

Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Homelessness in West Contra Costa County

A Needs Assessment prepared for

**West Contra Costa Unified School District
Homeless Programs**

by

Southeast Asian Youth & Family Alliance (SAYFA)



**Assessment prepared by:
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Asian Pacific Psychological Services (SAYFA Fiscal Agent)**



March 16, 2007

Project Background and Overview

In April 2006, the Southeast Asian Youth & Family Alliance (SAYFA) was asked to conduct a needs assessment to identify issues relevant to API homeless youth in West Contra Costa County. West County is the poorest and most ethnically diverse area of Contra Costa County and one of the “neediest” in the Bay Area. From 1980 - 2002 Contra Costa County has seen a three-fold growth from 4,500 Asians to 104,000 countywide. Almost all growth is due to resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees, primarily from Laos. Between 1986 - 1992, close to 24,000 legal immigrants and refugees came to Contra Costa County. Over 50% of these individuals were from Asia. Of the refugees, over 80% were from the war-torn countries of Southeast Asia. The majority of these immigrants and refugees settled in the communities of Richmond and San Pablo in West Contra Costa County (1994 Contra Costa County Profile).

A recent 2006 report conducted by SAYFA and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, titled *Hidden Challenges, Volume 1: Juvenile Justice and Education Issues Affecting Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Youth in Richmond, California*, illustrates the status of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) youth in West Contra Costa County, providing a portrayal that often differs from common stereotypes about their presumed near uniform high achievement and success. For example, broad categorizations of API youth as being academic overachievers, quiet, and obedient may prevent the acknowledgement of barriers that some API youth face. The data shows that some API ethnic groups cope with multiple issues that compromise their well-being and chances for future success.

Demographic and educational data examined in this report indicate that API households in Richmond have a wide range of household incomes, levels of linguistic isolation, while API youth demonstrate a broad scope of academic achievement. For example, census data shows that most Southeast Asian ethnicities, in particular, have high levels of linguistic isolation, especially Vietnamese and Laotian households (47.4% and 42.7%, respectively). The report also found that fewer than 40% of students in the West Contra Costa County Unified School District in any grade performed at or above grade level. This is lower than the statewide average of 50% and countywide average of more than 50%. Juvenile arrest data reveal that, while African American youth have both the highest number of total arrests and the highest arrest rate, Vietnamese and Laotian youth have the second and third highest arrest rates relative to the size of their community. The report also found that non-English speaking communities often have a difficult time accessing public resources and services. These families (usually Southeast Asian and Latino) are frustrated with the challenges of maneuvering the public system and often live in what’s known as linguistic isolation, where families simply give-up trying to receive any public resources.

As research illustrates, challenges facing West Contra Costa County youth are multifaceted. Issues facing Southeast Asian youth in West County include the widespread use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, mental health problems, poor school performance, family issues, poverty, crime-ridden neighborhoods, easy access to drugs and alcohol as well as high exposure to drug use in the neighborhood, lack of culturally-competent social services, lack of youth development resources such as recreation and job readiness, pervasive gang culture, unemployment, difficulties with the English language, role reversal in families, and poor parental modeling. SAYFA’s needs assessment activities have involved creating clearer understandings of the complex factors that contribute to issues facing the community, and which aid or inhibit our ability to create community-level change. Youth experiencing problems in one area (economic, juvenile justice, and education) also tend to manifest issues in other areas. These challenges create an environment that can contribute to homelessness among API youth.

Definition of Homelessness Used in this Study

- Youth who reside in an emergency, transitional shelter;
- Youth who live in another family/friend's house due to loss of housing, economic hardship, domestic violence, or similar reason;
- Youth who live in a motel, hotel, structure or vehicle that is not a permanent nighttime residence;
- Youth who temporarily reside with an adult other than their parent or guardian because the parent is suffering financial hardship;
- "Couch surfers" (i.e., youth floating between temporary living situations in others' homes in the community).

Methods and Needs Assessment Strategy

Service Provider Interviews

SAYFA partner Asian Pacific Psychological Services (APPS) conducted interviews prior to organizing focus groups with West County service providers that come in contact with youth that fit in the above definition of homelessness to identify number of homeless youth and if possible. In particular, we conducted background interviews with Roberto Reyes, Homeless Resources Coordinator for Contra Costa County; staff working with homeless youth deployed through Opportunity West's office located at the Nevin Community Center; Contra Costa County Probation staff; and staff working in various programs at APPS and Lao Family Community Development, Inc. These interviews helped to frame the Focus Group instrument, and to narrow the scope of our needs assessment in significant ways that will be explained in the analysis section of this report.

Youth Focus Groups

APPS organized two focus groups of youth being served as clients or participants in existing APPS programs such as STEP/AHEAD (Case management and Youth Development), Project SUCCESS (AOD Prevention), Wrap Around/Mental Health (Treatment), and SEAYL (Youth Development) to clarify API homeless youth issues. Youth were given a stipend of \$25 for participating in the interview. Both focus groups were conducted at APPS' Richmond office.

It should be noted that APPS was simultaneously approached to conduct focus groups with the same youth demographic concerning Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), an effort of Contra Costa County spearheaded by Probation, with the assistance of a consultant from The Impact Fund. Due to time constraints in organizing separate focus groups, we decided to ask both sets of questions (for homeless issues and DMC issues) with each youth focus group. Both focus group question sets appear in the Appendices section of this report.

Additionally, since both sets of questions, together, paint complimentary pictures of the texture of life for the youth being interviewed, we have included summaries of responses for both sets of questions in the Appendices section, and will address all responses in the analysis section of this report.

Community Outreach

It was initially proposed to deploy youth from our leadership group, the Southeast Asian Young Leaders (SEAYL), in conducting outreach to housing projects, neighborhoods and places where youth hang out. In retrospect, this was unrealistic for the youth to accomplish with short notice and little time to prepare for such an initiative.

