



State of Hmong Mental Health

Milwaukee County Mental Health Task Force

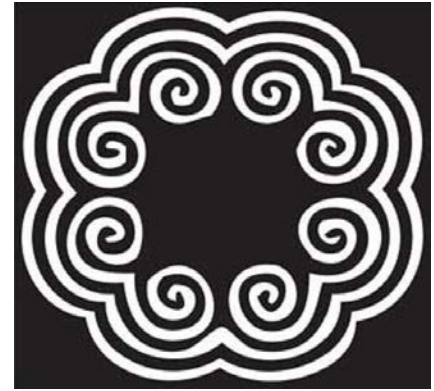
April 9, 2019

Wisconsin United Coalition of Mutual Assistance Associations (WUCMAA)

- Established in 1986:
 - To build capacity in our member organizations in order to advocate for the advancement of underserved communities in Wisconsin
- Board of Directors composed of executive directors and presidents from each local member Mutual Assistance Association (MAA) throughout Wisconsin:
 - Appleton
 - La Crosse
 - Madison
 - Manitowoc
 - Milwaukee
 - Sheboygan
 - Stevens Point
 - Wisconsin Rapids
 - Wausau

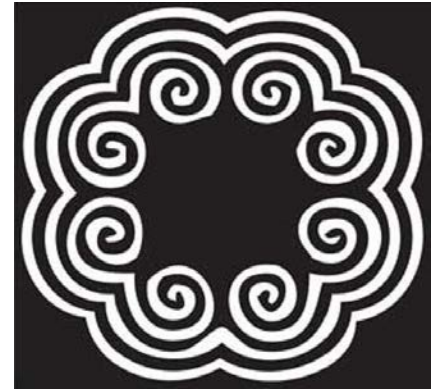
Did You Know...?

- How is “Hmong” pronounced?
- What’s the plural of Hmong?
- Wisconsin is home to the 3rd largest Hmong community in the nation
- Milwaukee is home to the 4th largest Hmong concentration in the nation
- First Hmong elected judge in the entire US is here in Milwaukee



Hmong Family/Clan Structure

- Patriarchal structure
- Clan-based
 - 18 clans based on last names
 - 18 Council
- Hierarchy: immediate family
 - Father
 - Older brother(s) to younger brothers
- Hierarchy: clan
 - Clan Leader
 - Male elders



The Hmong American Journey

- Mid-1970s – First wave of Hmong refugee resettlement to the US
- 1980s – Second wave of Hmong refugee resettlement to the US
- Early 2000s – Last wave of Hmong refugee resettlement to the US
 - Wat ThamKrabok
 - Relocation of 15,000 refugees
- Hmong Americans now
 - 2000-2010 saw a 40% population growth
 - US population growth of 10%
 - 2000-2010 saw a 15% decline in poverty
 - Growing number of Hmong professionals and elected officials



Hmong American Women

- Disruption of the traditional Hmong leadership structure
 - Working outside of the home
 - Higher education
 - Professional careers
 - Leadership positions



What Does Mental Health Mean in the Hmong Community?

Kev mob siab mob ntsws = traumatized liver and lung

Translation: there is no mental health concept or language

“In Laos, we didn’t ever talk about mental health problems. We just talk about pain here, pain there. But here, when we try to explain, there’s two types of doctors. One’s to cure your physical. The other one’s to cure your mind. They need more education to let them know what is mental health and what’s not.”

