



FEBRUARY 2022

REBUILDING TOGETHER FOR A JUST FUTURE

2022 POLICY PRIORITIES



ANTI-ASIAN HATE
IMMIGRATION
INTEGRATION
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
MENTAL HEALTH
NONPROFIT SUPPORT
SENIOR SERVICES



ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About	4
The State of the Asian Community	5
2020 AAF Highlights	6
Anti-Asian Hate	8
Immigration	10
Integration	13
Economic Empowerment	16
Civic Engagement	18
Mental Health	20
Nonprofit Support	22
Senior Services	24

ABOUT

Established in 1989, with the mission to raise the influence and well-being of the pan-Asian American community through research, policy advocacy, public awareness, and nonprofit support, the Asian American Federation (AAF) is the largest umbrella leadership organization in New York serving diverse Asian American communities that make up the fastest-growing population in the city, state, and country.

In partnership with our 70 member and partner organizations, we represent the collective interests of 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers, across critical issue areas such as immigrant integration, mental health, economic empowerment, and civic engagement. We work to make sure the pan-Asian community remains visible, and that our needs are addressed, our contributions are valued, and our stories are told. And we do this by providing expert research, strong advocacy, and training pan-Asian nonprofits to be better at serving their communities. Having served the community for 32 years, AAF is the strongest leadership voice advocating for better policies, services, and funding that lead to more justice and opportunity for Asian immigrants, one of New York City's poorest and most underserved communities.

THE STATE OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY

Asian New Yorkers have faced tremendous challenges over the past year. And while our country continues to struggle to get ahead of COVID, our community continuously demonstrates what it means to be resilient New Yorkers.

Despite the difficulties we face, we see the best of humanity displayed by ordinary New Yorkers every day. Neighbors look out for one another, and residents make conscious decisions to shop and dine in their neighborhoods. Frontline workers continue to show up to work every day to ensure that programs that serve the most vulnerable among us do not come to a halt.

However, there is still much work to be done. Anti-Asian hate persists. Small businesses that were beloved neighborhood anchors have closed for good. Accessible in-language mental health programs are still out of reach, and food is scarce in too many homes. Low-wage workers do not have enough resources to support their families, and our seniors are afraid to leave their homes for fear of being attacked. And many Asian-led, Asian-serving community-based organizations are forced to make difficult decisions because they do not have the capacity or support to match the need in our communities.

Together, let us resolve to reset the systems that exclude our community. Let us tap into our expertise and ensure that pan-Asian voices are heard in the rebuilding process. Let us continue to fight for those left behind by the pandemic recovery, while also fighting for our nonprofits to receive the resources they need to reshape the city into one that cares for the most vulnerable and always strives to put them first.

The solution to building a stronger community is us!

In solidarity always,



Jo-Ann Yoo
Executive Director

2020 AAF HIGHLIGHTS

Reached over **5,000**
community members through our
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Provided **technical assistance**
to over **400** Asian
American
SMALL BUSINESSES

Presented **30 TESTIMONIALS** at City
Council and before State Committees to highlight
the critical needs of the pan-Asian American
community, particularly related to **COVID-19**

Trained nearly
200 participants through
**TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE
TRAININGS**
in leadership
development, board
development,
fundraising, and
advocacy

Reached over **1,800,000**
contacts with **ASIAN VOTERS**
from diverse backgrounds through our **Civic
Engagement Program**

Engaged nearly
2,000
community members
through our
**IMMIGRANT
INTEGRATION
PROGRAM**

Distributed **55,000** physical and
electronic safety booklets and videos through our
HOPE AGAINST HATE CAMPAIGN
to **prevent anti-Asian hate violence**, as well
as **trained approximately 1,000 people** in
upstander intervention, verbal de-escalation, and
physical self-defense strategies in multiple Asian
languages

Co-led the
**AAPI
CAUCUS**
at the **National
Immigrant
Integration
Conference**

Helped **stop** the
CITIZENSHIP QUESTION
from being added to the Census



Advocated to **permanently halt** the implementation of
the new **FEDERAL PUBLIC CHARGE RULE**



ANTI-ASIAN HATE

Increase funding for anti-Asian violence prevention work being implemented through initiatives like the Hope Against Hate Campaign

As anti-Asian violence continues unabated, funding for the anti-Asian violence prevention work encompassed in AAF's Hope Against Hate Campaign must be sustained. Funding from the FY 2022 state and city budgets was an important down payment as we laid the groundwork for long-term violence prevention work in the Asian American community and among our allies. As part of the Campaign, dozens of Asian American-serving organizations are implementing a range of proven community-centered safety strategies, ranging from upstander trainings to safety ambassador programs, to building more robust victim support services. Continued city and state funding is critical to ensuring the proven community-centered solutions in the Hope Against Hate Campaign are implemented, sustained, and consistently supported, so Asian New Yorkers can live their lives without fear of being attacked whenever they step outside.

