

2023 Annual Report

Project Resiliency January - December

Prepared on 1/29/2024

by

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*Cover design created by Maa Vue, Founder of Empower Your Voice Media, LLC

About

WUCMAA is a statewide nonprofit umbrella organization that serves HMong and Southeast Asian communities in Wisconsin. WUCMAA's mission is to empower and advance our member organizations by providing capacity-building, funding, and advocacy services.

*This is an alternative spelling to the current language, "HMong" "Mong" and "Hmoob." HMong is a term created by community members to self-identify using more inclusive letters that acknowledge the linguistic diversity within HMong communities. Scan here to read an article by Ariana Thao of UW-Extension where this is further explained.



Acknowledgments

WUCMAA would like to thank all those who contributed and supported Project Resiliency. We would not be able to achieve these goals without all our partners, community members, leaders, and advocates.

WUCMAA is humbled to serve our HMong and Southeast Asian communities to create intergenerational impact to increase a thriving state of mental health.

All That Talk, Anthony Xiong, Makayla Cha, Nyob Zoo Milwaukee TV, Ka Lee, Angelee Vang, Mindy Kue, Pam Yang, PCL Therapy LLC, Niam Ntsuab Teev/Hmong Story YouTube, Hmoob Lub Neej Project, Sheboygan North High School, Blooming Minds Psychotherapy LLC, Transformation Counseling & Training LLC, Jackie Caratini, Pam Yang, Shong Her, Thong Xiong, Asia Yang, Masaya Xiong, Angela Yang, Patricia Monroe, Iaong Vang, Dana Bear, Dione Knop, Nenglee Vang, Doua Lor, Hmong American Center, Family Center WI Rapids, Dare2Know/End Abuse WI, Marshfield Clinic, Goodwill, Dr. Kevin Yang, WisCovered, ADRC, Hmong American Peace Academy, Bloom Art & Integrated Therapies, Dr. Calvin Yang, Hmodern Made, The Hmong Institute, Freedom Inc, Black & Brown Womyn Power Coalition, Felicia Thao, Jason Cram, Sarah Coyle, Jason Fischer, Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Lynn McLaughlin, Karen Iverson Riggers, You Lee, Lanise Pitts, Jose Cruz, Victor Kilpatrick, Gaochi Vang, Hmong Town (Milwaukee), Hmong Center of Green Bay, Green Bay Asian Allies United, Fox Valley Technical College, Thong Xiong, Rogers Behavioral Health, Safe Harbor of Sheboygan County, Prism Health and Wellness LLC, Shong Her, Hmong Mutual Assistance Association of Sheboygan, Mead Public Library, Hmong American Partnership - Fox Valley, Long Cheng Marketplace, LUV LLC, Cartoon Vue, MadebyMaixia, WI Department of Health Services - Division of Care and Treatment Services, and along with many others who may not have been named specifically here who have provided their time, trust, and talents to Project Resiliency.

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Executive Summary

There is limited mental health data about the HMong community in Wisconsin. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Wisconsin still remains home to the third largest population of HMong individuals who represent 28.8% of the state's Asian population¹ Furthermore, WUCMAA provides strategic partnerships to a majority of counties where HMong individuals represent at least half (50%) of the county population² The lack of data on the lived experiences, needs, and obstacles of HMong individuals in the areas of mental health and health in general in Wisconsin has contributed to the invisibility of underlying traumas. We need to intentionally address the deeply embedded traumas that continue to obstruct the HMong community's ability to truly be thriving members of their communities and Wisconsin.

In October of 2020, WUCMAA received the Project Resiliency grant. To address unmet needs and build capacity statewide, WUCMAA convened members to create programming to raise awareness of mental health, gathered the first statewide mental health council, and operated the first HMong peer-run warmline. From this, three main themes emerged:

- We need to keep building authentic relationships in the community.
- Arts and culture allow brave spaces for community members to express themselves and address trauma.
- We need more creative solutions that are authentic and will truly support our community members.