Data Collection and Analysis

Youth involved in programs for Southeast Asian and other API at-risk and high-risk youth were invited to participate in a 1-2 hour focus group at APPS' office on Macdonald Avenue in Richmond, CA. Youth who were interested were involved in STEP/AHEAD and Southeast Asian Young Leaders (SEAYL) youth groups. A total of 13 youth agreed to participate. All were ages 13-17, were Mien, Khmu, Lao or mixed Lao-Khmu. Youth lived in the cities of Richmond, San Pablo, El Cerrito and North Richmond. 8 were male, and 5 were female.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicities</i>	<i>Cities of Residence</i>
Male: 8	Age Range: 13-17	Khmu: 3	Richmond: 7
Female: 5		Mien: 6	San Pablo: 2
		Lao: 3	El Cerrito: 1
		Lao-Khmu mixed: 1	North Richmond: 3

Interviews were recorded with participant consent and, as all participants were minors, parental consent. These recordings were used to prepare summaries of focus groups, which are included in the Appendix. Youth received stipends of \$25 for their participation in the focus group.

Focus group summaries were analyzed for themes and recommendations were developed from those themes. Themes and recommendations are included in this findings paper.

Findings

Background of Respondents

The youth targeted in this study are members of families who are refugees from war-torn Southeast Asian countries such as Laos and Vietnam. Among the youth interviewed, many were born overseas, particularly refugee camps in Thailand, but the majority were born in the United States. Many recalled moving from various states and cities, and even among different families, before settling in West County.

Homelessness Themes

When respondents were asked what homelessness meant to them, responses reflected the general characteristics normally associated with the condition, such as an absence of housing, family support, employment, and education leading to living in your car or on the street. However, they initially denied that homelessness occurs among the Southeast Asian community, due to the nature of their inclusive extended family structure. Respondents stated that individuals in the Southeast Asian community are able to avoid homelessness because extended family members take them in during times of distress. In some cases, respondents mentioned that these individuals might benefit the family, often acting as caretakers for aging relatives or young children. It is also not uncommon for Southeast Asians to assert that “there is no homelessness in my community.”

However, according to this study, there are many other forms of homelessness other than living on the street. These include “couch surfing”, multiple families living in a single dwelling, and living for periods with extended family. All respondents agreed that most youth at some point were in living conditions resembling these definitions of homelessness. Several youth mentioned their experiences with “couch surfing,” staying out late with friends, sometimes too drunk or “messed up” to go home, and finding it more convenient to sleep over at a friend’s house instead. Others knew of young adults that could not afford rent, were evicted, kicked out by their parents, lost their jobs, or faced issues at home such as domestic violence or stern parental discipline that kept them away from home for periods. Several mentioned moving between homes of separated parents. Many recalled individuals, related or not, living with their family for long periods of time. Even though most youth say they know of people who can use extra help, including themselves, most youth mention that they would feel uncomfortable offering help to people outside their family for fear that people would deny needing assistance.

Several youth state that it is embarrassing for the Southeast Asian community to talk about social issues like homelessness. Only a few mentioned that some people do discuss homelessness, and ask for help. However, many respondents continued to assert that they do not think of multiple families or extended family that resides for periods of time with relatives as being homeless – that homelessness only counts if it means “being on the street.”

Language Themes

Nearly all youth respondents have at least one parent that does not speak English well or at all, and that they find it difficult at times to help their parents manage everyday issues. Many state that they accompany their parents from place to place to provide confidence and serve as interpreters. Increasingly it appears among the Southeast Asian community that this language disparity affects both the relationship between parent and child, access to services, but also the reliability and quality of services once accessed. Parents often do not know how to write their own signature and can only print their name, asking youth instead to help them write out their own signatures. Parents tend to rely on their children to interpret difficult adult issues like housing, finances, and health, instead of asking other adults for help, issues youth may only understand superficially, if at all.

Illustrating this trend, one youth stated how he often does not understand the advanced vocabulary in some settings, and does not know how to translate certain concepts, leading to misunderstandings and mistranslation.

Youth Life

Southeast Asian youth enjoy numerous healthy activities - from sports to video games, chatting online, listening to music, going to the mall, and hanging out with friends. However, many of these youth also mentioned taking part in high-risk activities, such as smoking marijuana and tobacco, taking drugs such as ecstasy, drinking alcohol, shoplifting, and going to adult parties and clubs as well as friends houses to “chill” or “kick it.”

Most youth stay in the immediate area to take part in these activities, such as Richmond, Berkeley, San Pablo, and Oakland, but some have traveled further distances such as Rodeo, Sacramento, Vallejo, San Jose, and San Francisco. Most travel further distances to attend house and hotel parties, as well as clubs where they have connections to sneak in, or where they can easily fade in with a group to avoid ID checks.

Community Issues

The most common community issues youth wanted to resolve were racism, violence, drugs, and prostitution. Many youth felt safe in their neighborhood, but were still afraid of being a target of violence and felt that money alone cannot stop violence. Several youth also mentioned the prevalence of drugs in their neighborhoods, sold and used even in front of their own houses. Youth respondents offered a variety of solutions to beautify their neighborhoods, such as an increased number of larger, affordable housing, entertainment places like Six Flags, taller buildings, and fancier malls.

Youth Programs

When asked what a youth program in their community should look like, youth respondents stated it must address multiple social issues, particularly helping youth find jobs, housing, stopping drugs use, gangs, and violence. Among all of these issues, youth felt that a jobs program was the most important in order to help people earn an income and keep them away from drugs. One youth in particular emphasized the importance of adults building a trusting relationship with the youth above all else. In addition, youth wanted a youth center for youth of all ethnicities, led by adult mentors and role models, and providing activities that are attractive to young people, like dancing, sports, physical activities, a recording studio, free food, field trips, performers and entertainment.

However, many youth expressed that they feel comfortable with only certain individuals, particularly if come from same “ghetto” background - not upper class backgrounds found at other youth centers. Moreover, they felt uncomfortable in several existing youth centers (like the YMCA in Richmond) being the only Asian person among a majority of blacks and Latinos. In addition, safe transportation and neighborhood location was brought up as a major obstacle in getting to youth centers. Many youth find it difficult and unsafe moving across neighborhoods that are not their own, or parts of town where they are recognized as outsiders.

Youth stated that outreach efforts to other Southeast Asian youth would be effective by reaching youth at schools, attracting them with incentives such as money or food, and outreach that emphasizes the fun activities and youth-friendly social environment of a particular program or place. Others mentioned that a youth center would be more appealing if it were open all night, and if all their friends were already part of it.

