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Abstract Title: Addressing Disparities for Asians and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities: A Promising Practice Community/Regional-Level Intervention

Introduction

Asian Pacific Islander (APIs) Americans generally enjoy a higher employment rate, household and family income levels than other ethnic minorities. But when disabilities is considered, APIs with disabilities have a much lower employment rate (27.4%) than African Americans with disabilities (31.7%) or Hispanics with disabilities (38.2%). Overcoming this disparity is difficult. APIs with disabilities constitute a hard-to-reach population because of cultural stigma and language barriers. Such barriers lead to sequestering of disabled API family members at home, and reluctance to seek rehabilitation services.

Results/Discussion

Community/regional-level convenings implemented by APIDC in California in 1999, 2001 and 2005 highlighted cultural awareness, legal rights, and culturally competent services, and included individuals with disabilities, their family members, and service providers.

In 2008, APIDC received a two-year Health Through Action (HTA) capacity building grant to outreach and build research capacity for APIs with disabilities. We have disseminated information to and partnered with community-based organizations serving Pacific Islanders (Guam Communications Network, Long Beach, CA), Laotians (Opportunity Plus, Fresno, CA), and Thais (Thai Community Development Corporation, Los Angeles).

Preliminary feedback suggests heightened awareness and understanding of APIs with disabilities. We will organize focus groups with individuals living with disabilities from these three ethnic groups in fall 2008, and incorporate these results into a proposed 2010 APIDC convening. After conducting the focus groups, the next steps are to continue disseminating information, analyze the focus group data, and identify funding for the 2010 APIDC convening.

Lessons Learned/Conclusion

This community-based participatory approach represents a “promising practice” to reduce disparities experienced by APIs with disabilities. Community-based collaborations are key to reaching diverse API communities not reachable by mainstream service groups. The APIDC convenings are a “promising practice” because participants find them very useful, but they have not undergone rigorous evaluation.