



REACHING THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE VALUE OF LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS, CULTURAL HUMILITY, AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

MISSION STATEMENT

Established as a nonprofit in 2001, the **Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Massachusetts, also known as SEACMA, aims to support the Southeast Asian population in Central Massachusetts.** Through deep relationship development in the community and an understanding of cultural history and context, SEACMA has established itself as a trusted local partner and hub for refugees, underserved individuals, and residents of all backgrounds to connect with the community and find support and resources. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, SEACMA has taken a proactive approach to outreach, education, and prevention activities. Early interventions included promoting the use of masks, implementing culturally relevant communications campaigns to help communities overcome barriers to vaccination, and connecting families to resiliency-building resources to mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19 such as technology, food, and childcare.

KEY STRATEGIES

Central to SEACMA's intervention approach is the core belief that community members must be engaged in identifying the solutions to the problems they face. One of SEACMA's key strategies to maintain consistent engagement is hosting regular informal gatherings over tea and simple homemade meals for neighbors, youths, and elders from different language groups to discuss challenges and opportunities. SEACMA also creates shared spaces for community building by organizing activities such as volleyball tournaments and cultural events. This ongoing engagement supports deep connections with different populations, allowing SEACMA to tailor intervention strategies that are not only well received by the community, but also originate from them. In addition to maintaining close ties with the Southeast Asian community, SEACMA believes in shared advocacy and approaches with ally organizations, such as Black Lives Matter, and organizations working to overcome LGBTQIA+ discrimination and Asian American and Pacific Islander hate. This holistic approach culminates in an organization that is deeply in-tune with the various populations in the community, including their needs, strengths and assets, barriers, cultural context, communication styles, language, and history. This deep knowledge, when combined with intensive relationship development and community data, allowed SEACMA to quickly identify and respond to the community's needs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over time, **these established partnerships continue to serve and shape practical interventions designed to increase access to services and reduce disparities for vulnerable populations in Central Massachusetts.**

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More information on SEACMA's activities is available on their website www.seacma.org.

To access tools and materials, please contact the SEACMA team at **(508) 791-4373** or through their website www.seacma.org/contact-us