

# Expanding Mental Health Care Access to the NYC AANHPI Community Request for Information

## **Background**

New York City (NYC) residents who identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) represent 14% of the City's population, approximately 1 million residents. AANHPI New Yorkers are among the fastest-growing racial group in NYC, comprised of more than 30 different ethnic groups, and speaking more than 50 languages.<sup>1</sup>

AANHPI community members have historically been targets of xenophobic and racist verbal and physical aggression, and this was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon has been reported in NYC and across the globe. In NYC, hate crimes against members of the AANHPI community nearly doubled in 2021 when compared with 2020. Furthermore, it is well documented that survivors of hate crimes are at high risk of experiencing psychological distress including post-traumatic stress, safety concerns, depression, anxiety, anger, and lower self-esteem. Additionally, the AANHPI community in NYC has a relatively high rate of poverty when compared with other racial-ethnic groups, where poverty is also associated with poor behavioral health outcomes. Current and historical racism and anti-Asian hate has impacted the individual- and community-level mental health of the AANHPI community.

Suicide is the fourth leading cause of premature death among Asian and Pacific Islanders in NYC.<sup>2</sup> 12.9% of AANHPI adults in NYC report probable depression, which is not significantly different from White adults (10.7%), but this group is the least likely among adults to seek treatment.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, social media continues to negatively impact youth mental health, especially among marginalized communities. This data is especially concerning, as the Health Department is actively leading HealthyNYC, the city's campaign to extend life expectancy to 83 years by 2030 and support longer and healthier lives.<sup>4</sup> The Health Department must address drivers of premature mortality such as mental health to achieve this goal.

The Health Department actively collaborates with community partners in this space. Specifically, the Health Department offers a three-hour mental health resilience workshop about the history of the AANHPI community in the US, and how to identify signs of mental health issues, combat the stigma of mental illness, and access free or low-cost mental health services that are culturally relevant. Workshops are offered virtually and in-person in nine languages (English, Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Cantonese Hindi, Korean, Punjabi, and Nepali). To date, the Health Department has engaged 247 community-based organizations and conducted 308 workshops with 2,937 community members.

Additionally, the Health Department aims to address social determinants of suicide using a comprehensive public health approach, especially because there is a lack of evidence-based suicide prevention interventions customized for youth of color. The Health Department is collaborating with researchers and practitioners to adapt, pilot, and evaluate interventions specifically for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) youth in NYC. One such intervention is a therapeutic approach for Asian-American adolescents that incorporates support for caregivers around managing difficult emotions associated with suicide risk. The Health Department's collaboration with TeenSpace, via TalkSpace, launched in November 2023 and offers free mental health support to any teenager

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<sup>1</sup> [Health of Asians and Pacific Islanders in New York City](#), 2021

<sup>2</sup> [NYC Vital Statistics](#), 2021

<sup>3</sup> [NYC Community Health Survey \(CHS\)](#), 2022

<sup>4</sup> [HealthyNYC: New York City's Campaign for Longer, Healthier Lives](#), 2024

aged 13 to 17 living in New York City. The program connects teenagers with New York State-licensed therapists through phone, video, and text on mobile devices. The goal is to create a low-barrier front door and normalize asking for help and receiving it. From November 2023 to March 2024, 5,375 teens have been connected with a therapist through TeenSpace, 13% of which identified as Asian and 1% as Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. 65% of users reported feeling improvement.

### **Submission Guidelines**

The following Request for Information (RFI) is being issued to gather information for crafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) to expand access to mental health services and supports for AANHPI communities. Specifically, funding will be allocated to community-based organizations that can address at least one of four areas of focus:

- Bolster efforts to reduce stigma
- Improve to access care and workforce support
- Promote digital literacy and technology
- Expand data, research and program evaluation related to the AANHPI community

To follow are a few starter questions to help us solicit stakeholder ideas for shaping the RFP.