Youth and Schools

Youth were asked to describe their current sentiments about school. Most youth felt that teachers failed to connect with their students and youth in general, are unfriendly, and pick on certain youth. Many youth state that it depended on the attitude of the teacher to

make the subject fun, and that they connected better with teachers from similar backgrounds of hardship. Youth also stated similar negative feelings for their school counselors, many of whom they felt took out their own frustrations on youth. Illustrating the lack of support these youth felt, one youth complained that their school had only one counselor. All youth felt that teachers and counselors could be more supportive, ensure they listen to their students, but be firm enough to motivate them to do better and push them to graduate. In terms of outside academic support, youth mentioned that schools provided tutors but they did not seek assistance because they did not know the tutors personally and preferred tutors they already had a relationship with, such as those provided through community organizations such as APPS.

All youth respond that they have thought about attending college, particularly community or state colleges. Some youth mention thinking about vocational schools or pursuing internships at companies like Pixar and WyoTech. Youth state that parents have mixed feelings about youth pursuing higher education. Some youth mention their parents comparing them to other high achieving students and pressure them to meet those academic expectations. Other youth say that their parents want them to get jobs right away instead of going to school so they can contribute to the family economically and sooner. Most youth state they would most likely try to hold a job and attend school at the same time.

All youth mention their hesitancy about the reality of attending college, addressing concerns such as being away from home, being removed from friends, and inability to cope alone. Moreover all youth felt unprepared to get into college, primarily because they feel they lack good grades, test scores, community service hours, and internship experiences. Youth state they do not know the details and requirements for getting into college, and do not know where to get assistance on issues such as financial aid and scholarships. They all indicated they would attend a workshop on financial aid and college applications – however, they stressed the need for it to be engaging, coming from college students who have been through similar hardships and come from similar backgrounds.

Juvenile Justice System

All youth respondents had been or are currently involved in the juvenile justice system, varying from being in contact with police to being on probation. Youth were asked to describe their experiences in the system. Many of the youth have participated in Juvenile Drug Court, and stated the benefits such as receiving incentives for progress and a clean record upon graduation. However, they feel the benefits are only temporary, and that youth return back to contexts where drug use is common upon graduation. Almost all youth knew someone who had lived in a group home. Several other youth spoke about their experiences on Probation and the lessons they learned from the officers there. However, youth criticized the effectiveness of Probation. While probation is there to catch youth when they violate rules, it fails to provide adequate rehabilitation assistance or supervision of progress, and Probation officers do not know how to communicate with or work with their parents.

Referring back to the language disparity, most youth agree on the difficulty of maneuvering the juvenile justice system when their parents do not speak English well or at all. Most youth mention their own facility of taking advantage of the language disparity when their parents rely on them for translation or interpretation, often purposefully mistranslating to parents to lower the severity of the situation. On the other hand, youth felt that juvenile justice programs should be connected to places like APPS, where their family feels more comfortable with adults of the same ethnic and linguistic background who can translate or interpret and help them through the situation.

When asked what kind of programs youth would want to see as part of the juvenile justice system, several youth mentioned placing youth in programs that keep them out of trouble, provide fun youth activities, that challenges their thinking, and makes them choose better alternatives. Most youth state that probation does not provide any kind of similar activities.

All youth state that they do not trust law enforcement. Many youth feel that officials misinterpret situations, subject youth to racial profiling, accuse them of being in gangs, and several report being physically harassed by police. Youth stated that law enforcement judge youth based on stereotypes, “colors,” gangs, or ethnicity, making them feel uncomfortable whenever they are around. Youth also mention that they receive harsher punishment or treatment from police compared to other youth, particularly of other ethnicities. Several youth bring up the possibility of hiring police and probation officers of similar ethnicities, but fear that these law enforcement officials may end up being more lenient on them. However, most youth believe they would feel more comfortable if the officer was Southeast Asian rather than white, Latino or African-American.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

Recommendation 1) Raise awareness of homelessness in all its forms in the Southeast Asian and other API communities.

After discussing the various forms homelessness can take with youth from the Southeast Asian community, it is clear that the topic is both stigmatized and misunderstood in the community, and that cultural attitudes about homelessness are perhaps making it difficult to assess both the dimensions and the scale of homelessness in the Southeast Asian community. In order to understand this issue and its impacts on API communities, there needs to be more dialogue among community members about the perceptions of homelessness and how it relates to actual living conditions for many Southeast Asian families. Further, more openness about homelessness issues in the community will make it easier to assess needs in the future, as well as increase access to resources for families and individuals at imminent risk of or already homeless.

Recommendation 2) Raise awareness of, and reduce stigma around, related issues that place the Southeast Asian and other API communities at-risk for homelessness.

Increasing awareness among Southeast Asians of, and willingness to discuss, social issues, such as employment, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, housing rights, gambling, etc. – can help prevent problems that can lead to homelessness. Homelessness is one of several highly stigmatized issues in this community, many of which are related to each other, and increase the risk for homelessness.

Recommendation 3) Increase knowledge of resources available to Southeast Asian and other API youth and families.

Increased awareness of services and agencies that Southeast Asian families can approach in order to address these social issues that can lead to homelessness.

Recommendation 4) Provide homelessness resources for the Southeast Asian and other API communities through current providers working in these communities.

Recommendation 5) Increase the number of trained Southeast Asian and other API staff capable of interpreting for or providing direct services to Southeast Asian youth and families through workforce development, training and more targeted hiring practices.

- Integrate trained Southeast Asian interpreters into all system providers to avoid the

dependence on youth translating and the resulting miscommunication that occurs.

Recommendation 6) Cultural competency trainings for adults interacting with Southeast Asian and other API youth and families.

- Encourage adults that interact with youth the most – particularly teachers, counselors, and law enforcement officers– to become better youth advocates through cultural competency training, and increase interactions with entire family instead of focusing on one individual.

Recommendation 7) Expand services and programming targeting Southeast Asian and other API youth to provide safe alternative activities in evening hours.

- Create youth programs that run into evening hours, giving youth safe and welcoming alternatives to attending parties, clubs, and other at-risk activities without adequate adult supervision.

Recommendation 8) Raise awareness of needs of Southeast Asian and other API youth among current youth service providers.