384% increase in **anti-Asian hate crimes** in New York City over one year

Source: NYPD Hate Crimes Dashboard, October 2019 to September 2021

Acknowledge the leadership of Asian community-based organizations (CBOs) in fighting anti-Asian hate and incorporate them into policy conversations on how to address the crisis

When they have experienced anti-Asian assaults, Asian New Yorkers have consistently chosen to contact their neighborhood CBOs first, since these CBOs have the most understanding of the cultural and generational nuances in our community. CBOs with deep roots in their neighborhoods have always been best-positioned to connect Asians to the help they need, especially during crises like COVID-19 and the rise in anti-Asian xenophobia. As anti-Asian incidents increased, our CBOs were

the first to be called upon to organize a response, help with reporting, and provide victim support services. It is critical that city and state leaders include Asian CBOs and community leaders in policy discussions and program implementation efforts to address this crisis so that solutions are culturally responsive.



IMMIGRATION

Increase funding for immigration legal services and recognize the critical work of Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations to serve as language and cultural bridges to these services

From 2017 to 2019, an investment from the Liberty Defense Project in AAF allowed us to regrant and build capacity at 10 Asian nonprofits to serve the immigration legal needs of 8,000 clients. Because of the change in priority of LDP to respond to the immigration policies of the previous presidential administration, AAF and our partners were left out of the second contract round. Now that a new administration is in place, we urge the state to return LDP to its original purpose of building long-term immigration legal services capacity that address the wide range of needs in the Asian community.

As the majority of the State's funding for immigration legal services has been redirected to other social service areas, there is more work that must be done to reinvest in, revitalize, and reinforce the leading-edge work of Asian CBOs, especially as immigrants continue to bear the brunt of a slow pandemic recovery and unmitigated anti-Asian hate. Asian nonprofits across our state have worked together to provide consistent and up-to-date information, including Know Your Rights trainings, and case management and referral services for those who need legal help. However, with 2020 Census data showing unprecedented growth in the Asian community in upstate New York and rising population growth in New York City, there has never been a more pressing need for increased funding and resources for Asian CBOs to make immigration legal service programs as accessible and successful as possible.

ASIAN NON-CITIZEN IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Growth from 2010

8.1% in NYS

5.2% in NYC



Current population (2019)

517,360 in NYS

381,824 in NYC

Source: 2019 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata

Invest in and build substantial partnerships with Asian CBOs that provide in-language outreach, information, and trainings to inform immigrant families about developments in immigration policy

According to the 2020 Census, the Asian community is one of the fastest-growing communities in the state. Yet, too many Asian immigrant New Yorkers continue to be left in limbo as a result of shifting federal policies regarding their status. Uncertain status impacts how they engage with and contribute to the communities they live in and help sustain. AAF's members, partners, and ethnic media sources, are critical conduits between our immigrant community and the services they deserve and the government processes that impact them. As such, city and state policymakers must effectively and sustainably incorporate trusted community partners and ethnic media into information dissemination efforts and communication processes regarding immigration policy changes and how to access legal assistance, healthy food, and quality medical care.

Fully dismantle the previous Administration's assault on "public charge" and remedy the systemic damage inflicted on our immigrant communities and their access to critical benefits and services

The past year has shown how critical our immigrant community is to the well-being of our city and state. However, the previous Administration's "public charge" assault left an indelible impact that will take years to address, having stigmatized the use of benefits and services our immigrant communities are entitled to. The Biden-Harris Administration can and must make the extra effort to acknowledge the difficulties facing our most vulnerable and put an unequivocal end to the "public charge" assault; ongoing conversations around dismantling the assault must acknowledge the damage already done and include mitigation efforts that address the accessibility of public services and benefits.