1. What are the current roadblocks for community members who want or may benefit from mental health services?
2. What are common barriers to community/faith-based organizations' ability to reach the population of focus?
3. What are challenges and possible ways community/faith-based organizations can help reduce stigma about mental health for this community?
4. What are challenges and possible ways community/faith-based organizations can help community members to connect to appropriate care?
5. What challenges are community/faith-based organizations' facing pertaining to workforce readiness, recruitment, and retention, and what possible solutions can you suggest?
6. How can the Health Department help community/faith-based organizations to enhance a workforce that is prepared to serve the community?

The Health Department acknowledges that community-based organizations require multi-year, flexible funding to support capacity-building for expanding their reach in support of New York City communities. Specifically, AANHPI-serving organizations need funding to attract linguistically and culturally astute mental health workers that reflect and are equipped to engage the communities they serve. In addition, non-clinical supports are key entry points for counseling that need to be expanded. The Health Department is prepared to allocate funding for three years to community-based organizations that can successfully expand mental health services to the AANHPI community in New York City, broaden their reach, and address at least one of four areas of focus: bolstering efforts to reduce stigma, improving access to care and workforce support, promoting digital literacy and technology, and expanding data, research and program evaluation related to the AANHPI community. Awardees will demonstrate that the following goals are addressed:

- Expand the reach and availability of culturally competent stigma busting education around mental health services in the AANHPI community.
- Increase access to clinical and non-clinical mental health care in the AANHPI community and bolster the workforce that delivers these services.
- Strengthen digital literacy and partnerships to support mental health care through technology.
- Improve tracking, data usage, and evaluation of mental health initiatives in the AANHPI community.

Over the next three years, selected contractors will be asked to grow services within one of the categories below, which may include:

#### Stigma-Busting and Education

- Providing stigma busting training and education around counseling and expanding mental health first aid training to encompass a variety of languages spoken in the AANHPI community.
- Developing programming that is informed by generational differences and language barriers that exist between parents and children in the AANHPI community.
- Creating opportunities for early career exposure and apprenticeship in the field of mental health.

#### Access to Care and Workforce Support

- Upskilling peers and community health workers with culturally competent training to strengthen care navigation and expand the reach of mental health services beyond the traditional mental health workforce.
- Offering competitive salaries to a diverse pool of mental health practitioners that are reflective of the communities being served, which may include creating funding streams for H1B and green card sponsorships.
- Uplifting and expanding existing mental health directories developed by AANHPI-serving organizations.

#### Digital Literacy and Technology

- Conducting outreach marketing and expanding language services through NYC TeenSpace and other modalities to better serve AANHPI youth, as well as educate parents around providing consent.
- Strengthening connections with the private sector to expand the availability of mental health services through digital mediums.

#### Data, Research and Evaluation

- Influencing and weighing in on the ways in which the Health Department uses data to track mental health initiatives, especially since AANHPI are one of the most diverse racial groups in New York City<sup>5</sup> and granular data disaggregated by ancestry, country of origin, and language groups are needed to understand gaps.
- Strengthening routine reporting and sustaining CBO data and infrastructure.
- Developing robust evaluation metrics and continuous quality improvement metrics for existing programs.

The Health Department is poised to learn from community members experiences lived experiences and welcomes community-based organizations to contribute additional goals that are not reflected in this list.

**Written responses to this Request for Information should be submitted in word format to [contracts@rfmh.org](mailto:contracts@rfmh.org) by September 20, 2024, at 12pm EST.**

**In addition to accepting written responses, the Health Department will host a conference on Thursday, August 15 at 11:00AM that will be open to all potential proposers. A transcript of the conference and record of attendance will be prepared and made available on the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene's website. The conference will include a virtual option via Zoom in order to maximize participation, which can be accessed here: <https://health-nyc.zoomgov.com/j/1603910525>.**

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<sup>5</sup> American Community Survey (ACS), 2013-2017