- Re-evaluate current youth programs to determine their inclusion of Southeast Asian youth in programming and staffing, and what steps need to be taken so that Southeast Asian youth feel accepted and embraced in the larger community.

Recommendations for WCCUSD Homeless Programs

Target resources to agencies working with API youth at-risk for homelessness.

Cross-train on cultural competency and available resources in the school district.

Hire Southeast Asian staff in the future.

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Appendices

Focus Group Instruments

API Homeless Focus Group Questions

1. Tell me a bit about how your families ended up living in Richmond or West Contra Costa County?
2. Define homelessness. Is there such a thing as homelessness in the Southeast Asian community?
3. What are some common ideas and attitudes about homelessness in your community?
4. Are any of your parents not able to use English, either not at all or not very well? How does this affect you and your family's abilities to get around or meet needs?
5. Have any of you ever had issues with housing, either as individuals or as families? [describe some examples: emergency or transition shelters; live with another family or friend due to loss of housing, economic hardship, domestic violence, or other reason; live in a motel, hotel, structure or vehicle that is not a permanent nighttime residence; temporary residence with an adult other than a parent or legal guardian because of financial difficulties; couch surfing; etc.]
6. Do you know any other Southeast Asian youth that are having issues with housing similar to what we just discussed?

Disproportionate Minority Contact Questions

Personal

1. What are your favorite hobbies?
2. Do you like to like to do in your spare time?
3. What kind of music do you listen to?
4. What do you do when you hang out with friends?

Community

1. When you hang out with friends, do you stay in your community?
If so, what do you do?
If not, where do you go?
2. If money was no option, what would you like to see in your community?
3. If you had to only have 1 major program in your community, what would it look like?
Who would it reach?
Why would it reach that group of people?
How would it do outreach to the community?
What would it need to have in order to be appealing to you?

School

1. When you were in school, what was your favorite part?
2. Why did you like _____ in school?

3. Did you feel supported by your teachers and counselors in school?
If yes, what made them supportive?
If no, what could have made them more supportive?
4. Have you ever thought about going to college?
Do you know how to apply for college?
Has anyone ever talked to you about going to college or vocational school?

Juvenile Justice System

1. What are some reasons you think young people of color get involved in the juvenile justice system?
2. How do you feel about the programs in juvenile hall—are they useful to helping you think about some of the decisions you made in the community?
3. What programs would you like to see made a part of the justice system?

4. Do you know young people who have been in group homes before?
5. How can trust be developed with law enforcement?

Employment

1. If you are of working age, would you like to get a job?
2. Have you ever worked before?
3. What kinds of jobs would you like to have now?
4. What kinds of jobs/careers would you like to have when you grow up?
5. Do you know how to get there?

Consent Forms

Focus Group Youth Consent

The Southeast Asian Youth & Family Alliance (SAYFA) is a community advocacy and policy development collaborative. Asian Pacific Psychological Services (APPS) is the fiscal agent for the Alliance. One of the Coalition's primary aims is to conduct research on factors that influence youths' behaviors, community health, well-being and resources—primarily youths between the ages of 10 and 17 who are Southeast Asian.

We are requesting your consent/approval to participate in a research project that will explore some of the issues facing the Southeast Asian community in West Contra Costa County. You are agreeing to participate in a focus group discussion. Because you are under the age of 18, we must also obtain your parent or guardian's permission to allow us to include you in this focus group. We will be asking about your experiences and perspectives on issues you face in the community, at school, with employment, and the juvenile justice system. With your permission, the focus group will be recorded by note takers and an audio-recording device. Your answers are confidential, and your identity will remain private and protected in any use of information acquired from them through this project. Anyone outside the project evaluation team will not have access to the information that you provide.

The possible risks of your participation in this study are minimal and may include emotional discomfort such as stirring up uncomfortable feelings and possible loss of privacy. A researcher will be available to address any questions or concerns that you may have about the study. Participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. You will receive a \$25 stipend for participating in the research project, and will receive this even if you decide to withdraw from the focus group.

If you have any other questions about this project you can call the number given below. All answers that you give will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. This means anything you tell us will be protected. However, the sponsor's of the project may view these records to make sure they are done correctly. Also, we must report to the state suspected cases of child, elder or dependent adult abuse, or if you tell us that you plan to seriously hurt yourself or others.

Although no immediate direct benefit is being provided for you, you will be helping our efforts in learning more about the Southeast Asian community that could lead to programs in the community.

If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to my questions or have comments or complaints about my participation in this study, you may contact: Beatrice Lee, Executive Director, at 510/835-2777 x13, Asian Pacific Psychological Services, 431 30th Street, Suite 6A, Oakland, CA 94609.

I understand that I have been selected by to participate in focus group. I understand that all participant interview responses may be included in a written report that will in **no way** identify the participants. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent/approval, and that I can refuse to take part further in the study at any time. In addition, I will receive a \$25 stipend for participating in the focus group.

I agree to be part of this study with the understanding that such consent/approval does not take away any of my legal rights, nor does it release the investigators or the institution or any employee or agent thereof from liability for negligence.

I consent to and authorize the following:

1. I grant APPS and SAYFA permission to use the interview results, and specifically for the purpose of utilizing participant feedback.
2. SAYFA and APPS shall have the right to use, reproduce, distribute to the public, perform publicly, and display publicly the written report resulting from this data.
3. Reports and any material that result from the focus group will be considered copyrighted product of APPS and SAYFA.

Signed _____

Date _____

Focus Group Parental Consent

The Southeast Asian Youth & Family Alliance (SAYFA) is a community advocacy and policy development collaborative. Asian Pacific Psychological Services (APPS) is the fiscal agent for the Alliance. One of the Coalition's primary aims is to conduct research on factors that influence youths' behaviors, community health, well-being and resources—primarily youths between the ages of 10 and 17 who are Southeast Asian.

We are requesting consent/approval for your child's participation in a research project that will explore some of the issues facing the Southeast Asian community in West Contra Costa County. Your child has agreed to participate in a focus group discussion. Because your child is under the age of 18, we must obtain your permission to allow us to include your child in a focus group. We will be asking about your child's experiences and perspectives on issues they face in the community, at school, with employment, and the juvenile justice system. With you and your child's permission, the focus group will be recorded by note takers and an audio-recording device. Your child's answers are confidential, and their identity will remain private and protected in any use of information acquired from them through this project. Anyone outside the project evaluation team will not have access to the information that you provide.