Given these themes, WUCMAA recommends for community organizations, local mental health partners and advocates, along with policymakers to advocate for and work alongside WUCMAA in the following areas:

- Initiate peer support as an alternative lens to mental health support. Collaborate with WUCMAA to provide HMong and Southeast Asian certified peer specialists in your organizations to advocate for mental health support from a peer lens.
- **Center lived experiences in workforce development.** Cultivate trainings and pathways that will reflect the lived experiences of HMong and Southeast Asian community members.
- Increase resources for navigation of mental health resources and services. Collaborate with partners and train on what existing services, supports, and resources are truly available to HMong and Southeast Asian communities.

 2020 Census Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.
 Ibid.



Introduction & Background

The HMong population in Wisconsin continues to be a vibrant community that offers a rich history and culture. It would be a loss to not invest in the well-being of a community that represents 28.8% of Wisconsin's total Asian population.¹ The HMong population represents one group of Southeast Asian refugees who were globally resettled starting in 1975 to escape persecution in the aftermath of the Vietnam War². Since then, the HMong population in Wisconsin has continued to remain a resilient and thriving community as integrated members of their local ecosystems.

With limited data on the mental health of the Asian American population in the U.S., we continue to lack the visibility and resources to invest in truly evaluating and uplifting the needs of our HMong communities. Overall, in an initial search on HMong-specific mental health data, only four studies were found related specifically to HMong communities in the U.S. along with two national assessments for the general public that include mental health outcomes (*see Appendix A*). Though there were valuable insights among the studies specific to HMong communities and mental health, there is still a long way to go when it comes to increasing the visibility of HMong-specific data and lived experiences in research, policy, and practices.

- 1. 2020 Census Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File A; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.
- 2. Lee, Erika. The Making of Asian America: a history. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2015.

Programming & Services

Overview

In 2023, team members participated in a series of trainings to better understand the current pathways that offer providing mental health support to the community. These trainings included:

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA),
- Emotional CPR
- The Missing Piece
- Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)
- Certified Peer Specialists

Furthermore, the team attended conferences such as the WI Peer Recovery Conference in 2022 and the WI Crisis Intervention Conference in 2023. As a result, here is our collective impact in 2023.

> 9.688.51 \$ 27,387.29 104 collective miles training dollars total programs traveled spent statewide 929 \$7,100.00 58 hours spent dollars for hours spent with members member events with external partners

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

1042,864ProgramsParticipants

Top 5 Participant Outcomes

Have a sense of belonging Positive outlook Respect & empathy for others Improve selfesteem and self-respect

Healthy relationships

5 HMong QPR Trainers in WI Trainers in WI On their way to becoming Certified Peer Specialists

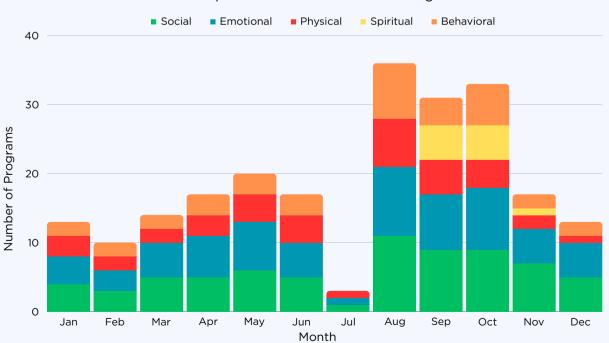
Summary

In 2023, Project Resiliency organized 104 programs encompassing various workshops, training sessions, and events. These programs primarily focused on delivering introductory mental health education, covering topics such as suicide prevention, self-care, healing opportunities, and promoting community and social interaction. These programs collectively reached 2,864 participants.



Areas of Mental Health Targeted

To develop effective programs, mental health was categorized into five key dimensions: social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and behavioral. This categorization was essential to address the broad spectrum of mental health. Each program was designed to address specific aspects within these dimensions. Graph 1 shows that the primary focus areas for these programs were social, emotional, and physical well-being.