Increase investments in culturally-competent city- and state-funded safety net programs such as community health centers and clinics, and food pantries

If ever there was a time when culturally-competent safety net programs proved essential, it was during a pandemic that disproportionately hurt communities of color. From innovating food service delivery at the height of the pandemic to creating new service streams that acknowledged the importance of providing multiple services in single visits, our member and partner agencies have led the way in meeting our most vulnerable where they were and providing them with services tailored to their needs. However, our community is still feeling the effects from the damage caused by changes to the Public Charge rule which made our communities afraid to access benefits and increased disenrollment rates. The City and State must fund emergency networks of linguistically and culturally competent food service programs that serve as viable, accessible alternatives for our most vulnerable.



INTEGRATION

Enforce Local Law 30 so that New Yorkers can gain access to city services with consistent, timely, and high-quality language translation access services

Today, Asian New Yorkers are struggling to find quality language access services as they seek out services from their own government, like encountering late translations or websites using Google Translate functions that are inauthentic, incoherent, or both. Telephonic translations are inadequate, especially when serving languages of limited diffusion (LLDs), and our experience has shown us that there are few substitutes for in-person translation. Asian CBOs and our partners in other communities stand ready to serve in providing feedback regarding City language access initiatives and providing additional capacity with coinciding funding. Our CBOs have the trust of our communities and, if incorporated into the City's efforts to increase language access, they can serve, as they always have, as critical intermediaries between isolated communities and the City.

Expand and codify into state law the languages covered by the Executive Order on language access to include languages spoken by low-income, limited English proficient Asian residents and new immigrants

Now more than ever, New York State lawmakers must pass legislation codifying Executive Order 26 and expanding its scope to include all agencies of New York State. Such legislation should also increase the number of languages covered so that it can provide services to the newest New Yorkers and those who have the most difficulty accessing state services.

Fund the creation of community-driven language access solutions, including a Community Legal Interpreter Bank (CLIB) and three worker cooperatives focused on Asian, indigenous Latin American, and African language interpretation

More than twenty ethnic groups speaking numerous languages make up New York's Asian community, and as the fastest-growing community in the state, demand for language access resources will only increase. At present, many organizations and government agencies are forced to use their limited resources to either devote staff hours to these responsibilities or find interpreters and translators who are not always trained in interpreting/translating legal, medical, and other sensitive terminology. That is why AAF, alongside coalition partners African Communities Together, Masa, and the New York Immigration Coalition, are asking that City and State resources be used to fund a CLIB to the tune of \$2.25 million, to act as a resource for nonprofit legal service and social service providers to access qualified interpreters of Asian, indigenous Latin American, and African languages. Additionally, our coalition is asking for \$750,000 to fund three worker cooperatives focused on Asian, indigenous Latin American, and African languages. Each worker cooperative will focus on the recruitment, training, and dispatching of qualified interpreters and create job opportunities for multilingual immigrants.

Support community-based ESOL programming to address the gap between community needs and education and employment opportunities for Asian immigrants

In 2016, AAF received funding from New York State to establish a multi-pronged program at one of our member organizations' community centers that would allow clients to receive intensive ESOL instruction. Over a three-year period, this program helped nearly 2,000 immigrants build English literacy skills; gain useful knowledge about services and resources available to them; create opportunities for employment; and attain their citizenship. However, funding for ESOL programming was gutted in 2019, forcing a number of AAF's member and partner organizations to effectively shutter their ESOL classrooms, leaving low-income Asian immigrants with no entryway to integrate into the larger community. In an uneven pandemic recovery, during which our immigrant community members have suffered the highest increase in unemployment rates across all racial groups, adult literacy education funding is critical to helping low-income workers develop the language and technical skills necessary to access employment opportunities and integrate into the larger community. Asian CBOs have been the first point of contact for our most vulnerable members, and they will continue to be centers of empowerment.

The City and State must fund these CBOs so that they can continue to take a leadership role in engaging isolated community members in pandemic recovery efforts that should prioritize them.

Sustain support in contracting processes for immigrant integration services and programming that center Asian community members' needs

In addition to ESOL programming, citizenship application services and immigrant integration workshops are critical to making sure every member of our community can participate fully in the affairs of the neighborhoods they help to sustain. However, the sheer ethnic diversity of the Asian American community makes finding a single approach that can address service gaps challenging. Government leaders must recognize this reality and fund CBOs to develop programs that can best serve their members. We must also work to ensure that program requirements reflect the on-the-ground realities of Asian immigrant communities and ensure that culturally-competent practices and processes are given preference.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Increase funding for CBOs and CDFIs that provide technical assistance to small businesses

The pandemic revealed the disastrous consequences of piecemeal outreach efforts from government agencies that ignored cultural competency and language access. It also highlighted the significant isolation of immigrant small business owners from mainstream financial systems. More than one out of every three small business owners in AAF's survey, conducted in the summer of 2020, stated that they were unable to connect with a service provider from banks or other financial institutions. But even when small business assistance programs improved language access, difficult processes and daunting requirements made these programs inaccessible to our communities. Short lead times in implementing new programs, staff shortages, and extensive language access needs in our community ended up straining the resources of the CBOs and CDFIs that were ultimately tasked with implementing policies and programs. Moreover, they were not properly funded to implement these programs. Therefore, we urge policymakers to view CBOs and CDFIs that have been working with hard-to-reach small business communities as critical partners worth including in the policymaking process from start to finish and funding fully and consistently year after year.