The possible risks of your child's participation in this study are minimal and may include emotional discomfort such as stirring up uncomfortable feelings and possible loss of privacy. A researcher will be available to address any questions or concerns that you or your child may have about the study. Participation in this project is voluntary and your child may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. Your child will receive a \$25 stipend for participating in the research project, and will receive this even if he/she decides to withdraw from the focus group.

If you have any other questions about this project you can call the number given below. All answers that your child gives will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. This means anything he/she tells us will be protected. However, the sponsor's of the project may view these records to make sure they are done correctly. Also, we must report to the state suspected cases of child, elder or dependent adult abuse, or if your child tells us that they plan to seriously hurt themselves or others.

Although no immediate direct benefit is being provided for you or your child, your child will be helping our efforts in learning more about the Southeast Asian community that could lead to programs in the community.

If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to my questions or have comments or complaints about my participation in this study, you may contact: Beatrice Lee, Executive Director, at 510/835-2777 x13, Asian Pacific Psychological Services, 431 30th Street, Suite 6A, Oakland, CA 94609.

I understand that my child has been selected by to participate in focus group. I understand that all participant interview responses may be included in a written report that will in **no way** identify the participants. I have been advised that my child is free to withdraw my assent/approval, and that I can refuse to take part further in the study at any time. In addition, my child will receive a \$25 stipend for participating in the focus group.

I agree to allow my child to be part of this study with the understanding that such assent/approval does not take away any of my child's legal rights, nor does it release the investigators or the institution or any employee or agent thereof from liability for negligence.

I consent to and authorize the following:

4. I grant APPS and SAYFA permission to use the interview results, and specifically for the purpose of utilizing participant feedback.
5. SAYFA and APPS shall have the right to use, reproduce, distribute to the public, perform publicly, and display publicly the written report resulting from this data.
6. Reports and any material that result from the focus group will be considered copyrighted product of APPS and SAYFA.

Signed _____

Date _____

Sign-In Sheets

Focus Group: API Homeless Focus Group #1

Date: 06.19.06

Location: APPS Richmond

Facilitator: Sean Kirkpatrick

Notetaker: Sean Kirkpatrick

Also in the room: Ping Pong Vilaisouk and Sang Saephan

	Gender:	Age:	Ethnicity	City of Residence:
P1	Female	16	Lao	Richmond
P2	Female	15	Mien	Richmond
P3	Male	17	Mien	San Pablo
P4	Male	13	Lao	San Pablo
P5	Male	16	Khmu	Richmond
P6	Female	15	Lao	Richmond
P7	Male	14	Khmu	Richmond

Focus Group: API Homeless Focus Group #2

Date: 06.21.06

Location: APPS Richmond

Facilitator: Sean Kirkpatrick

Notetaker: Quelani Penland

Also in the room: Ping Pong Vilaisouk

	Name:	Age:	Ethnicity	City of Residence:
P1	Male	16	Khmu	Richmond
P2	Male	16	Mien	El Cerrito
P3	Female	14	Mien	North Richmond
P4	Male	17	Mien	North Richmond
P5	Female	14	Mien	Richmond
P6	Male	17	Lao & Khmu	North Richmond

Focus Group Summaries

API Homeless Focus Group #1 SUMMARY

Monday, June 19th 2006

A: Facilitator Sean Kirkpatrick
B: Facilitator Ping Pong Vilaisouk
C: Facilitator Sang Saephan

P1: 16, Lao female, Richmond resident
P2: 15, Mien female, Central Richmond resident
P3: 17, Mien male, San Pablo resident
P4: 13, Lao male, San Pablo resident
P5: 16, Khmu male, Richmond resident
P6: 15, Lao female, Richmond resident
P7: 14, Khmu male, Richmond resident

Q1: How did your family end up living in West County?

- most of the parents from various countries in Southeast Asia (Laos, Thailand), several youth lived in different US states and cities before settling in Richmond. A few youth have separated or divorced parents. Some youth were born overseas, others youth born in America.

Q2: What does it mean to be homeless?

- Youth responses ranged from having no house, abandonment, no money, nothing to eat, no clothes, living and surviving on the street, or in your car.

Q3: Is there such a thing as homelessness in the Southeast Asian community?

- One youth says no, because people have family to live with. Several youth recalls one homeless person who was Khmu, whose brother kicked him out, and he slept in a dumpster and died.

Q3a: [Facilitator provides several definitions of homelessness, including “couch surfing”, having multiple families to live in same house, and living with extended family. Asks youth if they know of anyone under these circumstances]

- All youth respond that it is common for youth their age to be homeless at some time, under given circumstances. Many also know of multiple families living together.

Q4: What are some common ideas or attitudes about homelessness in your community? How do people feel about it?

- One youth says that many of their families cannot help being in that circumstance, coming to America, cannot get a job, cannot speak English. Several youth feel bad about it, feel that they need help.

Q5: Is it easy for people in the Asian community to talk about having issues like homelessness?

- Several youth state that it is embarrassing, others mention that some people do talk about it, and do ask for help. One mentions that Mien families do not think of multiple families or extended family living as being homeless – that homelessness only counts as being on the

street. Many youth say that they did not think about those circumstances as being “homeless”, often have family that “visits” for 3 weeks, several months, etc. One youth asks whether you can be homeless for a couple hours, if parents kick you out, etc.

Q6: Are any of your parents not able to speak English very well?

- Most youth say that their parents cannot speak English, although some parents are multi-lingual.

Q7: How does your parents inability to speak English affect you?

- Several youth say it is a big issue, that they often accompany their parents to several places to help them understand, provide confidence, serve as translators.

Q8: Have any of you have issues with housing?

- Several youth state that they’ve moved around, eviction, lack of money to pay rent, parents domestic issues making living situations complicated, moving from one parent to another parent’s place.
- A couple youth have “couch surfed”, stayed at a friend’s or cousin’s place
- Another youth once lived with two families, total of 13 people, one bathroom, two bedrooms; another youth lived with uncle’s family when their family first arrived in US
- One youth says Asian people do have low income, do have welfare, apply for Section 8, but do not admit homelessness, will take in youth no matter how old the youth is

Q9: In the various Southeast Asian communities, are there a lot of youth who have similar issues with housing?

