

The Asians with Disabilities Outreach Project Think-Tank was funded by agreement number 40C6001747 from the Illinois Department of Human Services through the American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) Act of 2009.

The information and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Correspondence concerning copyright permissions should be sent to:
Asians with Disabilities Outreach Project Think-Tank (ADOPT)



Department of Disability and Human Development
Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research
1640 West Roosevelt Road
Chicago, Illinois 60608

Copyright © 2013 ADOPT
All rights reserved


Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to many individuals, providers, partners, and students who generously shared their perspectives on vocational rehabilitation disparity challenges and on opportunities for and with Chicago-based Asian Americans with disabilities. The information they provided contributed greatly to our exploration of the cultural and institutional barriers that face Chicago's Asian Americans with disabilities as they seek vocational rehabilitation and work opportunities.

Much of what was learned about Asian American culture and outreach is transferable to other ethnic and cultural groups, who also benefited from the work conducted during this initiative.

First, the ADOPT team would like to thank the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) for funding this pilot initiative through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This funding helped create new jobs and vocational rehabilitation opportunities and supports for many job-seekers with disabilities of all ethnicities and cultures, including Asian.

Very special thanks go to the members of the project's advisory board and three task forces for their endless commitment and dedication to ADOPT's systems-change and capacity-building efforts. They helped drive the project in directions far beyond what was expected of the initiative. The individuals who contributed so much to the success of our work are listed in the introductory part of the toolkit.



We thank all the undergraduate and graduate students who joined in with our team spirit and helped to make this small pilot into an initiative with a big vision. We could not have succeeded without their interest in and curiosity about community-based research and advocacy. We are grateful to William Barrett, Susana Sylvester, Darryl Reynolds, Edward Seighman, Claudia Garcia, and Shawn Dimpfl at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), who helped us with the monthly ARRA reporting demands. We also would like to extend our special thanks to Kay Robin Alexander and Joan Kocsis, who provided endless input, suggestions, and feedback on this work. Thanks to Jae Jin Pak for his generous support of ADOPT and its vision.

We also want to thank Francisco Alvarado, Assistant Director of the DRS, for his leadership in addressing the needs of Asian Americans with disabilities in the context of vocational rehabilitation services and employment. Doug Morton, Mike Scott, Lisa Reigal, and Joan Davis also gave genuine support and guidance through the administrative phases of the project. And finally special thanks to former director Robert Kilbury and the new DRS Director Dave Hanson for their support.

Lead Authors

Rooshey Hasnain, Ed.D.
Lauren A. Zawilenski, B.A.
Gaurav Singh, B.S.
Jessica Hunnell, Ph.D student
Chitra Gurung, M.S.
Carmit-Noa Shpigelman, Ph.D.
Robert Gould, M.S.
Ashmeet Oberoi, Ph.D. candidate
Paul Kaczor, M.S.
Kajal Kiran Aggarwal, M.S.W.
Fabricio Balcazar, Ph.D.
Jae Jin Pak
Samuel Kim, MPH
Elizabeth Adetoro, MPH
Eunice Paik, MPH
Jane Kim, MPH student

Lead Graphic Designer

Alfred Tsao

Visual and Art Contributors

Rachelle Johnson: Web-based designer
Carlos Lopez: Web-based designer
Sean Carino: Graphic and visual aid assistant
Phu Duong: Graphic and visual aid assistant
Liam McKeever: Binding and publishing assistant
Sean Austin: Filmmaker and ADOPT documentary producer/director
John De Jesus: Digital story assistant
Ivan Lo: Photographer
Peter Moon: Photographer

Partners, Task Force Members, and Advisory Board Members

Joe Albritton, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities^{3,4}
Yussuf Ali, Refugee One¹

Francisco Alvarado, Assistant Director, Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services (IDRS)^{1,2,3,4}
Romy Arrieta, Chinese Mutual Aid Association^{2,4}
Nancy Asirifi-Othchere, United African Association
Monica Barroso, Chinese Mutual Aid Association^{1,3,4}
Steve Bixler, IDRS^{1,3,4}
Marca Bristo, President/CEO, Access Living
Steve Brunton, Chinese Mutual Aid Association⁴
Luverno Cervantes, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights^{2,4}
Grace Chan, Chinese American Service League⁴
Suey Lee Chang, Help at Home, Chinatown
Mark Chiang, Asian American Studies Program, UIC
Inchul Choi, Korean American Community Services^{2,4}
Pamela Clay-Wilson, IDRS^{2,4}
Alexandra Conroy Baig, L'Arche Chicago
Gloria Curtin, El Valor⁴
Vandana Dalal, Midwest Asian Health Association^{3,4}
Tina Dillon, Dillon Reporting Service
Mike Dittmer, IDRS
Oriana Fowler, Erasing the Distance
Sarah Franz, Disability Resource Center, UIC
Karie Frazier, IDRS⁴

Ami Gandhi, South Asian Policy and Research Institute (formerly with Asian American Institute)

Anna Guevarra, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies, UIC

Jackie HaDo Conley, Vietnamese American Community of Illinois

Christine Hammond, Illinois Department of Human Services^{1,2,3,4}

Renard Haygood, IDRS^{2,4}

Grace Hou, Assistant Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services

Tony Hu, Tony Gourmet Group³

Ahlan Jbara, Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago^{2,4}

Henry Jiang, Association of Chinese American Scientists and Engineers³

Robin Jones, Great Lakes ADA Center, Disability & Human Development, UIC^{3,4}

Nick Kamboj, Standard India Restaurant

Won Kang, Business Sector Consultant^{3,4}

Melineh Kano, Refugee One^{1,4}

Jian Kim, Asian Human Services³

Seth Kompha, Cambodian Association of Illinois⁴

Jennifer Kons, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights^{2,4}

Santosh Kumar, Asian Metropolitan Family Services^{3,4}

Kevin Kumashiro, Asian American Studies Program, UIC

Daphne Kwok, Chairperson of the President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders; Asians and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities of California

