

Portage County

Portage County Hmong Needs Assessment – Four Focus Groups Compilation 2-28-02

Brenda B. Janke, Interim Family Living Educator, Portage Co. UW-Extension

Please think about your life experiences and how you learn best. How and where would you like to learn in your community?

Elders/Elderly – We're very limited by our Language, vision, memory, poor health, sadness, lack of driving, etc....but we're still interested in some topics.
We would like to learn via the Hmong radio station!

Youth –

- Peer education
- Youth center
- Boys and girls clubs
- Tutoring younger children
- Being tutored

What challenges and issues are you seeing in your local Hmong community?

Elders/Elderly –

1. Language!! - This affects us tremendously in that we can't be normal. We can't drive and participate. We can't be involved in the community.
2. Poor Health in the US – This has seemed to have led to a lot of sadness as expressed by this group...feelings of stress, hopelessness, depression, etc. One woman wonders each day whether she will live another day. Lack of fresh foods and exercise, which they used to get via gardening, and walking to others homes in Laos, were discussed.
3. Isolation – Lack of driving and language combined with poor health, etc. Add to that the issue of poor memory, vision problems, etc. One gentleman said he didn't know how to use the phone so was especially isolated.
4. Memory – Unable to do what I want to because I forget. Makes me feel worthless to live. I even forgot why the bus came to pick me up today after two phone calls from Jim (interpreter).
5. Uneducated – Am an un-educated widow. Example given re: plumbing problem in home and don't know what to do....but there are other issues, and beyond the home also. E.g. I can't help w/ homework...however kids do listen to teachers and do a good job on their own right now.

UWSP –

1. Participation –
 - Lack of parent's participation in school, community activities, don't vote....
 - Related to Language!?
 - Parents feel too many school activities take away from academics.
2. Language –
 - Parents don't participate.
 - Makes getting a job difficult.

3. Lay offs
4. False perceptions –
 - Hmong do have to pay taxes (people think they don't)
 - Hmong don't get free cars every year
5. School Challenges –
 - Hard on girls in particular to not be at home
 - Younger kids not doing well in school
 - Budget cuts on services offered in school
 - New refugees and ESL = needs to just be SCHOOL, not HIGH school. (level of expectation, etc.)

Youth – Younger children don't have an opportunity to participate in after school functions due to:

1. Lack of time because of work and commitments
2. lack of money
3. old traditional ways that treat females more protectively and they're not allowed to participate.
4. early marriage while in high school, including bride selling.
5. high school completion, dropping out.

What has successfully worked for your local Hmong community in the past to address these challenges and issues?

Elders/Elderly - CAP services helps w/ Dr. appointments thru Jim Vang

Youth –

1. Support through Human Service and Medical Assistance
2. Hmong radio
3. Hmong channel on TV (although less families have cable?)
4. Oriental store/network for community
5. Homework center
6. ESL program
7. Head Start, 3-5 program, NEED A 0-3 PROGRAM!
8. Hmong Tapestry program
9. CAP services/refugee program
10. Young Hmong Women's Support group at SPASH

What are the challenges facing Hmong individuals and families?

Elders/Elderly –

- Concerns about grandchildren – One person expressed concerns re: teen w/ stubborn streak, sneaks out and is gone all night, discipline issues. Other parent of teens there did not have same concerns/issues currently.

Youth –

1. Some families are more traditional, some are more Americanized, and this causes some problems among Hmong families and Clan relationships.

2. Expectations of females with family
3. Expectations of early marriage/girls running away, etc.
4. Girls coerced into having sex by older men, then marriage.
5. Need to have "parenting class" for Hmong families
6. Need to have a Clan Leader Training.

What are the challenges facing Hmong businesses and business owners?

Elders/Elderly – We don't know! We're old, we stay home. We don't pay attention to the pressure they're facing.

Youth –

1. Competing against big companies like Walmart, etc.
2. Financial loans and qualification for loans to start businesses.
3. Need more help with business background in order to run profitable business.

Could you also tell us about issues or needs for:

Elderly:

UWSP –

1. All the elders do is sit home or go to casino. Or, they are taking care of grandkids also.
 - Plan fun excursions (like Lincoln center with transportation provided)
 - Dinners
 - Create programs
 - See younger Hmong volunteers.
 -

Entrepreneurs/Economic Development Needs:

Families:

Child Care/Work Issues:

UWSP –

1. Affordable Childcare – some exists, but need more.

Elders/Elderly – This group stated they only do childcare in-between shift changes generally, not all day.