- One youth mentions their sister, dropped out of school, stays with her friends/cousins
- Another youth mentions their family, constantly moving
- Another youth mentions a friend who stays at uncle’s house, another person mentions adult children living with their parents
- Most youth mention that everyone has been homeless at some point

Q10: So do any of you know families or have friends that might be able to use some extra help or assistance?

- Most youth say yes, including themselves.

Minorities in the System

Q1: What are your favorite hobbies?

- Sports, cooking, swimming, crabbing, camping, soccer, video games, fishing, internet, keeping in touch with friends using MySpace sites
- Several youth say they do not shop as a hobby because they do not have money for it

Q2: What kind of music do you listen to?

- R&B, rap, love songs, Asian songs, karaoke songs, hip hop, Alternative, instrumental

Q3: What do you guys like to do, hang out with friends?

- Youth say that they used to smoke weed, drink alcohol, beer, liquor, will sneak into friends house to smoke. Sometimes sneak in to movies.

Q4: When you guys hang out with your friends, do you usually stay local (Richmond, San Pablo)? What do you do when you’re there?

- Sometimes travels to San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Sacramento, Vallejo
- Smokes, drinks, pop pills like Ecstasy
- Also sneak into clubs, particularly if you know people who work there

- Also go to house parties, usually in Richmond or Oakland, around 100 people
- One youth passed with fake ID to the San Pablo Casino

Q5: If money was not a problem, what would you like to see in your community?

- Wants to see no racism, no violence, no drugs, no prostitution
- Wants to see more homeless shelters, more affordable housing

Q6: If you could have one major program in your community, what would it look like? Who would it reach, why them, what would it need to have to be appealing for you?

- Youth center for all youth, all ethnicities, place for youth to hang out, like APPS, have adult mentors to have youth follow their lead, provide info so youth know what is good and bad
- Free food, have a park in the back for people to hang out, activities

Q7: There is a YMCA in Richmond – and we hear that a lot of Southeast Asian youth do not feel comfortable going there, why?

- Feel comfortable with certain people, particularly if come from same “ghetto” background and not upper class backgrounds that other youth centers have
- Also not going to feel welcome or comfortable being the only Asian person among a majority of blacks and Latinos.

Q8: Do other schools that you attend have youth centers?

- Helms does

Q9: How would you reach out to other Asian youth to get them to come?

- Tell them about the program, opening party, persuade them that it is fun, activities that are attractive to young people, like dancing room, sports, physical activities

Q10: If there was a youth center for you, would you do that instead of your current activities of drinking and smoking?

- All youth say yes, but would like it to be all night, but said that some people might not go if their friends do not go.
- One youth mentions that other youth would come for money.

Q11: Some of you left the old habits of drinking and smoking behind, why?

- One youth responds that the change occurred once they came to APPS, realized that there was more to life than drinking and smoking, but hard to open up at first

Q12: What about trainings, poetry slam, or talent shows, dancing contests, etc.?

- One youth mentions that people are interested in that type of stuff, but the first thing that has to happen is to build relationship with the youth, and in order to build relationship, you have to have something that they want, like field trips, activities, stipends, bring them in, work with them, then let them join programs so they feel guilty if they don't come
- Another youth mentions separate activities for girls and boys
- Another youth mentions rap, or having a studio for youth to make records

Q13: Is safety an issue?

- Drug dealers, thugs, but also transportation needs are mentioned, some youth downplay the “colors” you should wear

Q14: What is your favorite part of school? Do the teachers connect with you?

- Some youth mention lunch, in between classes
- One youth likes weight training, football but they quit because couldn't afford it
- Do not think teachers connect with youth, think some are racist

- Schools have tutors but they do not go because they do not know people there, would rather go to APPS, a lot safer too

Q15: How many of you are thinking about college?

- Most youth thinking about college, particularly Contra Costa Community College or Middle College, but voice being hesitant, not sure if will meet people in common with them, hesitant about being alone

Q16: Do you know how to apply, have the skills or the knowledge to go to college?

- Many youth would like help applying to colleges, would like touring colleges, have siblings that are in college, have friends in Middle College
- Others mention that they have low grades, difficulty applying because of them

Q17: Do you feel that your parents understand or are supportive of you going to school?

- One youth mentions that parents push them to go to certain schools, comparing their children to other high achieving children and pressuring them to meet those expectations
- Many youth say that their parents want them to get jobs right away, but when they don't have a job, then they tell you to stay with school

Q18: Is it important for you to stay in school as long as possible?

- One youth mentions that they are hesitant about moving forward in school, wants to stay with their friends, do not want to be by themselves, friends will persuade you not to go to school if you are faced with a decision

Q19: Has anyone talked to you about going to college or vocational school besides APPS staff?

- One youth says that their parents do talk to them about college, comparing them to other youth who are successful, but mentions that they phrase it so that if they go to college it makes the parents look good.
- Several youth ask facilitators what college is like, what you do in college

Juvenile Justice System

Q1: What are some reasons young people of color get involved in the juvenile justice system?

- Drug influence, poverty, involvement in gangs
- Minorities live in poor neighborhood, are poor, so they steal because they are desperate
- Stress, people get depressed, do things that are not rational

Q2: How many of you have ever been on probation?

- At least 2 or 3 youth respond to have been on probation before or currently, either contact police or probation officers

Q3: How has your experience been with probation, juvenile justice officers, system?

- One youth says they've learned their lesson, that it is scary
- Another youth mentions that probation is always there to catch you if you violate a rule, but is not there to help you, do not know how to help juveniles, do not know how to work with the parents, to provide necessary resources, instead tell you to do things to rehabilitate you, but do not supervise your progress, you do it on your own

Q3a: Is any of your experiences related to the fact that your parents do not speak English well? Is it more difficult for Southeast Asian youth?

- Most youth seem to agree that it is more difficult, others mention that their parents often do not even have a signature, only print their name, youth often help their parents write out their own signatures.