Ricky Lam, Chinese American Service League³

Tuyet Le, Asian American Institute

John Lee, Asian American Small Business Association^{3,4}

Man-Men Lee, Chicago Chinatown Chambers of Commerce³

Hong Liu, Midwest Asian Health Association^{3,4}

Rene D. Luna, Access Living

Bhuttu Mathews, Access Living^{3,4}

Ali Merchant, Self-advocate⁴

Manshaparven Mirza, Northwestern University⁴

Aaisha Mohammad, Muslim Women Resource Center

Mary Anne Mohanraj, Asian American Studies Program, UIC

George Chunkau Mui, Chicago Regional Office Minority Business Development Association & The Organization of Chinese Americans^{3,4}

Tabitha Mui, Chinese American Service League^{2,4}

Joe Nelluvel, IDRS^{1,2,4}

Shelly Ng, American Mass Media Corporation³

Thavone Nyatso, Lao American Community Services

Brigid O'Shaughnessy, Erasing the Distance

Nancy Otto, IDRS

Lavonzell Paige, Mayor's Office for
People with Disabilities⁴

Hae Sook Pak, Advocate⁴

Jae Jin Pak, Asian American Suicide
Prevention Initiative & Asian
Giving Circle (formerly with
Community Counseling Centers of
Chicago)^{1,2,3,4}

Rahnee K. Patrick, Access Living³

Marta Pereyra, Coalition of Limited
English Speaking Elderly⁴

Himali Pharucha, Asian Metropolitan
Family Services^{3,4}

Bishnu Phuyal, Nepali American Center

Bonnie Pinnow, IDRS

Sima Quraishi, Muslim Women
Resource Center

Francisco Ramos, Coalition of African,
Arab, Asian, European & Latino
Immigrants of Illinois

Jeffry Romano, Community Counseling
Centers of Chicago^{2,4}

Soung San, Asian Human Services²

IkpoBari Senewo, Asian Human
Services²

Linda Seyler, Coalition of Limited
English Speaking Elderly

Iteadal Shalabi, Arab American Family
Services

Renuka Sharma, Indo-American Center

Meredith Siemsen, Falling Petals
Curator

Edwin B. Silverman, Chief, Bureau of
Refugee & Immigrant Services

Khamphoui Singvongsa, Lao American
Community Services

Ivy Siu, Chinese American Service
League⁴

Carol Southern, disabilityworks within
the Chicagoland Chamber of
Commerce

Roxana Stupp, Disability Resource
Center, UIC

Karen Su, Asian American Resource
and Cultural Center, UIC

Nareman Taha, Arab American Family
Services

Karen Tamley, Commissioner, Mayor's
Office for People with Disabilities⁴

Jamie Taradesh, Chinese Mutual Aid
Association²

Huy Tran, Chinese Mutual Aid
Association³

Alfred Tsao, Visual Arts Advisor to
ADOPT

Grace Tsao, University Instructor and
Self-Advocate^{3,4}

Lhakpa Tsering, Coalition of African,
Arab, Asian, European, & Latin
Immigrants of Illinois^{2,4}

Susan Tybon, Japanese American
Service Committee of Chicago⁴

Howard Vu, Vietnamese Association of
Illinois^{3,4}

Kaoru Watanabe, Cambodian
Association of Illinois^{1,4}

James Watkins, Ability Chicago

Judith Weinstein, Heartland Alliance
Refugee Health Programs

Mark Williams, Disabilityworks within
the Chicagoland Chamber of
Commerce

Celine Woznica, Asian Health Coalition

Chi Can To, Chicago Chinatown
Chambers of Commerce³

Esther Wong, Chinese American
Service League⁴

Jane Young, Chinese Mutual Aid Association²
Kripal Zala, Executive Director at Northside Community Resources & Rogers Park Community Development Corporation; Formerly Director & Community Liaison, City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations and Council on Asian American Affairs^{3,4}

Jing Zhang, Asian Human Services^{1,4}

³Indicates Promoting Employment Opportunities via the Business Sector with and for Asians with Disabilities Task Force Member

⁴Indicates Advisory Board Member

Student Research Aides, UIC Alumni, and Contributors

Ashley Barba
Yvonne Gail Bermas
Kathryn Joy Caneda
John Capua
Sean Carino
Elizabeth Chung
Catherine Louise Crivellone
Alyssa Deluca
J.R. Ellaos
Sara Krajcir
Ana Sophia Lupu
Aaron Maass
Melanie-Kukana Maglaya
Desiree Rivo
Andrew Seun
Mark Rizkalla
Michelle Robins
Ken Truong

¹Indicates Building Capacity of Agencies to Address Disability and VR Issues Task Force Member

²Indicates Building Cultural and Linguistic Capacity Task Force of IDRS to Address Asian Issues Task Force Member

Table of Contents

Introduction

Acknowledgments.....	iii-iv
Authors and Contributors.....	v-viii
Partners.....	v-viii
Student Research Assistants.....	viii

Part One: Introduction to the Toolkit and Community-Based Outreach

Chapter 1: Executive Summary.....	1-25
--	------

Appendix A: Asian Immigrant and Refugee Fact Sheet.....	22-23
--	-------

Appendix B: Community Capacity Building and Outreach.....	25
--	----

Chapter 2: The Status of Asian Americans with Disabilities: Cultural Challenges and Opportunities.....	26-42
---	-------