(Facilitators note: Thru a side discussion, we did acknowledge that this has been an issue for others in this group. The elder must have their son's permission to attend what is perceived to be a function that is worthy. If childcare is provided, that still might not be acceptable, because trust is a huge issue...and there is concern that Caucasians do not like the Hmong children as well as kidnappings in the Hmong culture. Add transportation issues to the elderly attending...plus transporting kids with them possibly? - Another side issue was that the elders are so isolated, they have not been beyond the community in

some cases and some speculation is that the gambling buses hold an attraction from the angle of transporting them beyond their normal borders?)

Youth – The expectation to care for child by family rather than day care outside of family is a concern

Intergenerational Relationships:

Elders/elderly - We have no power. There's nothing we can do. They're not teachable.

UWSP –

1. Workshops/Conference?
2. Meetings during special holidays e.g.. Father's day.

The Health of Individuals and Families:

UWSP –

1. Language
 - Medical terms are not in Hmong language
 - Translators needed in hospital
 - Medical professionals need to be fluent in Hmong
2. Rituals – Problems with them (traditional Hmong medicine)
3. “Lure” Hmongs into programs to educate
4. Hmong women don't understand reproduction.
5. St. Michaels does a lot = use them as a model for rest of state....a suggestion received.

Youth –

1. Family planning issues
2. lack of exercise
3. high blood pressure
4. cancer

Housing:

Elders/Elderly – It's not as bad as it was 5-6 years ago. We're employed not and can buy a home now.

One problem mentioned was that the homes are big and hard to sell?

UWSP

1. Lack of Affordable housing
 - Section 8 – Aid for housing has been cut, we need to see more.
 - Low incomes w/ big families
2. Zoning Laws – families are so large, laws didn't fit this culture.
3. Language – discrimination
4. Home care education needed – cleaning, emergencies, fire alarms, etc.

Youth – Most people want own home, multi-family housing due to extended family needs for housing.

Educational Programs: (K-12 experience, drop-out problems, college prep. For high school students, older adults, cont. ed. Classes)

Elders/Elderly – Yes; Concerns about dropping out of high school and in the middle of college!...but it goes back to our not being able to do anything and not having any power.

What are some educational topics you or others would like to learn more about?

Elders/Elderly -

- Teens/discipline/respect!
- Economy
- Gas prices
- House on fire – how to escape
- What to do if feeling short of breath
- Safety issues
- Culture/respect
- Taking care of self
- How NOT to disturb our neighbors
- How to be a friend to our neighbors
- Healthy foods/what to buy, etc.

Youth –

- History of Hmong Culture and traditions (Example: Hmong Tapestry – Because young/teen Hmong have not learned about history from home.)
- Hmong Written Language – reading and writing it....because young/teens don't know how to
- HSL – Hmong as a second language...so culture is maintained
- Sexual topics – discussed by educated Hmong adults
- Continue to provide race/ethnic classes at high school

What would be the best way for you to learn about those topics?

Elders/Elderly – **HMONG RADIO STATION!!**

Youth –

1. Older Hmong person as mentor
2. Through plays and entertaining means

Are there any additional thoughts you would like to share?

Elders/Elderly - Thank you for the gift certificate for food and for being interested in what our concerns and needs are. You are a very caring person.

Youth –

1. Concern about loss of Hmong art and cultural activities

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Four Focus Groups Compilation
Elders/Elderly, Youth (High School), UWSP College Students, Parents (CAP Headstart)

Please think about your life experiences and how you learn best. How and where would you like to learn in your community?

Elders/Elderly –

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 - Parents feel too many school activities take away from academics, therefore parents limit/don't allow participation.

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Parents –

1. Hmong Leadership -
 - The association and leadership need to be more involved with families, the schools, citizenship, interpretation help w/ drivers license, etc.
 - Need stronger leadership overall. (If it were functioning well, we wouldn't need this assessment!)
 - Would help if the association would partner with CAP and go to the same meetings. (Hmong Assoc. competes for same grant money as CAP according to one participant)
 - Training needed for the Hmong leadership. (x)
 - Leaders need to be able to read/write English.
 - Leaders need to be able to spend time in office.
 - Funding needed to enable some of above. Suggestion that other counties have received funding/accounting thru WISCAP, while the Hmong association still provides the service...but Portage County has not been willing to do that in the past. Maybe the new leadership will reconsider, especially if they see the need identified in this assessment.
 - Strong leadership to work with courts/law enforcement
2. Additional Interpreters Needed/Language Barriers –
 - Dr. appt's/health issues
 - Drivers license exams.
 - School issues, e.g. ESL cuts (or..school rules, transitions from elementary to middle and high)
 - Energy assistance appointments
3. Summer Gardening –

- Need more land. Many are too small or cost too much.
 - Need land closer to town, especially for elderly (transportation issues, etc.)
 - Concern raised re: vandalism if in town
4. Citizenship
- Need information on it (e.g. on Hmong radio)
 - Transportation/bus to Milwaukee possibly?
5. Financial
- Younger adults have no eye on the future and potential lay-offs.
 - Debt is an issue and purchasing too many possessions.