- Another youth mentions that some youth take advantage of the language difficulty, for instance youth will translate for their parents at a meeting with officials, will lie to parents since they do not know what is going on

Q4: What kind of programs would you like to see involved with probation?

- One youth mentions SEAYL, that it keeps you out of trouble, provides activities, makes you think different, that it is fun, makes you feel guilty about doing bad things
- Probation does not have any kinds of those activities

Q5: Do you know people who have been involved in group homes before?

- Almost all youth mention they know someone involved in group homes, even at a very young age (one youth mentions a 9-yr old).
- Know both Southeast Asians and other minorities in the system

Q6: Do you trust law enforcement people?

- Youth all respond negatively, that they misinterpret things, act differently whenever police are around even when nothing is wrong, do not feel comfortable even talking to police; also heard about two people imitating as police who raped two women after pulling them over, hear or see several cops that deal and use drugs, etc.

Q7: Have you heard of racial profiling? Do you feel that probation officers, police, etc. treat people differently because of their race or ethnicity?

- Two youth had experience with cops pulling them over because of racial profiling, suspicious of them being involved with gangs, minor offenses
- Another youth had a relative arrested and physically harassed by a policeman

Q8: What would the police or probation department need to do to gain trust? Do they need to hire more people of color (from Asian community? From African American community? Etc)

- One youth mentions knowing one police officer who was Vietnamese, other youth mention that San Pablo police do have a few Asian police officers. However, most youth feel it does make a difference, they would feel more comfortable if the officer was Lao than white or African-American.

Q9: Do you feel that there are police in your neighborhoods that are respected or liked or feared in your community?

- Some youth say there are some police that can be trusted, but if they drive by and watch from a distance, then they feel that they cannot trust them; also notice that they receive harsher punishment or treatment from police compared to other youth, particularly of other ethnicities (white), that the police pick on the wrong people

Q10: What do the young people in your neighborhood or school getting in trouble for the most?

- Smoking marijuana, cussing out teachers, talking too much or disruptive in class, tagging. One youth also mentions that people judge the way they dress and walk.

Q11: If you are of working age, would you like to get a job?

- Almost all youth say "yes", because they can make money, keeps them busy with something to do. Several of them have had summer jobs, working in family business, tabling at restaurants, selling merchandise, babysitting, etc.

Q12: What kind of jobs would you like to have now?

- Several of them want a good paying job, one mentions wanting to teach younger kids, others mention a variety of activities such as working in restaurant, landscaping, helping the

community, phone calling, salesperson, etc. Anything as long as it pays them enough cash, also if they provide school credits.

Q13: What kind of careers would you like to have when you grow up?

- Several responses include being a doctor or doctor's assistant, working for FBI.

API Homeless Focus Group #2 SUMMARY

Wednesday, June 21th 2006

A: Facilitator Sean Kirkpatrick

B: Facilitator Ping Pong Vilaisouk

P1: 16, Khmu male, Richmond resident

P2: 16, Mien male, El Cerrito resident

P3: 14, Mien female, North Richmond resident

P4: 17, Mien male, North Richmond resident

P5: 14, Mien female, Richmond resident

P6: 17, Lao & Khmu male, North Richmond resident

Homelessness Questions

Q1: How did your family end up in Richmond, West County area?

- Several families from Southeast Asian countries (Laos, Thailand), two youth born overseas (Thailand), several youth born in US, lived in different cities first before coming to Richmond.

Q2: What do you think of when you hear the word “homeless”?

- Responses include no house, no money, collecting cans to make money, no family to care for them, living on the street, no education, bums, poor people

Q3: Is there any such thing as homelessness in the Southeast Asian community [here]?

- Most youth say they do not think so – one youth mentions that they probably have family that they live with.

Q3a: [Facilitator provides several definitions of homelessness, including “couch surfing”, having multiple families to live in same house, and living with extended family. Asks youth if they know of anyone under these circumstances]

- All youth respond positively. Some examples that they see include multiple families in one home, people sleeping at other people’s house for more than one or two weeks.

Q4: What are some common attitudes about homelessness in the community?

- Some youth say people are not bothered by it, that they are used to it, that sometimes multiple families is a good thing, to take care of aging relatives or young children

Q5: Are any of your parents not able to use English very well?

- All youth have at least one parent that cannot speak English very well, although two youth state that their fathers understand and speak English adequately

Q6: Does it affect the way your parents access services?

- Several youth say that their parents use the youths to translate, that the parents do not want to tell other family members or ask for help, depend on their children to go to places to talk issues like Section A housing, etc.

Q7: How do you feel when parents ask you to translate? Do you feel comfortable?

- One youth says he does not understand the long words and does not even know how to translate, just pretends that he knows what he’s talking about.

Q8: Have any of you had issues with housing, finding a place for family to stay? Couch surfing, etc?

- One youth describes staying out late with friends, “too messed up to go home”, prefer to sleep over, go home only to get their clothes, repeating cycle for 2 weeks. Another youth says that they have several other people that live with his family, even though not related, staying for over a month. Another youth mentions that her aunt and child stayed with her family for several months.

Q8a: Do you know people who have had similar issues with housing/having place to stay?

- One youth knew one 18yr old who was kicked out of his home, stole to survive and live on his own, find a job. Another knew a youth whose mother kicked him out of his home, ended up being taken in by his sister. Several youth say that it is common to not go home, that they are too drunk or “messed up” to go home, others just want to hang out with their friends. A couple youth say they do know someone who could use school supplies, bus passes, other forms of help. One youth in particular feels uncomfortable to ask if people need help if they are homeless, as if you were talking down to them because they need help, that people are proud, do not want to admit needing help.

Minorities in the System

Q1: What are your favorite hobbies?

- Sports, sleeping, camping, hiking, gambling, eating, going to parties, talking on the phone, hanging out with friends, two youth have MySpace pages, writing poems, drink, smoke, drawing

Q2: What kind of music do you listen to?

- Country, Lao music, rap, R&B, hip-hop, techno, slow jams

Q3: What do you do when you hang out with your friends?

- Shoplifting, although some youth say that they do not shoplift anymore. Other youth say they talk, drink, smoke, take some pills, although several youth say they do not do it anymore. Another youth says they play basketball.