Appendix C: Asian Countries and Languages.....	41-42
---	-------

Chapter 3: Context of the Vocational Rehabilitation System and Asian Americans.....	43-49
--	-------

Chapter 4: Building a Grassroots Presence.....	50-66
---	-------

Appendix D: The Logic Model: ADOPT's Initial Approach.....	62-65
---	-------

Chapter 5: Introducing ADOPT's Outreach Framework for Vocational Rehabilitation.....	67-102
---	--------

Appendix E: Outreach Strategies.....	91-92
---	-------

Appendix F: Ten Effective Outreach Strategies.....	93-102
---	--------

Table of Contents

Part Two: Demographics and Issues Concerning Asian Americans

- Chapter 6:** Disability, the Census, and the Geographical Information System.....103-116
- Chapter 7:** Characteristics of Asian Americans: Data, Tables, and Figures.....117-141
- Chapter 8:** Building Community-Based Connections with the Asian American Community.....142-152

Table of Contents

Part Three: Improving Vocational Rehabilitation Access and Outcomes

- Chapter 9:** Building Community Partnerships
and Collaborations.....153-177
 - Appendix G:** ADOPT’s Advisory
Structure.....171
 - Appendix H:** Chicago-Area Resources for
Asians and People with
Disabilities.....172-177
- Chapter 10:** Disability, Asian Religions, and
Spirituality: Partnering with Faith-
Based Organizations.....178-204
 - Appendix I:** Faith-Based Organizations in
Greater Chicago.....197-204
- Chapter 11:** Achieving Successful Vocational
Rehabilitation Outreach for Asian
American Businesses.....205-252
 - Appendix J:** Considering Self-
Employment: A Culturally
Relevant Solution.....227-229
 - Appendix K:** Valuing a Diverse Workforce
with Mainstream Best
Practices: Hiring Strategies
for Businesses.....230-234
 - Appendix L:** Event Information and
Multimedia Presentation
Slides.....235-238
 - Appendix M:** Poster.....239
 - Appendix N:** Agenda for 2011 Asian
Americans with Disabilities
Forum.....240
 - Appendix O:** Directory of Asian-Based
Chambers of
Commerce.....242-250

Table of Contents

Appendix P: Encouraging Job Applications from Persons with Disabilities.....	251
Appendix Q: Web Resources.....	252
Chapter 12: Collaborative Agenda-Setting for Action: Raising Awareness through Media, Cultural Arts, and Theater.....	253-287
Appendixes R-U: Promotions for <i>Falling Petals</i>	273-278
Appendixes V-W: Asian American Disabilities Forum Promotion.....	279-280
Appendix X: Asian American and Disability Video Links.....	281-283
Appendix Y: Chicago-Area Asian Media Organizations.....	284-287
Chapter 13: Strengthening Language and Linguistic Capacities.....	288-330
Appendix Z: DRS Spoken-Language Interpreter Policy Update.....	315
Appendix AA: Immigrant Family Resource Program Contacts..	316-318
Appendix BB: Interpreter Job Description.....	319-320
Appendix CC: Interpreter Job Application.....	321-323

Table of Contents

Appendix DD: Best Language Practices for DRS/VR Serving LEP and Low-Literacy Customers.....	324-327
Appendix EE: Fact Sheet on Executive Orders 13166.....	328-329
Appendix FF: DRS Referral Guide for Asians with Disabilities.....	330
Chapter 14: Online Promotion of Successful Vocational Rehabilitation.....	331-356
Chapter 15: Achieving Workforce Diversity in the Vocational Rehabilitation Arena.....	357-387
Appendix GG: Chicago-Area Mental Health Service Provider.....	370-387
Chapter 16: Policy, Systems Change, and Recommendations.....	388-394



PART I

Introduction to the Toolkit and Community-Based Outreach





Chapter 1

Executive Summary



About ADOPT

Today, hundreds of Asian Americans with disabilities (AAWDs) are living in the Chicago area who are qualified to work but unable to find employment because of a simple problem: they have no idea where to go for job services or support. Researchers know that a major factor in this real-life scenario is that vocational rehabilitation (VR) and community-service providers are not aware of the VR needs of AAWDs and how to reach out to them (Hasnain & Leung, 2010). However, thanks to funding for a grassroots, systems-change outreach project, an extended opportunity to address this situation has been granted.

Established in January 2010, the Asians with Disabilities Outreach Project Think-Tank (ADOPT) is designed to help VR agencies increase their capacity to help Chicago-based AAWDs gain meaningful access to the state VR system and to increase quality of services through culturally and linguistically relevant outreach efforts. Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) of the Illinois Human Services Department (DHS), the project was awarded to the Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research (CCBMDR) and the Asian American Studies Program (ASAM) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). This initiative is also collaborating with many local Asian-serving agencies, businesses, and advocacy groups.



The challenge of working successfully.

ADOPT's Outreach and Success Measurement Strategies

As part of this initiative, ADOPT has established a strong network of Chicago-based immigrant and disability groups to support AAWDs who are striving to achieve self-sufficiency, community integration, and a better quality of life. ADOPT's central purpose is to identify outreach strategies that VR and community-based providers can use to help Asian American job-seekers with disabilities secure access to employment and training opportunities in their communities.

ADOPT continues to conduct various educational and capacity-building forums in partnership with DRS partners during its funding cycle. Without the information and assistance they need to navigate the complex DRS service system, AAWDs will continue to be marginalized in greater Chicago—and ADOPT is addressing this reality.

