

Reaching Immigrant Populations: Asian Services in Action, Inc. (ASIA)

Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative Best Practices Report

April 2020

Introduction

Asian Services In Action, Inc. (ASIA) was founded in 1995 by four women who sought to improve the quality of life for Asians in Northeast Ohio. Today, the organization is the only Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)-focused health and social services 501(c)(3) organization in the State of Ohio.

ASIA has taken on the most challenging tasks to help the underserved, low-income, and immigrant communities across the state. ASIA is a nonprofit organization providing services out of offices located in Cleveland and Akron, Ohio. ASIA provides culturally and linguistically appropriate services that address the needs of AAPIs and new American communities in Northeast Ohio. The organization serves over 58,000 new American clients and patients through 60+ programs and services annually. ASIA, Inc. has a language capacity of over 55 languages and dialects.

ASIA's Outreach Strategy

ASIA assists seniors in enrolling for SNAP benefits by using paper applications, online applications, and submitting applications over the phone to Job and Family Services. ASIA and its partners developed culturally sensitive educational workshops aimed specifically at older adults. These workshops are offered in different languages across the state. Additionally, we provide education regarding public benefits qualification for immigrants. We also seek to create dialogue between older adults and staff from government agencies, giving seniors a platform to express their concerns and advocate on their own behalf.

Challenges

It is a challenge for seniors to apply for SNAP benefits because of the complicated process, which also requires an interview. Most of our clients are not able to complete an interview by themselves because of the language barrier and a lack of knowledge. Even though an interpreter is available to assist our clients in communicating, older adults might not know how to answer some of the questions because of a lack of knowledge about the SNAP interview process. For example, older adults might not be able to verify the address if the address is written in English. Also, some of them are not able to provide the required documents because they do not know that they need to keep essential documents in order to submit the benefits application. We need to provide education to AAPI older adults on the importance of retaining important documents and on how to go through an interview.

Based on their income, some older adults might receive a minimal amount from SNAP. This discourages them from completing the application process because they do not want to go through the complicated application process and interview.

The public charge rule also affects the immigrant population because it discourages them from applying for benefits. Revisions to the rule [implemented in February 2020 and expanding the benefits under consideration] were not effective at the time we submitted this report. However, the clients did not want to risk applying for benefits knowing that doing so might affect their residency status in the future.

Best Practices

ASIA, Inc. provides broad education and supportive services for older adults to apply for SNAP benefits. We provide assistance in applying for benefits and also do a mock interview. We also provide transportation and interpreting assistance. Our case workers remind older adults that they have to go through an annual redetermination. Due to the language barrier, our case workers contact Job and Family Services with the client on the line and provide support during the interview. We also follow-up with clients when they receive an approval notice to make sure that the benefits amount on the EBT card is the same as the amount on the approval notice.

SNAP Client Stories

- Mr. and Mrs. Ghalley moved to Ohio from Las Vegas in October 2019 to be closer to their daughter. They stayed with their daughter who was working full time at the factory. Not knowing how to assist her parents to access benefits, she referred her parents to one of their relatives. The relatives then contacted ASIA regarding the newly arrived couple.

During a home visit, our case workers learned that this couple did not have a phone and were not receiving Medicaid or SNAP benefits due to a lack of information about accessing these resources. Our case worker then helped them apply for SNAP benefits and Medicaid. We also provided transportation for these seniors to go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) to update their SSI contact information. Since they did not have a phone, we assisted them in applying for Safelink. Our case worker also introduced them to ASIA's Lucky Seniors' program held in Akron. Hopefully, they will be able to attend the wellness program and enjoy socializing with other seniors.

- Mr. Dhan B. Rai and Mrs. Kirti Maya Rai moved to Akron from Minnesota in November 2019. Mr. and Mrs. Rai learned about Asian Services In Action, Inc. through their relatives. Our case worker did a home visit because they did not have transportation. We completed an intake with the couple and got a better understanding of their situation. They were not receiving SNAP benefits and Medicaid. They wished to get a home healthcare aide to help with their daily activities. Our case worker assisted them in completing the SNAP and Medicaid applications and with the interviews due to the language barrier. We also provided transportation for clients to go to SSA to update their contact information for SSI. Since our clients needed an appointment with a primary care physician because of health issues, our case worker referred them to ICHC, ASIA's health clinic, for a physical examination. Because it takes time to get approved for SNAP benefits, ASIA provided emergency food for these clients. After they were approved for Medicaid, we referred them to Community Home Health Care to apply for a home health aide.
- Ratna M. Rai and his family of three moved from Texas to Ohio in January 2019. They went to SSA to update their address because he had been receiving Medicare and SSI. Since Mr. Ratna's family does not have income and rely on SSI, they tried to apply for Medicare Savings Programs (MSP), Medicaid, and SNAP by themselves. Unfortunately, they were not able to complete the Medicaid and SNAP applications due to the language barrier. He contacted SSA for further assistance with his MSP, Medicaid, and SNAP applications. SSA suggested that he contact ASIA, Inc. for benefits application assistance. Our Nepali case workers also received a referral from SSA regarding Mr. Ratna's situation. As a result, our bilingual case workers were able to assist him with his all three applications and complete the interview over the phone. Mr. Ratna started receiving his benefits in March 2019.
- Hotak Bibi Khar is a refugee who arrived in the United States in March 2018. She moved to Ohio in July 2019 from California. Ms. Khar is a widow and lives with her son, daughter-in-law, and seven grandchildren. Her daughter-in-law is pregnant at this moment. Ms. Khar moved to Akron, Ohio, because she knew some friends in the area. Meanwhile, her family is looking for job opportunities to support the family.

Ms. Khar and her family resided at her friend's house after she arrived in Ohio. However, it soon got very crowded at her friend's house due to the size of her family. She then decided to move out of her friend's house. Unfortunately, Ms. Khar has no other income source except for SSI. It was then that our caseworker received a referral from her

friend regarding Ms. Khar's family situation. Our caseworker started to look for a house for her family of ten. We also started to assist this family in applying for public benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, and WIC. After getting approved for cash assistance and SSI, they were able to move out of her friend's house. Our caseworkers also provided emergency food assistance and clothes for this family. At this moment, our caseworker is still looking for employment for her family members.

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