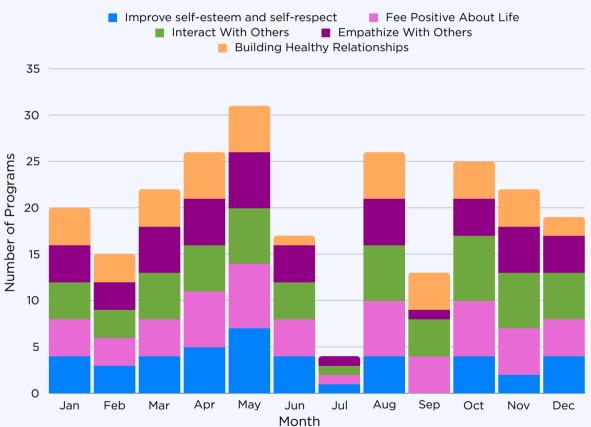
Graph 1. Areas of Mental Health Targeted

Participant Outcomes

We developed a uniform set of participant outcomes corresponding to the five dimensions of mental health. These outcomes offer more detailed illustrations of the influence our programs have had on the mental health of participants.

In Graph 2, the top five outcomes included:

- Fostering a positive self-image and outlook on life.
- Enhancing the ability to engage with diverse individuals and feel a sense of belonging.
- Promoting respect, empathy, and tolerance for others.
- Boosting self-esteem and self-respect.
- Maintaining healthy relationships with others.



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Graph 2. Monthly Comparison of Programs Across Top 5 Participant Outcomes

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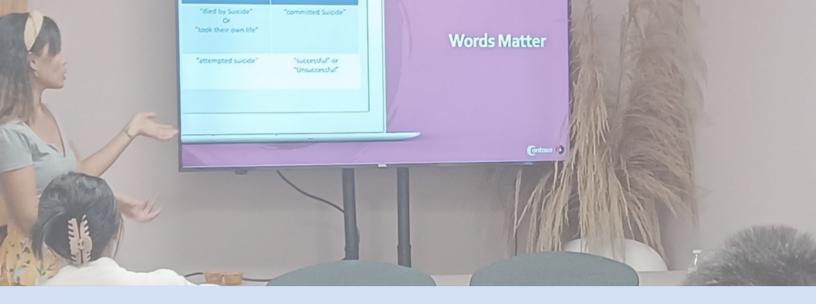
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Partnership Impact

We actively pursue partnerships to enhance our programs by leveraging the expertise and resources of various collaborators. We have established collaborations with a total of 38 partners, comprising mental health professionals, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, advocates, artists, mental health services, and state agencies. Among these collaborators, 25 are from the HMong community, while 13 are non-HMong.

Additionally, WUCMAA played a pivotal role in sponsoring three HMong individuals in becoming the first certified QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) trainers in Wisconsin. This has been a significant asset in addressing suicide risk within the HMong community. These partnerships have deepened our understanding of and response to the mental health needs of the HMong community, thanks to the relationships we have built with community leaders and mental health providers.





Challenges

Addressing the stigma

There is stigma in our HMong community when it comes to talking about mental health. Across all our programming and services, we saw that trust and relationships are critical to getting community members to engage in our workshops.

 Solution: We will invest in more in-person outreach and relationship-building opportunities in order to build deeper trust with the community.

Finding more focus in our programming

Establishing specific mental health goals for our programs is essential for strengthening our vision for programming.

• Solution: Looking to the future, we will focus more of our programming on suicide prevention and peer support.

Successes

Bridging the Gap in Mental Health Education

Our programs introduce culturally relevant mental health education to the HMong community, addressing the traditional lack of emphasis on mental health. For example, from March to May 2023, our Sheboygan Program Coordinator held three workshops at Sheboygan North High School, introducing mental health concepts and local resources to HMong students.



Promoting Self-care and Collective Healing



Many programs have prioritized self-care and healing to improve mental health, which is less common in HMong culture. For instance, our Milwaukee Program Coordinator collaborated with Bloom Art and Integrated Therapies, Inc. to host monthly art therapy workshops from April to September 2023. These workshops allowed participants to engage in healing practices through drawing techniques, promoting collective well-being. We strive to continue offering such opportunities for the HMong community.