The project's success is measured through the increased number of AAWDs using DRS and the establishment of new community-university-state partnerships that address this issue. The information collected was used to develop this toolkit. It highlights culturally relevant outreach strategies and best practices that can help bridge the service gap in Chicago's Asian American community.

For your convenience, ADOPT has put together a collection of online resources specific to the Asian American community online. For easy access, go to <http://uicdisability.blogspot.com/2010/03/maps.html>.

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. They comprise 5.25% of the overall population, and 5.8% of them live in the greater Chicago area, many of whom (approximately 15%) have disabilities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Nonetheless, service providers in the state VR system know little about the employment and training needs and successes of this group. Moreover, because Asian Americans are often misunderstood due to their cultural and linguistic diversity, they remain relatively invisible in the Illinois VR system.

Compared to other ethnic and racial minorities with disabilities, AAWDs are underrepresented in the federal rehabilitation and disability system. In Illinois, the proportion of Asians being served by the state VR system is less than 1.09%, (DRS FY 2005–2010). These numbers are alarmingly low given the large population of Asians in the Chicago area, 4.1% of whom are working and disabled (Illinois Disability Report, 2008).



ADOPT's partners are tagged.



Ethnic neighborhoods in Chicagoland are geographically cluster-ed.

To address the VR and employment disparity, ADOPT (an ARRA-funded initiative) served as a demonstration pilot project. In winter 2010, DRS awarded a grant to UIC's Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research to help DRS craft outreach efforts for Asian Americans.

The ADOPT toolkit focuses on the analysis of archival state data and the qualitative and quantitative findings of ADOPT's research efforts and community-based field experiences. Housed at UIC, ADOPT integrated the cultural and linguistic expertise lacking in the state VR system by partnering with key stakeholders.

Through task-force activities, these stakeholders helped to address the employment disparity issue in pan-Asian American communities through the creative and innovative outreach strategies identified in this toolkit, the first of its kind.

In metropolitan Chicago, demographic data show a clear need to improve VR access and participation for Asian American communities dealing with disability. For many working-age AAWDs, language and lack of social capital limit their families' and communities' involvement in their VR experience. Yet such engagement—the product of effective outreach activities—can play an important role in promoting workforce success among this overlooked population.

Defining Outreach

The National Council on Disability (NCD, 2003) asserts that there is no single definition of outreach in the scholarly literature about reaching out to underserved or hard-to-reach populations such as Asians. As a complex process with a variety of theoretical and conceptual underpinnings, outreach is often used by an organization to locate and communicate with underserved populations in order to realize certain mandates or goals.

To integrate the wide array of outreach definitions the literature offers, ADOPT recognizes six components that are common to current outreach efforts to AAWDs (Victor, 2008).

1. Identification of the value of AAWDs and reducing family and community stigma
2. Assessment of the Asian American community and its needs and assets
3. Promotion of advocacy movements pertaining to disability inclusion and VR/employment
4. Dissemination of referral and service information on VR and workforce integration via ethnic media
5. Transformation of behaviors and attitudes about AAWDs' ability to work
6. Capacity-building of community agencies and local Asian businesses to partner with DRS

This toolkit explores these and other outreach strategies in detail. In sum, the information and recommendations presented in this toolkit are intended to help DRS increase outreach efforts that are culturally and linguistically relevant to the challenges and opportunities identified by DRS and key stakeholders. By creating this toolkit, ADOPT supports the efforts of DRS to plan, implement, and evaluate effective outreach efforts to AAWDs and other valued communities in Illinois, particularly the Chicago area.



**Buddhist temple bookstore
in Chicago's Chinatown.**

Mapping Outreach for the Illinois Vocational Rehabilitation System

Despite the dramatic rise of Chicago's Asian population, the combined issues of disability and workforce development among Asian American immigrants and refugees remain poorly studied (see Appendix A for a discussion of immigrant and refugee issues). This is especially true of the barriers this group faces in accessing mainstream VR assistance offered by the Illinois DRS. In fact, many Asian-serving service providers, Asian American business owners, and disability professionals know little about the numbers, needs, and experiences of AAWDs (ADOPT's fieldwork findings, 2010).

In many parts of the U.S., Asians have long been perceived as a homogeneous group. In reality, however, they represent a wide variety of cultures, religions, and cultural beliefs and speak more than 100 different languages and dialects. The lack of disaggregated data can promote the model minority myth—that Asians are the healthy minority who are intelligent, successful, and free of needs or problems—and thereby prevent AAWDs from obtaining needed VR resources. As a result, many AAWDs remain outside the VR system that could be helping them find meaningful employment (Chen, Song-Jae, & Donnell, 2004).

In addition, the VR system itself is a source of disparity in services because of several cultural and institutional factors. First, mainstream VR systems in Illinois lack information about the needs of AAWDs and about the cultural and linguistic barriers they face in accessing the system. AAWDs are one of the most difficult populations to reach because of their cultural beliefs and the stigma associated with disability and mental illness in many of their home cultures. Second, DRS has significant shortcomings in reaching out to the Asian American community; moreover, the state VR system lacks cultural and linguistic capacity. Third, Asians find it difficult to connect to DRS because they are not aware of the agency and what it offers (Hasnain & Leung, 2010).



This photograph shows storefronts on Devon Street in Chicago.

This situation stems from two overlapping problems. First, staff members at many mainstream VR offices in Illinois have limited knowledge of the barriers facing AAWDs and how to overcome these challenges. Second, Asian community-based agencies and businesses lack the information needed to help AAWDs understand their disability-related rights and entitlements and/or to link them to VR and employment resources (Hasnain & Leung, 2010).