Increase transparency in small business grant programs

The pandemic and the pandemic recovery have provided critical lessons on the importance of transparency in program implementation. In AAF's 2020 survey, 54 percent of our small business owners said they faced a revenue loss of over 75 percent in the initial months of the pandemic shutdown while 26 percent saw a revenue loss between 50 to 75 percent. Future small business assistance programs must collect accessible data on application submissions and approval rates with geographic, sectoral, and racial breakdowns. Such data would better reflect the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in various communities and prove critical for policymakers and advocates evaluating whether programs are reaching those who need them the most.

Transparency also entails making sure small business owners are not left in the dark during the application process. Many business owners had their applications rejected without being given a reason, while others went months without hearing

back. Others had their applications turned down before finally being accepted. Future programs should have more consistent and informative communication plans centered on first-time applicants, as well as a well-defined appeal process to avoid such misunderstanding and future unwillingness to obtain government aid.

Better engage marginalized communities regarding business inspection practices

Far too often, the hardest-to-reach small business communities are the last to hear about new regulations that affect their business operations and revenue. Worse, they have had little opportunity to provide input on city processes that impact them the most. Put simply, navigating the government regulatory structure has been an impossible task for recent immigrants, especially those with limited English proficiency. Due to inconsistencies in communication and a lack of language access, many small businesses were unable to update practices before being subjected to burdensome fines and penalties with little opportunity to cure their violations. Moreover, during the pandemic recovery, small business owners remain confused about evolving regulations and are penalized as a result. In order for our small businesses to thrive, City and State agencies must rethink how they engage small business owners in marginalized communities and prioritize language access, cultural competency, and consistency in inspections. Our small businesses need help, not punishment.

Prioritize Asian American small businesses in the pandemic recovery

The pandemic revealed how much small businesses in our community have had to do on their own as well as the obstacles they faced when they needed help. With the pandemic recovery underway, many government assistance programs for small businesses have focused on distributing limited funds to as many businesses as possible. However, small business owners report that grants of a few thousand dollars do not even cover a month's rent. To that end, policymakers must emphasize offering longer, fairer leases for small businesses.

Furthermore, industry mandates impose an added burden to recovering businesses. While equipment upgrades like mandatory ventilation requirements in nail salons are no doubt important, new regulations add to the burden and expenses small businesses are incurring in a sputtering economic recovery. City and State agencies must provide assistance to vulnerable small businesses who should not have to choose between safety and bankruptcy.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Prioritize community engagement by supporting CBOs who understand the needs of diverse Asian communities

Asian Americans are having an increasingly large impact on election results throughout the country, yet our community civic engagement efforts remain drastically underfunded. The results of New York City's 2021 Primary Election revealed that a lack of culturally competent outreach had a negative impact on the political power of Asian voters. Voters in Flushing and Sunset Park, both Asian-majority neighborhoods, were among the least likely to fully utilize the new ranked-choice voting system.

New ideas and policies meant to give voters a greater say in their futures need to be built and implemented with our most marginalized communities in mind. Trusted CBOs, including those belonging to our pan-Asian serving AAPI Power Coalition, must be funded to provide community education and training efforts to engage Asian residents in civic activities, especially around registering to vote, participating in elections, volunteering for community boards and engaging with elected officials. Support must also be provided in the form of timely and translated educational resources regarding upcoming elections including who/what is on the ballot, voting rights, methods of voting and electoral systems (e.g. ranked-choice voting).