Successes

Creating a Sense of Belonging

Another key focus of our programs is promoting community and social interaction, crucial for enhancing mental well-being. Our Central Wisconsin Coordinator initiated the F.U.N. (Feem Ua Neej) Program, a monthly program for HMong elders. This program provides a safe environment for elders to socialize and go on field trips to places they might not access independently. Elders have reported significant positive impacts on their well-being as they typically lack opportunities for social interaction.





Increasing Awareness of Suicide

Many participants in our suicide prevention training have expressed gratitude for our accessible training, feeling much more educated and prepared to address individuals with suicidal thoughts. Their feedback indicates our success in raising awareness and providing valuable training for the HMong community to recognize and respond to suicide risk appropriately.

Insights from Participants

"A lot of family traumas from our childhood affect who we are today and our relationships."

"Being nice is when you're doing things so people will like you, but being kind is when you don't care about what people would think, so you'll do what's right every time."

"I am really thankful for joining this group because I would have been really lonely."

"I feel mental health is something we rarely talk about in the Hmong community. This program has taught my teenage daughter about what mental health is and how to cope with things. I've noticed she is more open about her feelings and has been coming to her father and I about things. We really appreciate having this program and hope that it can continue in the future. It's a great program for the community!"

Warmline Highlights

WUCMAA established the first, HMong peer-run warmline in Wisconsin. The purpose of our warmline is to provide a safe space for community members where we listen, share, and heal without judgment.



Training for the Warmline

On November 3rd, 2022, the Project Resiliency team held a warmline training session. The training involved discussions about the significance of the warmline for the HMong community, establishing shared peer support values, reviewing operational procedures, policies, shift schedules, onboarding processes, and technology training for warmline devices.

The team additionally developed a script and engaged in team-based roleplaying exercises to prepare for specific scenarios. For instance, we discussed the appropriate course of action when assessing a crisis situation. It was emphasized that obtaining clear verbal consent from the affected individuals is a crucial step before contacting a crisis support service.



Marketing the launch of the First, HMong Peer-Run Warmline

A few months before the official launch, the team did a soft launch of the warmline. We emailed partners that collaborated with WUCMAA on various projects, drafted some initial flyers to be shared on Project Resiliency's FB Page, introduced what peer-support was to our HMong community, and passed out flyers during community events.

During the week of the official launch of the warmline, the Project Resiliency team dedicated significant effort to producing TikTok videos and Facebook posts. The TikTok videos featured each Project Resiliency staff member reading the values of the warmline in English and HMong, allowing our audience to become acquainted with the voices they would encounter when calling the warmline. Additionally, these TikTok videos were shared on our Project Resiliency Facebook page.

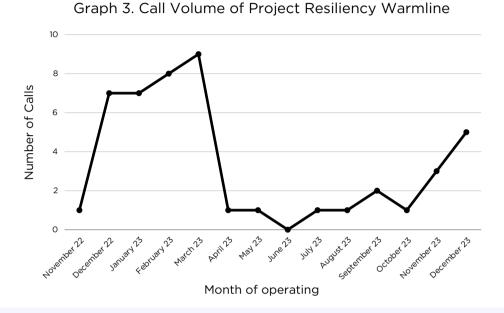


WUCMAA

WEB

Data Findings

Since the soft launch, we have received a total of 47 calls. There were 26 out of the 47 total calls that were unique peers that we were able to support through the warmline. Graph 3 shows that we experienced a significantly higher number of calls from December to March as a result of our early marketing and launch efforts. Additionally, the highest call volume was nine callers throughout the month of March.

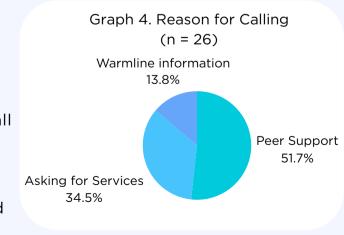


To further understand how our community was impacted by our warmline, we gathered general information about the nature of the call along with asking peers what they would like support with during our calls.