To address these shortcomings, ADOPT and its key partners identified ways for building VR's capacity to reach out to Chicago-based AAWDs. A community-based, participatory-action research model guided all the advisory board and task force activities from conceptualization through implementation. In partnership with key stakeholders and Asian-serving agencies, ADOPT is helping to bridge the gaps in service and awareness between the mainstream VR system and historically underserved AAWDs.

The Need for Asian American Community Outreach

Phuc's Story

Phuc is a recent college graduate who is originally from Vietnam. He and his family moved to the United States when he was about 5 years old. Doctors in Vietnam were unsure of his disability, but when his family arrived in America, they were told that Phuc was deaf.

Phuc was able to learn sign language. Now he has an undergraduate degree in biology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Among multiple roles and responsibilities, he helps out at his parents' wedding catering company while continuing to help with cancer research at UIC. Phuc is already planning to go back to school for his master's in biotechnology.

Throughout his high school and postsecondary schooling, DRS was rarely mentioned to Phuc. It was not until his senior year as an undergraduate student that an ADOPT staffer introduced Phuc to DRS, and he decided to meet with a counselor.

Unfortunately, the DRS counselor refused to offer Phuc help because he already seemed independent enough. Phuc assumed that his attitude had something to do with the counselor's response. He explains, "Well, at first I thought that the service was like welfare, so I was really not comfortable with it. Now I realize that it is not the same thing. But I had that kind of attitude, thinking that it was related to welfare, so I went in, you know, kind of against my family."

Phuc did not see how DRS could help him. Very little information had been given to him. Even the DRS counselor told him little about the different services and resources available. Recently, Phuc went back to DRS to request help in paying for his master's degree. At the appointment, he was told that DRS could help him find a job and also help pay for his schooling. Later he learned that DRS has many more services to offer. Now he's thinking of getting support for a better hearing aid.

Phuc hopes to receive a new hearing aid within the next few months to help him comprehend group conversations better. He is also interested in receiving speech therapy to make it easier to communicate with his peers and professors and ultimately simplify his life. In addition, he is in the process of applying to graduate school in molecular biology.



Captioning is used for various outreach ADOPT events.

Although little research has been conducted on the nexus of disability, VR outreach, and culture in Asian communities, anecdotal evidence drawn from Chicago-based providers and consumers indicates that AAWDs often faces many complex disadvantages. Although this topic has been studied in other states with a high density of Asians, such as Hawaii and California, few studies have taken the approach of this current pilot initiative. Our preliminary findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions indicate that AAWDs face a variety of barriers, including unmet needs for personal care, few job-training options, unsuitable housing, and a lack of aides and equipment, or a general lack of what DRS offers as highlighted in Phuc’s case study.

These findings suggest that AAWDs lack support for VR and employment searches because of a range of language, cultural, and perceptual barriers that exist between Asians and VR providers, as well as challenges at the community and systems levels. As a result, many AAWDs miss out on benefits and services; this leads to isolation, underemployment, and lower levels of well-being.

To address these issues, ADOPT has been working closely with various Asian communities and with multicultural service agencies—those that support people from multiple Asian communities—to address the issues of disability and mental illness. As a result, it has connected an increasing pool of Asian job-seekers to the state VR system, including a few immigrants from non-Asian countries. To carry out the initiative, ADOPT is collaborating with DRS, many local Asian-oriented agencies, Asian-owned or -managed businesses, and key city-based stakeholders.



Asian communities are perhaps in greatest need of disability outreach due to physical and attitudinal barriers.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Service and Employment Gap

Although they are increasingly more visible in Chicago, the AAWD population and their families remain the least-understood and most-underserved cultural group in their communities and in the mainstream VR system (Hasnain & Leung, 2010). Because of the historic stigma of disability and various cultural influences, AAWDs and their families often have limited or no opportunities in society and are therefore invisible.

Moreover, since Asians are known to underuse health and mental health resources in general, it is not surprising that those with disabilities use VR services and supports even less. In addition, because of inadequate data and research, state and federal disability programs have traditionally not noted or addressed the particular needs and challenges facing Asian Americans (Hasnain & Leung, 2010).



Chinese Mutual Aid Association is one of ADOPT's partners.

Bhutanese Success Story

One success story is that of a Bhutanese refugee woman in her 20s with a significant hearing impairment. For 18 years, she and her family lived in a refugee camp in Nepal; in August of 2009, she resettled in Chicago with her brothers. ADOPT connected with her, discovering that she was not aware of DRS or of the option of working in this country.

Through ADOPT's outreach efforts, she was connected to a VR office and counselor who worked with her, her family, and the community agency. As a result, she had a job-training evaluation at a major hotel and is now looking for a job and learning about transportation options with the help of ADOPT and an Asian-oriented job-placement agency. Such outreach efforts can benefit other Illinois-based Asians who are not aware of VR services and supports.

Recent demographic reports indicate that AAWDs in Illinois are increasing in number and diversity, thus posing new cultural and language challenges for the state VR system. Unfortunately, Asians with the greatest needs are often difficult to reach and therefore are severely underserved. There is alarming evidence that AAWDs do not use public services and supports effectively, especially VR. In addition, AAWDs are underrepresented in the Illinois VR system: only 1.09% (1,421 out of 130,351) of AAWDs are served by the state VR system (DRS VR Data, FY 2010). These numbers are alarmingly low, given that as many as 4.1% of working-age Asians in Illinois have disabilities (ACS, 2008).

To address this service gap, ADOPT has established a strong network of 40 Chicago-based immigrant and disability groups in order to support AAWDs who are striving to achieve self-sufficiency, community integration, and a better quality of life. ADOPT has helped the state DRS to connect to underserved Asian communities, families, and individuals for the first time.

