructure and capacity for sustainability transcended any one individual. This was essential for program growth and sustainability, but challenging to accomplish with limited funds and resources.

Finally, what emerged from this study is consistent with a recently developed risk and protective framework for AAPI youth (Huang, and Ida, 2004). Acculturation stresses, devalued ethnicity, lack of culturally supportive institutions and disconnection between home and school are key risk factors in this framework. Protective factors include bicultural competence, presence of extended family, and cultural traditions and worldviews. These are in addition to the general protective factor of bonding through a warm, caring and consistent relationship with an adult. The programs presented in this study systematically address these culturally-based risk factors while enhancing cultural protective factors in the individual, family and community domains. As more attention is focused on community youth development programs, ethnic-specific features of diverse youth populations need to be integrated into these programs.

■ Appendix A: AAPI Work Group Members

Amando Cablas

Sonia Chesson

Sandy Dang

Douglas Dodge

Kana Enomoto

Nancy Gannon

Terry Gock

Tracy Harachi

Tiffany Ho

Jeannette Johnson

David Kakeshiba

David Moy

Patricia Mrazek

Nhai Nguyen

Howard Phengsomphone

Larry Sullivan

Bouy Te

Deborah Toth-Dennis

Nghia Tran

Tien Tran

KaYing Yang

Lucas Yang

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