

METTA HEALTH CENTER
of
Lowell Community Health Center

**A holistic approach in providing health care services for
Southeast Asians**

**Statewide Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Services Coalition
Meeting, December 14, 2011**

Metta Health Center

- Established in 2000 in response to health care needs in the growing Southeast Asian community
- Metta means loving, kindness, and compassion in Pali, Buddhist language.



Why Are We Starting MHC to focus on SEA?

- 30,000 SEA in Lowell (25,000 Khmers, 5000 Laotians, 1,500 Vietnamese)
- Only 1,600 use LCHC
- Many barriers to care for SEA

What are some of the barriers to care for SEA?

- Limited educational opportunity with average education 3-5 years & limited literacy in English or Khmer
- Trauma & torture in SEA resulting in hesitancy to seek care
- Language, transportation, reliance on others to help them seek care.
- The U.S. health care system & insurance is complex & very different from SEA
- Limited provider understanding of SEA culture/health beliefs/practices
- Fear, discomfort in western settings
- Limited understanding of preventive health, different beliefs about disease causes.

Services

- Two Western based services:
 - Primary Health Care (plus nutrition counseling)
 - Mental Health Services
- Two Eastern based services:
 - Alternative medicines-Acupuncture & Massage Therapy
 - Traditional healing consultation & Meditation

Mental Health Services

- Another service provided at a primary care setting to eliminate stigma in the community.
- Team approach of English speaking clinician with Khmer Bil./Bic. mental health specialist.
- Concrete Services
- Using Client's cultural beliefs
- Integration with other services available at MHC

Refugee Health Assessment Program

- Funded by Mass. Department of Public Health's Refugee and Immigrant Health Program.
- Serving Burmese, Bhutanese, Iraqi, and other refugees/Asylees, incl. Uganda, Eritrea, Haiti, Ethiopia, Cuba, Congo, Somalia, and Cambodia,

Support Services for Victims of Torture

- Funded by UN Voluntary Fund for Victim of Torture.
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Case Management

Metta Health Center Team



Staff Training

- BU School of Social Work's Refugee and Immigrant Training Program.
- Bridging The Gap (BTG) Medical Interpreter Training Program.
- Monthly in-services
- LCHC mandated training program, e.g. Annual Orientation and Cultural Competency Training.
- CHW went through CHEC training program.

Training for others

- Externship for MA students
- Preceptor ship for NP students
- Education Session for Nursing Program Students from MCC
- Volunteer student from UML/LHS
- Other community providers

Community Health Edu. & Outreach

- Weekly Radio/TV
- Community events
- Work with Health Promotion to provided community health screening.
- Community Flu clinic



Community Collaboration

- Works closely with CMAA which is now houses Burma Volunteer group and Iraqi American Community Center
- Buddhist Temples and Cambodian churches

Resources:

- www.SEARCHprogram.info
- www.khmervoices.org
- <http://www.innovations.ahrq.gov/content.aspx?id=2774>
- <http://khmerabroad.blogspot.com/search/label/Massachussets>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowell,_Massachusetts

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