In greater Chicago, immigrant agencies such as the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), Asian Human Services, and the Chinese Mutual Aid Association are part of ADOPT's efforts to include more immigrants with disabilities in their programming and staffing. ADOPT has also established new links between native-born and foreign-born Asians in Chicago through a variety of outreach and educational efforts pertaining to issues of disability and mental health. More importantly, ADOPT has brought together Asian immigrant community leaders and VR providers to address cross-cultural disability/mental health issues in their communities.

Led by staff at UIC, ADOPT is providing outreach and services to underserved Asian and other immigrant communities in Chicago, but it needs ongoing funding to continue building its capacity. The leaders and staff of service organizations need to be educated about the employment and VR needs of AAWDs and the range of DRS resources available to them. DRS staff need to be educated about Asian cultures and the needs and strengths of various sub-ethnic groups. Some of these details are presented in this toolkit.

Inadequate Outreach

Two key problems with the current VR system in Illinois are inadequate outreach and follow-up. These problems often leads to poor outcomes. Even when individuals or families of diverse cultures receive help, as we found via ADOPT, they can be disappointed because agency personnel are often unaware of cultural values and linguistic needs. They may also be unaware of and insensitive to unique stressors, such as poverty, language barriers, discrimination, immigration status, social class, and racism.

These difficulties occur primarily because of a lack of cultural competency, but also because so few multilingual counselors and staff are employed in the VR system, and even fewer have Asian American backgrounds. Clearly, the current state and federal system of VR service delivery has not addressed the needs of its culturally diverse population base. This is true despite the various efforts being made to expand outreach and workforce diversity in the rehabilitation arena



Community-based work often has geopolitical implications.

The current VR system is predominantly grounded in Euro-American values and beliefs and is less designed to understand or address the needs of individuals and families in Asian American communities. For instance, in an effort to empower AAWDs, service providers often work with the customer individually to design rehabilitation service plans rather than with the individual's family or significant other. Yet many Asian cultural norms require the individual to make important decisions only after consulting with key family or community members (Hasnain & Leung, 2010).

Many studies suggest that a stronger focus on understanding Asian American family and community dynamics can create better interactions between service providers and families seeking rehabilitation services, as well as better outcomes. In fact, when programs are sensitive to the backgrounds of specific cultural groups, providers see an increased rate of service usage, which improves outcomes (Stodden, Stodden, Kim-Rupnow, Nghi, Thai, & Galloway, 2003). Therefore, ADOPT's focus has been to tackle cultural as well as institutional issues that can help to improve VR experiences and outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals with disabilities, especially Asians.