When we look at the 26 unique callers we spoke to, nearly 52% (n=15) of callers reached out for peer support (Graph 4). Some of these callers also shared they wanted support with navigating services as well.

This demonstrates how crucial it is for our warmline to operate because it provides a safe space for callers who are seeking social and emotional support along with assistance with finding services to support their overall well-being and safety.

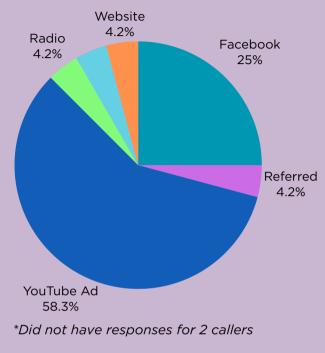
There were 14 unanswered calls, of which most were given a call back and left a voice message.



Data Findings

To further increase the reach of our warmline, WUCMAA collaborated with several HMong influencers and other organizations to market our warmline to their audiences.

Graph 5. How did you hear about the Project Resiliency Warmline? (n=24)

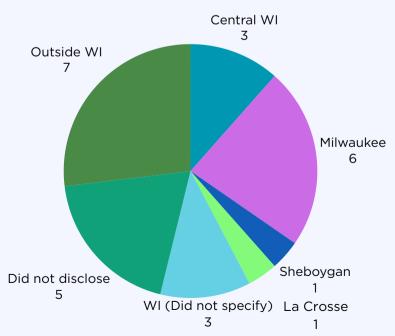


One of the most significant influencers that WUCMAA collaborated with is Niam Ntsuab Teev, also known as May Vang, who runs the "Hmong Story" channel. May Vang is a well-known storyteller in the HMong community with over 260K subscribers on YouTube as of October 2023.

As shown in Graph 5, nearly 59% (n=14) of the callers heard about the warmline from May Vang's advertisements.

Among all the 26 unique callers, 46.2% (n=12) of them were WI residents. There were 5 callers who chose not to disclose their location. Graph 6 shows that among all the callers who did disclose their location, the highest proportion of those callers were from Milwaukee.

We did receive 7 calls from individuals outside of Wisconsin, including Minnesota, North Carolina, Washington, and California. Graph 6. Regions reached by the Project Resiliency Warmline (n=26)



Social Media Highlights

We have utilized Facebook as a platform to spread awareness of mental health. In 2023, our team continued to circulate programming flyers, general content, and regularly post to engage with our followers.

Reach = the count of distinct users who view your post or page Interactions = the sum of likes, reactions, comments, clicks, and shares generated by users Posts = the total number of content pieces posted

Breaking the Stigma

The "Breaking the Stigma" media project series aimed to raise awareness about suicide prevention and mental health stigma within the HMong community. We introduced messaging and hosted community dialogues on the topics of domestic violence, mental health in the LGBTQIA+ community, QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), generational trauma, depression and therapy (Figure 2).

We implemented the media projects in three formats:

- 3 public service announcements (Post reach of 27,404)
- 2 educational videos (Post reach of 300,343)
- 2 webinars (Post reach of 12,310) *Last webinar for the series to be released in February 2024.

Figure 1. Combined social media data in 2023 for WUCMAA and Project Resiliency pages



In 2023, WUCMAA and Project Resiliency's Facebook accounts collectively reached 398,832 users, 33,462 interactions from users, and published 589 posts (Figure 1).