Q4: When you hang out with your friends, do you stay in the community or go someplace else?

- Most youth stay in Richmond and friends houses, but also Hilltop, Berkeley, Oakland, Rodeo, San Francisco, Stockton, Sacramento, San Pablo, Fremont, Vallejo, Union City, Milpitas, San Jose, states that there is not much to do in Richmond. One youth says they only stay here, limited to buses.

Q5: Are you going to parties? Clubs? Where do people hang out?

- House and hotel parties, depends on where and who hosts the party, someone rents room and hosts huge parties, also goes outside for parties when weather is warmer. Sometimes clubs where they have connections, 16+ clubs, or fade in with a group so ID is not checked. One youth states that they notice groups of youth hanging out at the Richmond BART.

Q6: If money was not a problem, what would you like to see in your community?

- Several youth mention wanting entertainment places like Six Flags, taller buildings, fancier malls, larger apartments and housing. One youth mentions that he wants his neighborhood to be fixed, that it is dirty, too much violence, always hearing gunshots while walking down the street, scary for them. Other youth agree that they’ve heard gunshots nearby, felt afraid.

- However, they feel safe in the neighborhood, but are afraid that there might be someone who has something against them, might kill them. All the youth know someone or heard of someone who has been shot, for reasons like the color you wear, the kind of car, etc.
- Feel that money cannot buy trust to stop violence.

Q7: If you had one program to choose out of all of those, what would you like to see? How would you reach those people?

- Most youth would like a combination of all the changes, helping youth finding jobs, housing, stop drugs, get dealers off the street, stopping gangs and violence, etc. Wants programs for all youth. Several youth mention the problem of drugs throughout their neighborhoods, even in front of their own houses. State that it is hard to stop drugs, that people will use whatever materials available to make and use drugs. To choose one, they said that a jobs program would help people make money, keep them away from drugs, but not necessarily will stop gangs.

Q8: What are the best ways to reach people about your program? What would make it attractive to them?

- Would reach youth at schools, attract them with money, free food, field trips, keep them off the street for a couple hours, have performers and entertainment, any fun activities. However, one youth mentions that their friends would rather smoke and drink to feel good than to do activities.

Q9: What is your favorite part of school?

- Responses include lunch, biology, P.E., math. One youth mentions that depends who is teaching and what friends are in your class that makes it fun. One youth mentions that the cafeteria food is not good, another youth mentions that they only have 15 minute lunch.

Q10: How do you feel about your teachers and counselors?

- Some youth mention that they like some teachers, one youth mentions a teacher from similar hard backgrounds. Most youth, however, mention that their teachers are not friendly, pick out certain youth, other teachers do not speak English well, several of them are dirty and not hygienic. As for counselors, one youth mentions that their entire school only has one counselor, some are nice and understanding, others are not, take out frustration on youth. Another youth mentions that they had to switch counselors from Latino counselor who was not friendly, to white counselor who was more helpful.

Q11: What could teachers and counselors do differently to support you?

- Have only nicer people to fill those roles, listen to the youth, but be firm enough to motivate you to do better, push them to graduate.

Q12: Have you thought about college?

- All youth respond that they have thought about college, either community college then transferring to SF State, Chico State, UC Berkeley, other state colleges. Some youth mention going to vocational school, internships at companies like Pixar, WyoTech, etc.

Q13: Do you feel like you're prepared to apply for college?

- All youth feel unprepared, have to meet community service expectations, have good grades, internship experience. Do not know the qualifications for getting into community college, whether you need GED or high school diploma, details about middle college etc. One youth mentions that they are thinking about joining the Navy to get money for college. Most other youth ask about needing help for financial aid, or scholarships, do not know where to get help for that. Would come to a workshop on how to apply for financial aid, college

applications, but has to be engaging, especially college students who have been through gangs and jail just like them.

Q14: Given the choice between going to school or getting a job right away, what would you do?

- Some youth say that their parents talk to them about going to school, compare them to other youth who have good jobs and degree. Most youth say that they would try to both job and going to school at the same time, but would rather go to school to make more money in the end.

Q15: Have any of you been involved in the juvenile justice system?

- Every youth responds that they have been involved in the justice system.

Q16: What are some of the reasons why young people of color get involved in the juvenile justice system?

- Youth say that youth like them are poor, have no money to spend, so they go out to steal or commit crimes to make money, or also rob out of jealousy, wanting certain items that other people have. Also involved in crime due to drugs. One youth also mentions there is peer pressure to do things when involved in a gang, to prove that you belong in the gang. Also feel like minorities get picked on by other minorities as well as whites (particularly police), that they also do not receive help from other ethnicities when they need it.

Q17: How do you feel about the juvenile justice programs?

- One youth talks about his experience in juvenile justice system, that it is noisy. None of the youth have been involved in youth camps or ranches. Other youth have been involved in drug court, received lots of incentives, gift certificates for being good, and clear your record completely once you graduate. However, they feel that youth go into drug court, finish with good behavior, but then return back to drug use.

Q18: Is it good that juvenile justice programs are connected to places like APPS to help your parents, etc?

- Youth says yes, family feels more comfortable to talk to someone who can translate and are of the same ethnicity.

Q19: What kind of programs would you like to see as part of probation or juvenile justice?

- Youth felt that juvenile hall is boring, only let you outside a couple times, bathroom situation is not good (no toilets in their own room during lockdown). One youth describes typical day of being in juvenile hall. Only two activities to do – basketball or watch TV, does not think that they should have better activities otherwise people will want to come back.

Q20: Do you know people who have been in group homes before?

- Two youth say they have known a couple of people in group homes.

Q21: What should be done to develop trust with law enforcement? Do people in your community trust the police?

- Youth say that nobody trusts the police, throw things at police cars and cussing them out. One youth mentions that people need to stop selling drugs first, another youth mentions that they need to hire different kinds of cops, not sure if they want Lao speaking police because think Lao youth will feel that they will be more lenient on them, will get away with more things. But mainly do not feel they can trust any police, that they are corrupt or “smurkish”, one youth describes one cop who took away his lunch and threw it to the ground. Feels that police should not judge youth based on stereotypes, colors, gangs, ethnicity, have experienced numerous targeting by police based on those stereotypes.