Ensure that voting laws are properly and promptly implemented by investing in translators and polling place interpreters

With the release of new Census data upcoming, the Board of Elections must promptly and transparently produce translated materials in and provide interpreters for any new languages in accordance with Sections 203 and 208 of the Voting Rights Act. Because of the growing number of Asian New Yorkers, we recommend that any languages nearing the VRA threshold be included at this time so that LEP voting populations are not left without access to translated voter information following this once-in-a-decade evaluation process. There is also a greater urgency to improve translation practices and re-assess the evaluation process for language needs in light of the passage of Intro 1867, which allows non-citizens to vote in local elections. To ensure quality translations, policymakers should provide funding support so CBOs can 1) conduct reviews of translated materials to ensure that

they properly convey their intended meaning and 2) make sure translated materials communicate what our community members need to know, such as when and where they can access interpreters.

TOP ASIAN LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN NYC



Source: 2019 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata

Ensure increased transparency and education around applications for and appointments made to Community Boards

Community boards play an important role in connecting community members with local government and giving them a say in what happens in their neighborhood. However, due to a lack of education and transparency around applications and appointments to Community Boards, Asian New Yorkers are often not represented on Community Boards and left out of important decisions such as street design, land use and other community concerns. For instance, when it comes to appointments, Asian Americans are underrepresented in 13 of Queens' 14 Community Boards. In order to increase diversity and provide meaningful opportunities to community members, there must be greater transparency in Community Board appointments, as well as an increased effort to educate the community about the application process and the purpose of Community Boards.

MENTAL HEALTH

Increase funding for organizations providing culturally competent mental health care to Asian New Yorkers

Throughout the pandemic, Asian-serving mental health providers and CBOs have seen unprecedented demand for culturally-competent mental health care in our community. However, the ongoing pandemic and rising anti-Asian hate have only highlighted how little infrastructure has been built to allow our most vulnerable community members to readily access mental health support in ways that are culturally appropriate. In 2022, AAF and our mental health partners will continue to advocate for investment in mental health care that is readily accessible and integrated into existing services and programs to ensure multiple points of access. This includes advocating for increased funding for Asian-serving CBOs to identify mental health needs and provide non-clinical interventions, as well as creating a community education program to help reduce cultural stigma and distribute in-language mental health resources. Following two years of unprecedented demand for mental health services from the community, we are calling for continued funding of existing services, as well as expanded funding for new services, so that preventive and responsive solutions exist for individuals and families struggling with stress, trauma, and at times, severe and chronic mental illness. The current limited capacity of Asian-serving CBOs has led to waitlists and inadequate care, leading to more urgent and extreme cases across communities.

Acknowledge the importance of non-traditional and community-specific approaches to addressing mental health across Asian communities in city contracting and engagement processes

As policymakers increase investment in Asian-focused mental health services, they must also create a legislative and regulatory environment that recognizes the importance of community-grown mental health approaches. Community-based mental health services have consistently filled gaps left by mainstream service systems. However, CBOs providing these services continue to be underfunded as a result of rigid RFP requirements or engagement processes that favor mainstream providers, despite the fact that these services rely on community agencies for their cultural competencies. Our CBOs have been hard at work developing and

integrating mental health programming customized to the specific needs of our most vulnerable members. As a next step, they should be given the opportunity to shape RFPs that will widen access to culturally competent mental health services and play a key role in designing citywide mental health programs that integrate CBOs into the larger mental health care system. In short, mental health policies and practices affecting Asian New Yorkers should reflect their needs as well as the needs of service providers who have been underserved for far too long.



NONPROFIT SUPPORT

Prioritize Asian-led, Asian-serving community-based organizations by making permanent and expanding the Asian American-focused City and State Budget funding streams

As a leadership convener, AAF has seen countless nonprofits emerge and evolve to meet the changing needs of New York City's pan-Asian American communities, which include numerous ethnic groups speaking over 36 Asian languages. This year, funding for Asian Americans was included in both the State and City budgets. However, these allocations fell far short of what other states made available for Asian-American-focused work, including a \$150 million-plus budget provision in California. The time has come for New York's policymakers to make commitments proportionate to our state's Asian American population and the enormous impact they and the CBOs that serve them have had on New York.

Amend contracting processes to allow Asian-led, Asian-serving community groups with on-the-ground credibility to apply for and receive funding directly from the City and State

City and State RFP processes simply do not reflect the needs and identities of the nonprofits doing critical work in our diverse Asian community and other marginalized communities. Contracts are often too large and complex for smaller nonprofits to apply for, and processes too onerous for smaller nonprofits with low capacity to pursue. As a result, the most critical service providers miss out on contracts for direct services funding. To rectify these inequities, RFPs must give greater weight to organizations with a demonstrated track record of serving low-income, underserved immigrant communities with linguistic and cultural competency. For organizations with limited capacity to spend down funds, RFPs must also offer smaller contract amounts. Policymakers should also simplify the contract registration process and reporting requirements so that service providers' may use their limited capacity to better serve their clients. Finally, true financial parity also requires protecting social service subcontractors so that they do not bear the brunt of budget cuts incurred by the main contractor.