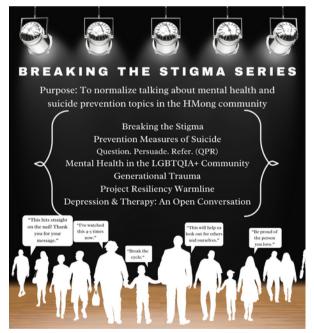


Figure 2. Breaking the Stigma flyer

Advisory Council Goals & Updates

Overview

From June of 2021 to December of 2023, an advisory council convened to review how best to address mental health in the HMong community. Three subcommittees were created to prepare recommendations to advocate for the following priorities:

Data	Terminology	Workforce
To better understand	Develop and translate	Brainstorm ways to
gaps and limitations of	mental health terminology	recruit and cultivate
existing data that are	in HMong that can be	future HMong
specific and relevant to	used consistently across	practitioners in the mental
the HMong community	the state	health field

Data

The initial review of the current literature revealed that there is not a sufficient representation of HMong individuals in the data. In addition, there is little to no data on mental health services utilized and available to address needs in a culturally relevant way.

The recommendations are categorized into the following four areas: policy, research, practice, and community engagement. These recommendations serve as a guide and is intended for:

- Researchers and people who collect mental health data
- Mental health providers and agencies servicing HMong clients
- Policymakers and funders
- Organizations serving the HMong community

Policy

Focus: Funding

• Increase funding needed to provide mental health research, resources, and services to the HMong community

Research

Focus Area 1: Centering lived experiences in data

 Build the capacity to collect, synthesize, and communicate the HMong community's stories and other community-led ways of understanding lived experiences

Focus Area 2: Increasing HMong-specific data in research

- Disaggregating data on Asian Americans to specifically identify information about the HMong population
- Include HMong as a distinct ethnic category in data collection forms

Focus Area 3: Partnering in community participatory research

- Conduct community-engaged, population-based mental health research in the HMong community
- Develop and validate mental health assessment instruments informed by and responsive to the experiences of HMong people
- Create a multidimensional approach to data collection in the HMong community (e.g. phone call or in-person surveys, focus groups, community conversations, key informant interviews)

Data

Practice

Focus Area 1: Continued education on culturally relevant practices for providers working with HMong clients

- Educate mental health providers, public health professionals, healthcare clinicians, social workers, educators, and other professionals about the particular needs and barriers to mental health in the HMong community
- Identify and screen for at-risk HMong individuals who experience mental health challenges

Focus Area 2: Continued training for community members in the HMong community

- Increase access to HMong interpreting for mental health services
- Integrate culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health care for the HMong community
- Provide training in mental health response to HMong community professionals

Community Engagement

Focus Area 1: Build trust within your local community and partners

- Establish strong relationships with local mental health partners
- Conduct a community mental health needs assessment to tailor education, resources, and outreach for the HMong community

Focus Area 2: Promote mental health services and education through outreach

• Provide education and outreach to the HMong community about what mental health is and what services are available

Subcommittee Members

Ka Zang Xiong, MPH Mai Thao, Mental Health Navigation Advocate Maichou Lor, PhD Maliya Xiong, MPH, MA Michal Engelman, PhD Pa Yiar Khang, MPH Valentina Vang, Hmong Family Society Xong Lee, Domestic Abuse Advocate

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Terminology

This subcommittee was focused on addressing the gaps in mental health language access. To bridge the gap, this committee gathered resources to create a glossary that translated all mental health terminology from English to HMong. One of the resources that the subcommittee found was the "Hmong-English Mental Health Terminology Glossary," created by the Wisconsin Hmong Mental Health Professional Group in 2003 (*see Appendix B*). The subcommittee adapted this glossary and added additional terminology that was more culturally relevant to current verbiage in the HMong language.

The end goal of the adapated glossary was to provide an easy-to-read booklet for community members to easily describe their symptoms to providers.

At the end of 2023, the subcommittee created an initial draft. The terminology has been translated into White and Green dialects. The subcommittee members also added terms such as *ceeb* and *poob plig* which are terms that some HMong community members use to describe how trauma is formed on the spiritual level. To truly have the glossary be a meaningful tool, more community engagement to gather feedback from the HMong community and certified HMong healthcare translators would be needed.

Looking Ahead

WUCMAA looks forward to publishing a robust mental health terminology glossary in the future.