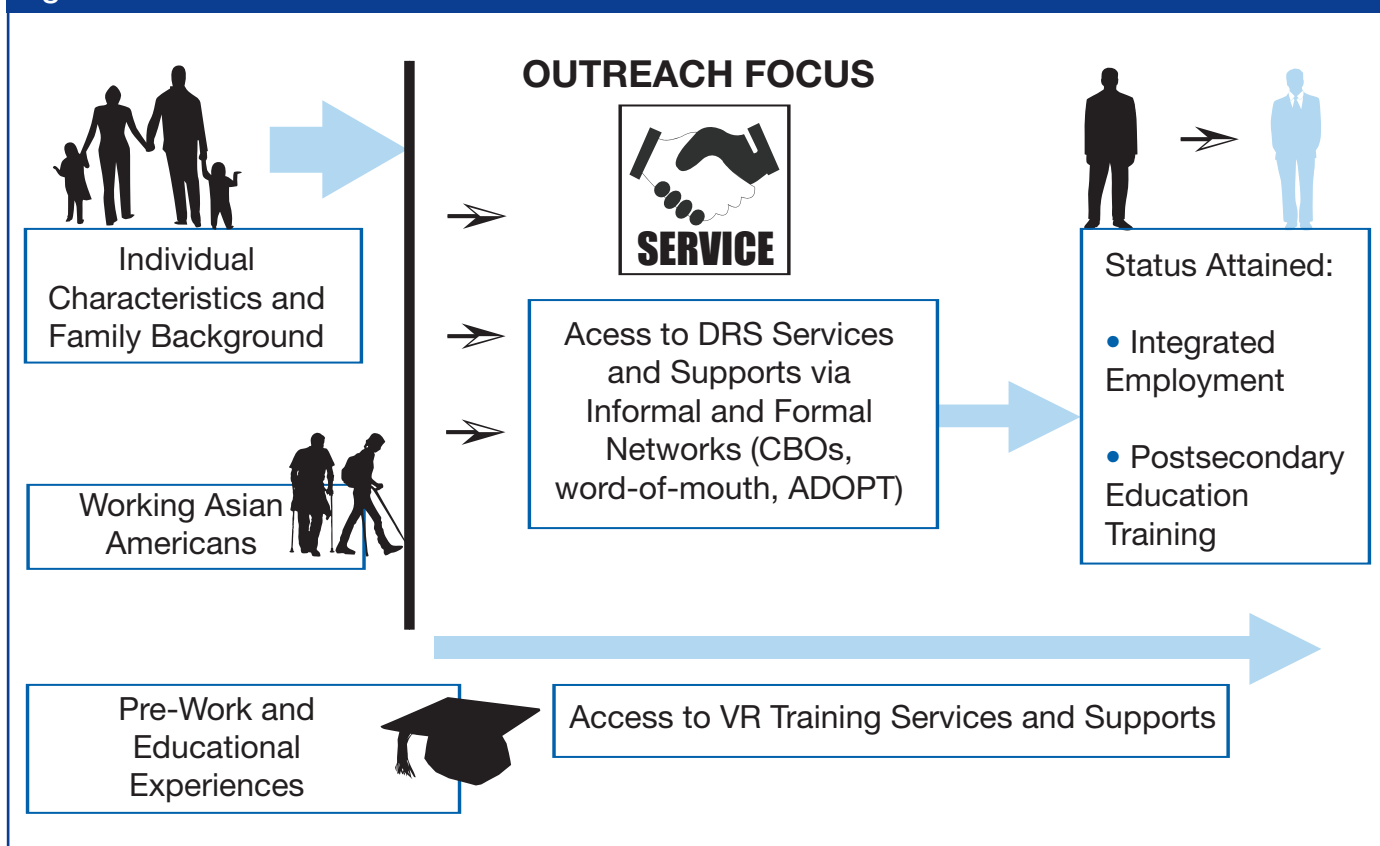
ADOPT's Purpose

ADOPT's central purpose is to identify outreach strategies that VR and community-based providers can use to help Asian and other immigrant job-seekers with disabilities secure access to employment and training opportunities. This toolkit will help to build DRS's outreach capacity to conduct educational and capacity-building activities in partnership with DRS champions and allies in workforce integration. Without the information and assistance needed to navigate a complex system of services, programs, and laws, AAWDs in greater Chicago will continue to be marginalized.

Long-term, the success of this outreach toolkit will be measured through the increased number of AAWDs using services offered through DRS. ADOPT will chronicle all successful activities and promising outreach practices to provide guidelines for those wishing to replicate the project (Figure 1.1). As a result, the well-being of individuals and their families improves, and so does that of the greater community.

Despite current limitations, the past decade has seen a positive shift from a VR system that focuses only on the individual with a disability to one that recognizes and emphasizes the importance of family, community, and faith-based entities to reach out to AAWDs. In the past, the individual was the center of professional attention and the family was excluded from the rehabilitative process. Increasingly, the trend is to include families and the larger community in all aspects of VR and work options (Hagglund & Heineman, 2006).

Figure 1.1. ADOPT has a multi-faceted focus on outreach



ADOPT is designed to build more comprehensive connections among VR, DRS, and local communities, thereby catalyzing system-wide improvement in meaningful access and participation in VR for disabled Asian Americans that can lead to successful employment outcomes. Besides outreach activities targeted to individuals, families, communities, organizations, and systems, ADOPT helps DRS providers improve outreach to a much underserved community in Illinois.

Given the complex set of realities faced by AAWDs, the ADOPT toolkit serves as a practical outreach guide to facilitate connections between the public VR system and the Asian American community. It also provides state-of-the-art strategies and approaches to improve access and service-delivery practices for this population. This toolkit introduces the complex issues faced by Asian Americans dealing with disability and VR. Also addressed are some contextual and cultural issues that affect VR services and outcomes. We present information that supports outreach to approaches that can be used to help VR professionals overcome cultural and systemic barriers that have kept AAWDs and their families from using VR services and from finding employment.

Who Is Responsible for Developing Outreach Toolkit?

The Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research (CCMDR) at UIC is working with the Illinois DRS and other key partners to identify and promote culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach mechanisms that can help improve access to and quality of VR care for Chicago-based AAWDs. Outreach is a viable employment strategy that has been proven to yield positive results when used in conjunction with strategic partnerships and other job-search methods. This toolkit contains such strategies to help VR professionals work with diverse customers of Asian descent.

This systems-change project had three aims.

- 1.** To synthesize and document the information on VR and employment status of Chicago-based AAWDs using archival data sources and existing literature.
- 2.** To identify and design vigorous culturally specific and sensitive strategies for reaching out to AAWDs so that more of them participate in the state's VR system.
- 3.** To produce a toolkit that contains practical information and guided local outreach strategies and interventions to help bridge the service disconnect between DRS and Asian American communities.

The information presented in this toolkit will help VR professionals at DRS to improve the agency's use of culturally and linguistically diverse outreach strategies and, ultimately, to improve DRS access and outcomes for Asian Americans. To accomplish these aims, we have developed and carried out this project in collaboration with DRS, local Asian-specific agencies, disability advocacy groups, businesses, chambers of commerce, city officials, and related workforce stakeholders.



Student interns connecting with Asian businesses in Chicago's Chinatown.

Overview and Key Components of the ADOPT Toolkit

ADOPT is designed to be:

- Relationship-centered: It supports the delivery of customer-centered, family-centered, community-oriented support to Asian (and other immigrant) job-seekers with disabilities.
- Targeted on capacity–building and systems change: It focuses on recognized, demonstrated gaps in access to VR services, and in employment and training, to improve the economic status of individuals with disabilities.
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate: Its strategies and service-delivery methods are tailored to the unique needs of diverse customers.
- Community-based, participatory, and collaborative: It promotes open discussions that allow for the input of key stakeholders from all sectors.

The information collected by ADOPT has been synthesized and incorporated into practical strategies and recommendations. Throughout its development, we took a community-capacity approach to outreach as illustrated in Appendix B. With input from the project advisory board as well as key stakeholders and university students, UIC staff have compiled and summarized state-of-the-art outreach strategies that can help to build the capacity of DRS providers to work with Asian communities.

The toolkit is designed to help VR professionals and staff understand the necessities, challenges, and opportunities to improve access for and participation of AAWDs. It offers an exciting approach to outreach based on evidence and fieldwork experience. It is divided into three parts that introduce VR professionals to a broad spectrum of outreach strategies and model practices and programs.

Each chapter contains practical information and cultural insights. These strategies for outreach, fact sheets, and resources will all help DRS to reach out effectively to Asian American communities in the Chicago area.