~Hmong Community Leader

Hmong Wisconites 2014

- 84 deaths due to suicide and/or homicide, including murder/suicide
- 55% occurred in 3 cities
 - Milwaukee – 19
 - La Crosse – 14
 - Wausau – 13
- Hmong youth are 4 times more likely to have suicidal ideation in their lifetime compared to general population

*“Mental illness is like a burden that is unbearable.
It cannot be pulled uphill, it cannot be released downhill.”*

~Hmong community member

Hmong Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse: An Analysis of Focus Group Findings (2016)

1. *Recognition that mental illness, physical illness and alcohol and other drug abuse are real, serious, interconnected problems in Hmong American communities*
 - Belief that people with mental illness and/or AODA problems should seek professional help and services

2. *Identification of challenges that prevent persons with mental illness problems from seeking professional help and services*
 - Stigma attached to mental illness and AODA
 - Lack of peer support in the help seeking process
 - Lack of bilingual and bicultural mental health professionals in the communities in which Hmong Americans live

Hmong Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse: An Analysis of Focus Group Findings (2016) – cont'd

3. Identification of social stressors that lead to mental illness

- Breakdown in the communication between spouses, parents and children
- Extra-marital affairs
- Abusive relationships
- Social isolation (most common amongst our elders)
- Social stigma
- Poverty

4. Priority community concerns

- Frequency of suicide among Hmong young adults and young unmarried people
- Lack of local, state and national data on current problems Hmong are facing on a day to day basis

Hmong Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse: An Analysis of Focus Group Findings (2016) – cont'd

5. *Identification of community assets that could be called upon to address mental illness:*

- Community leaders, male and female
 - Leaders who lead by example
- Traditional healers and/or cultural specialists (shamans, mej koob, funeral ceremony specialists)
 - Attend to individuals' spiritual needs and help develop strong inner strength/resilience
- Hmong organizations (mutual assistance associations, nonprofits, churches)
 - Regular and major Hmong events that brings the community together to socialize and to support each other during times of need
- Health professionals of Hmong background
- Researchers of Hmong background

Community Recommendations

STRATEGY:

Multidimensional community assets can play crucial roles in terms of preventing and intervening in mental health.

FOCUS:

- Strong families and strong homes are essential to good mental and physical health for individuals, families, and communities in general.
- Healthy adult relationships, including healthy marriages, could contribute to healthy parenting, reducing stress on adults, children, and other dependents.

How to Help

How can community advocates and providers be a resource for individuals in Milwaukee's Hmong community regarding mental health and substance use disorder needs?

- 2009 UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities and CA Dept. of Mental Health Project – Building Partnerships: Conversations with The Hmong About Mental Health Needs And Community Strengths
 - Worked with policy makers at state and county levels to advocate for changes in policy that address the needs of underserved communities
 - Worked with many communities to facilitate their involvement in county and state level decision-making processes (what I call capacity-building)
 - Collaborated with communities to identify opportunities to build, develop, and obtain funding for programs that stem directly from needs
 - Developed a guide to the community engagement process that can be used by county mental health agencies, with this project as an example to be followed.

How to Help – cont'd

- Partner/collaborate with local Hmong American efforts
 - WUCMAA/Hmong American Friendship Association (HAFA)
 - Develop bicultural Hmong mental health curriculum
 - Build MAA capacity in mental health education and community outreach
 - Develop statewide mental health resource pamphlet
 - Develop mental health campaign to disseminate to WI Hmong communities
- Create pipeline of Hmong mental health talent
- Collect Hmong-specific data

How to Help – cont'd

How to outreach and provide services in a manner that is respectful and culturally competent? Opportunities for us to continue to learn?

- Engage in cultural competency trainings
 - Contact Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce for consultants/organizations: (414) 645-8828 or info@hmongchamber.org
 - Hmong American Community Certificate Program: hmonginstitute2017@gmail.com
- Ensure Hmong interpreters/translators are well-equipped with mental health/AODA language competency

Save the Date

Save Me: Shine the Light on Mental Health In Our Community

<https://www.facebook.com/nyobzoomke/videos/2213059822084333/>

June 15, 2019

Marcus Performing Arts Center

Thank you.

May yer “mine-za” Thao, Board President

WUCMAA

(414) 645-8828

mayer@hmongchamber.org

or

Thai Vue, Executive Director

WUCMAA

Phone: (608)781-4487

Cellular phone: (608)518-8536

tvuewachia@yahoo.com