Subcommittee Members

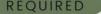
Bee Lor, Hmong American Center (HAC) Billy Lor Julie Thao Kajua Lor, PharmD, BCACP Mai Moua Lee, Chair Mai Zong Vue, MSSW Nancy Yang, Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association (ECAHMAA) Pazong Vang Wa Yia Thao

Workforce

The subcommittee is cultivated of at least 50% of members who are licensed to provide mental health services within the state of Wisconsin and 50% of other members are individuals supporting mental health work. At the beginning of 2023, the subcommittee identified the following target populations to connect with: undergraduate college students and high school students. The overarching goal is to serve information but also cultivate a network that students can utilize as support for their career and education.

The subcommittee identified short-term and long-term goals. The short-term goals are creating exposure to the community and younger generations to consider mental health as a viable career option. A long-term goal would be encouraging prospective clients to utilize mental health services. While working to cultivate the mental health workforce, it is also equally important to continue to destigmatize mental health illnesses and practices with community.

Quarter 1	 3 providers were interviewed Outreach to identify HMong and Southeast Asian (SEA) providers remains a challenge
Quarter 2	 Perplexed school districts and scheduling proposed its own challenges for career presentations
Quarter 3	 First live virtual workforce panel was conducted. Total: 5 participants.
Quarter 4	 WI SEA and HMong Mental Health Provider Directory revamped Outreached to over 50 mental health providers who identify as HMong, of which 20 providers currently listed in online provider directory



CULTIVATING MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: CAREER EXPLORATION

SEPT 25 | 5-6:30PM | VIA ZOOM



DAESIA





PAM



JENNY



MELISSA

Workforce

Conclusion

This subcommittee was rather successful with this year being its inaugural year to launch quarterly goals to initiate the cultivation of visibility of the mental health field within the SEA and HMong communities.

Our Southeast Asian (SEA) and HMong communities have such talented and capable individuals. Pockets of our SEA and HMong students interested in the mental health field at the higher educational level are far and few in between in the state of Wisconsin. However, that should not serve as discouraging as we work to cultivate the future generations of providers and practitioners. It remains important to educate and build bridges to connect with community members to be aware and educated about mental health. (See Appendices C - E for more information)

Subcommittee Members

Samantha Yang, Co-chair Pajnag Moua, Co-chair, APSW Houa Yang Pazee Yang, LCSW Yeng Beyler, MPH Pa Her, PhD Melissa Xiong, LCSW

Pam Yang, LMFT Cartoon Vue Pa Houa Kiatoukaysi, LPC Chaly Vang, ECAHMAA Yer Yang Mai Zong Vue, MSSW Jessica Xiong

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Calls to Action

Priority #1: Promote genuine collaboration with members, local partners and stakeholders.

Collaborate with WUCMAA to:

- coordinate and lead in-person outreach events to build trust and strengthen relationships with community members.
- identify programming goals aligned with suicide prevention and peer support that is specific to the needs of HMong communities.

Priority #2: Initiate peer support as an alternative lens for mental health support.

Collaborate with WUCMAA to provide HMong certified peer specialists in your organizations to advocate for mental health support from a peer lens.



Calls to Action

Priority #3: Center lived experiences of HMong and Southeast Asian identities in workforce development.

Collaborate with WUCMAA to cultivate trainings and pathways that will reflect the lived experiences of HMong and Southeast Asian history, identities, and cultures.

Priority #4: Increase resources for navigation of mental health resources and services.

Collaborate with WUCMAA and our members to train community members on what existing services, supports, and resources are truly available to HMong and Southeast Asian communities.



Appendix A: Preliminary literature review of mental health studies and data specific to HMong communities.

Please scan here to view:





Appendix B: HMong-English Mental Health Terminology Glossary created by the Wisconsin HMong Mental Health Professional Group (2003)

Please scan here to view:



Appendix C: Workforce Panel Discussion via Zoom. September 25th, 2023.

Please scan here to view the YouTube link:



Appendix D: WUCMAA's Mental Health Provider Directory

Please scan here to view:



Appendix E: UW-Whitewater Qualified Treatment Trainee Grants Program

Please scan here to view:



To stay connected:



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