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| [9-20-2018] |

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| MRC Lowell Office Asian/Khmer Focus Group Meeting Notes |

# In Attendance

MRC Staff: William Noone, Graham Porell, Lola Akinlapa, Maureen Kriff, Judy Greene, Samnang (Sam) Khoeun, and Sokheang Hong

## **Discussion**

* Discussion of purpose of focus group
  + Identify needs for services from Cambodian/Khmer community and further outreach strategies to this population

## **Meeting Notes**

* Total of 16 participants (not including MRC staff)
* Brief overview of ground rules ; passed out sign in sheet for follow up items

1. **How did you hear about MRC?**

* Participants reported they learned of MRC through various sources. Most responded they learned about MRC from friends and family members, community –based providers such as CMAA (Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell), and former MRC staff.

1. **What do you know about MRC?**

* Participants had listed several services they know of or received from MRC. The majority of the answers were, school services, job placement, driver’s education and the CVS pharmacy tech training. Most of the younger individuals completed the CVS pharmacy tech program and expressed how much they enjoyed it.
* One consumer also mentioned after the training she was hired in one of the CVS stores. She is now looking into obtaining a vehicle through Good news garage vehicle donation program as well as a second individual who has just completed his driver’s education training provided through MRC and is now looking for a vehicle through good news garage.
* MRC indicated that we have an array of employment services

1. **What services did we provide for you?**

* Again, the responses received were, school services, job placement, driver’s education, and the CVS pharmacy tech training. They found all the services they received to be helpful. One participant indicated they would have liked to know more of what MRC provided such as services from the Community Living Division among others.
* There was also a discussion around transportation barriers. MRC indicated that aside from good news garage, we also provide transportation services through HST. It was also mentioned that since this is a bigger issue that goes beyond MRC and that transportation presents a significant challenge to many MRC consumers across the Commonwealth. MRC will continue to look into partnering with other agencies/community partners such as HST that might be able to assist consumers with transportation issues.

1. **Were the services helpful?**

* All respondents agreed that MRC services were very helpful to them and expressed their appreciation to the agency and to the Lowell staff.

1. **Could we have done or can we do anything else?**
2. **What can MRC do to outreach to the Cambodian community?**
   * Consumers suggested that MRC should continue to enhance outreach methods. Some of the suggestions from the group were around translations of materials, more MRC presence in the Cambodian/Khmer community, and local/community feedback.
   * Sponsoring tables at events ( MRC to look into any grants opportunities to fund outreach supports to attend events)
   * Include MRC events on community based providers “calendar of events” on their websites.
   * Better utilize community assets, group suggested some promotional outreach using television and radio communications (paid by the Asian community). Counselor would be able to talk about MRC to increase Asian population.
   * Community providers would also let MRC counselor know what events are happening in the community that the counselor could attend.
   * Having a Cambodian/Khmer female counselor
   * Lack of language and translation can be misleading and offensive disability can be translated into different meaning and different words and can’t be interpreted differently than what we intended it to mean. Need to add more and be more descriptive in what we mean
   * Sharing MRC marketing materials in different languages through our social media accounts.
   * Develop promotion material to get feedback from the community in conjunction with the bilingual committee to avoid using offensive/confusion of terms/words used in our marketing materials.
3. **How can we be of more help to the community?**

* More MRC presence in the Asian community
* Providing ESOL Training - MRC suggested looking into do future work with adult education as a resource to provide in the Asian/Khmer community.

**Other Questions:**

1. **How are we reaching out to older populations?**

* Focus group suggested that we need to focus in more on community and housing centers and identify the centers where most of the older Asian population may have a disability. MRC should have counselor do a presentation on MRC and services to further increase the number of Cambodian/Khmer individuals served by MRC.
  + DMH will make a list of these place and send to Lowell Counselor and the DDS representative in focus group to further collaboration between agencies and combine agency resources.
  + DDS has staff dedicated to the Cambodian community and MRC can tap into these resources to increase outreach. DDS will create and share inventory list of resources with other partners and agencies.

1. **MRC process takes a long time? How can we speed this process up?**

* The timelines are based on RSA regulations but MRC has been looking at counselor caseloads and doing research on reducing the workload of MRC counselor to ensure consumers are not being overlooked due to the overwhelming size of the counselor’s caseload size.

1. **How can we help people understand (financial) criteria and explain it?**
   * It is a federal requirement to get this information from the consumers in order to be cost efficient in terms of supporting people and providing services.

Follow up Items from Lowell Conference call :

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| Items | Point Person | Next Steps/Comments |
| Bilingual Group Meeting | Sam | Discuss involvement of local/community providers in translation of |
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