Ensure that city contracts reflect the increased wages and salaries required by new minimum wage rules

Contract awards should be increased to account for New York State's minimum wage increase for non-exempt employees and new salary thresholds for exempt employees.

Support nonprofits serving marginalized communities as they strive to re-open safely amidst changing COVID regulations

The COVID-19 pandemic has left Asian CBOs dealing with ever-changing rules that have continued to dramatically affect the direct services that they provide to our communities. They have had to work through regulations that have limited the capacity of senior centers, even as seniors were facing food shortages and social isolation. They have had to pivot, with little preparation, to offering telehealth services. And they have had to come up with creative solutions to continue to deliver services to needy clients under some of the most challenging circumstances we have ever experienced. After two years of immense strain, as CBOs settle into navigating the new normal, they need consistent communication and steady government support. Decision-makers need to engage early and often with them, include them in discussions around new regulations and procedures, and communicate all aspects of funding support and policy without ambiguity. As we undertake this enormous endeavor of re-opening and revitalizing our city, a re-imagined engagement strategy that acknowledges the systemic barriers confronting our vital service providers is needed more than ever.



SENIOR SERVICES

Increase funding for senior centers and senior service providers administering culturally-competent and nontraditional programs

From being isolated because of closed senior centers during the pandemic to being isolated because of rising anti-Asian hate during the recovery, Asian seniors are struggling to get their basic needs met. Many CBOs continue to provide door-to-door food deliveries, using these single touchpoint opportunities to leverage mental health wellness checks and other services. Still, despite their anxieties about COVID and anti-Asian violence, the vast majority of Asian seniors want to visit senior centers again. Our CBOs have responded by hosting innovative hybrid programs for seniors requiring staff to address the digital divide head-on and in real-time, even as they navigated complex and constantly-changing city and state regulations around re-opening. Asian CBO staff members are stressed because their workload has grown exponentially since the pandemic began, with increased demands for rigorous cleaning, mental health services, in-language technology set-up, and hybrid services.

Asian CBOs have continued to be frontline responders even as they fight basic needs insecurity and mental health crises. While they carry the weight of providing consistent, high-quality, culturally-competent services, adequate support from policymakers has been hard to come by. Policymakers must increase funding to address capacity constraints in the very CBOs our seniors trust.

Create processes for frequent, thorough, and timely communication between DFTA and Asian senior-serving organizations

Our CBOs have a long and consistent track record of identifying and responding to the needs of our seniors in ways that are both comfortable and accessible to them. They are frequently the only ones with the language skills to assist our seniors, especially as the digital divide makes services more difficult to access than ever before. Nonetheless, the process of reopening senior centers has added to the confusion and stress of service providers who are already stretched to capacity. We need a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between

Asian senior organizations and DFTA, wherein CBOs receive clear and consistent communication about opportunities and updates. Our CBOs, like those in our Seniors Working Group, the first Asian-centered senior service provider coalition in our State, need to be fully-integrated into conversations regarding policies and practices that will impact them and the seniors they so selflessly serve.

Provide funding for culturally competent, in-language, and senior-focused mental health clinicians, individual sessions, support groups, and resources so seniors can access them for free or at a subsidized cost

While COVID-19 and anti-Asian violence have exacerbated mental health challenges and social isolation, these are persistent issues in our community. Of the seniors we surveyed, 30% live alone, and 37% do not have daily contact with people they do not live with. However, Asian seniors have consistently sought out Asian CBOs before seeking out mainstream providers or City services, and our CBOs have adapted ways to reach seniors more effectively. From referring to group therapy as a “tea party” to reduce stigma, to organizing social activities like origami folding with children, our CBOs are doing everything they can to provide access to mental health services. Along with these group activities, seniors also require individual sessions to build trust and reinforce the learnings and relationships fostered by group activities.

Our mental health service providers are adapting critical services to our seniors’ needs, but community members require easy access to City and State resources that center culturally competent mental health care and can meet Asian seniors where they are.



For more information, please contact:

Howard Shih

Research and Policy Director
howard.shih@aafederation.org
(212) 344-5878 x219

Ravi Reddi

Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy
ravi.reddi@aafederation.org
(212) 344-5878 x220