The ADOPT toolkit contains educational information and resources for proactive outreach. Ultimately, this toolkit will help all DRS staff and partners to connect with disabled individuals of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, provide them with meaningful VR services, and help them find employment. It serves as a bridge to improving VR access and outcomes for AAWDs and other individuals with disabilities.

Rather than taking a passive approach to service delivery, VR professionals and their partners can use this toolkit to be proactive in reaching out to hard-to-engage communities so that they may participate in DRS services and programs. Using a combination of strategies, VR counselors and staff can learn about the Asian American communities of Chicago and begin to think outside the box.



Two Asian American businessmen selling magazines.

Chapter 1 References

ADOPT (2009-2011). Fieldwork findings.

Chen, R., Song-Jae, J., & Donnell, C. (2004). Enhancing the rehabilitation counseling process: Understanding the obstacles to Asian Americans' utilization of services. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 35 (1), 1-7.

Flowers, C., Crimando, W., Forbes, W. S., & Riggart, T. F. (2005). A regional survey of rehabilitation cultural diversity within CILs: A ten-year follow-up. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 71 (2), 14-21.

Flowers, C., & Pusch, B. (1996). Rehabilitation cultural diversity initiative: A regional survey of cultural diversity within CILs. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 62 (3), 22-28.

Hagglund, K., & Heineman, A. (2006). *Handbook of applied disability and rehabilitation research*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Hasnain, R., & Leung, P. (2010). Cross-cultural issues in the vocational rehabilitation system for Asian-Pacific Americans with disabilities. In F. E. Balcazar, Y. Suarez-Balcazar, C. Keys, & T. Taylor-Ritzler. (Eds.), *Race, culture, and disability: Rehabilitation science and practice* (pp. 185-204). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Illinois Disability Report (2008). Retrieved December 15, 2010 from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1285&context=edicollect>.

National Council on Disability. (2003). Outreach and people with disabilities from diverse cultures: A review of the literature. Retrieved October 16, 2010 from http://webharvest.gov/peth04/20041016103321/http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/advisory/cultural/cdi_litreview.htm.

Stodden, R., Stodden, N., Kim-Rupnow, W., Nghi, T., Thai, D., & Galloway, L. (2003). Providing effective support services for culturally and linguistically diverse persons with disabilities: Challenges and recommendations. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 18 (3), 177-189.

U.S. Census Bureau (2010). State and County Quickfacts: Cook County, Illinois. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17/1714000.html>.

Victor, D. (2008). Developing a curriculum to support the Hispanic/Latino outreach efforts of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago.

Appendix A. - Asian Immigrant and Refugee Fact Sheet

In 1951, the United Nations defined a refugee as a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

- Most refugee populations are made up of families, and they are usually forced to leave their homes and/or countries on an involuntary basis (Hein, 1993).
- Immigrants generally leave their country on a voluntary basis in search of better economic and educational opportunities, and they usually arrive in their new country as individuals (Hein, 1993).

United States Census Figures from 2000 to 2010

- Asians comprise only about 5% of the U.S. population, but Asians, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, are the fastest-growing population in the United States (~44% increase since 2000).
- In Illinois, 4.6% of the population is Asian. Cook County's Asian population is highest, with 6.2% of the population.
- Since 2000, immigrants accounted for 55% of population growth in metropolitan Chicago, or 145,093 new residents, according to ICIRR.
- In the 10-year period from 2000 to 2010, 26 Illinois counties saw their Asian population at least double.
- During the same period that the population of Illinois' Schuyler County grew by 578%, its Asian population increased by 1,188%.

Asian American Immigrant Demographics

- Asian Americans differ from other major ethnic groups and have many intragroup differences. For example, Chinese were among the first Asians to immigrate to the United States in 1848 to 1852 for reasons such as seeking political refuge and better economic opportunities. In contrast, many Vietnamese did not come here until after 1975, seeking refuge from the aftermath of the Vietnam War (Xie & Goyette, 2004).
- The socioeconomic background of immigrants from Asia compares favorably to other groups. Asian immigrants' rates of English proficiency are often lower than that of other immigrants, but personal income may be similar to or higher than other immigrants and United States-born groups (Le, 2011).
- Although Asian immigrants and refugees compare favorably with other immigrant groups in some ways, detailed analysis of Asian groups reveals that their difficulties are similar to those of other racial/ethnic groups, such as Whites and Latinos (Le, 2011).
- Unfamiliar language, different cultural norms, and an unfamiliar government and legal structure create challenges for Asian immigrants and their families in Chicago (Gupta, 2004).
- In the greater Chicago area, 75% of immigrants live in Cook County, and almost 25% of these immigrants are Asian (Gupta, 2004).

Fact Sheet References

Gupta, S. (2004). Immigrants in the Chicago suburbs: A policy paper.

Hein, J. (1993). Refugees, immigrants, and the state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, 43–59.

Le, C.N. (2011a). Demographics and statistics of immigrants. Retrieved May 18, 2011 from <http://www.asian-nation.org/immigrant-stats.shtml>.

Le, C.N. (2011b). Asian immigrants in the postindustrial economy. Retrieved May 18, 2011 from <http://www.asian-nation.org/postindustrial.shtml>.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Profile of general demographic characteristics: Cook County, Illinois*. Retrieved May 23, 2011 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *State and counties quickfacts: Illinois*. Retrieved May 18, 2011 from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17000.html>.

Xie, Y., & Goyette, K. (2004). *Asian Americans: A demographic portrait*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation and Population Reference Bureau.

Appendix B. - Steps to Community Capacity Building and Outreach