What has successfully worked for your local Hmong community in the past to address these challenges and issues?

Elders/Elderly - CAP services helps w/ Dr. appointments (thru Jim Vang)

Youth –

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Elders/Elderly –

- Concerns about grandchildren – One person expressed concerns re: teen w/ stubborn streak, sneaks out and is gone all night, discipline issues. Other parent of teens there did not have same concerns/issues currently. (Her children are doing well!)

Youth –

1. Traditional vs. Americanized families - this causes problems among Hmong families and Clan relationships.
2. Expectations of females within family
3. Expectations of early marriage/girls running away, etc.
4. Girls coerced into having sex by older men, then marriage.
5. Need to have “parenting class” for Hmong families
6. Need to have a Clan Leader Training. (x)

Parents –

1. Language
 - Children end up being interpreters, and sometimes purposely speak in English to make it difficult for parents. The situation makes their parenting difficult. Some parent's want/need to learn English, while others continue to want their children to interpret.

- Parents unable to help with homework, especially those who don't read/write English. ESL cuts have added to this issue.
2. Teen Behavior –
- Unsupervised due to parents working more
 - Parents don't know teens friends
 - Discipline. No follow through. Alternatives for keeping them in line. (We used to beat them up and it worked because they knew what would happen if they misbehaved)
 - Teens challenge parents. Teens show no respect.
 - Gangs are still an issue. You must join if you are 'called' to join. They target 10-16 year olds. Those under 14 carry the guns and deal/do drugs, as they can't be punished as harshly. Recruited at school or playgrounds. 3-5 gangs in Wausau that filter down.

What are the challenges facing Hmong businesses and business owners?

Elders/Elderly – We don't know! We're old, we stay home. We don't pay attention to the pressure they're facing.

Youth –

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Could you also tell us about issues or needs for:

Elderly:

UWSP –

1. All the elders do is sit home or go to casino. (Sometimes they are taking care of grandkids also.)
 - Plan fun excursions
 - Dinners
 - Create programs
 - See younger Hmong volunteers.

Parents –

1. Gardening -
 - Need land closer by so older people could go
 - Transportation would be easier for them, but still needs to be coordinated.
2. Outings –
 - Camping, the zoo, etc. (Should be assisted by the Hmong Assoc.)
 - Alternative to free casino bus needed. They're spending too much money there, just for the chance to get out/away on the free bus/transportation.
3. Lincoln Center (aging center)– suggest they serve rice every day and other foods Hmong would like on occasion

Entrepreneurs/Economic Development Needs:

Parents

1. One woman's Dad wanted to start a restaurant here in one of the stores (Japanese deli) but was turned down. Has now found a place in Madison.
2. Testing alternatives @ employment- could be doing an excellent job, but cannot take a written exam.

Families:

Parents – Dating is still not allowed. Parents lose face, are shamed. – Young people say everybody else does it!

Child Care/Work Issues:

UWSP –

1. Affordable Childcare – some exists, but need more.

Elders/Elderly – This group stated they only do childcare in-between shift changes generally, not all day.

(Facilitators note: Thru a side discussion, we did acknowledge that this has been an issue for others in this group. The elder must have their son's permission to attend what is perceived to be a function that is worthy. If childcare is provided, that still might not be acceptable, because trust is a huge issue...and there is concern that Caucasians do not like the Hmong children as well as kidnappings in the Hmong culture. Add transportation issues to the elderly attending...plus transporting kids with them possibly? - Another side issue was that the elders are so isolated, they have not been beyond the community in some cases and some speculation is that the gambling buses hold an attraction from the angle of transporting them beyond their normal borders?)

Youth – The expectation to care for child by family rather than day care outside of family is a concern

Parents –

- Childcare is a problem. They stated there are too many kids for parents to be able to get out of home and learn as well. Can't afford to go learn if we have to pay for childcare
- Child care is too costly
- Hard to find child care
- They hesitate to apply for child car subsidy because they probably won't qualify

Intergenerational Relationships:

Elders/elderly - We have no power. There's nothing we can do. They're not teachable.

UWSP –

1. Workshops/Conference?
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The Health of Individuals and Families:

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5. St. Michaels does a lot = use them as a model for rest of state...(a suggestion received.)

Youth –

1. Family planning issues
2. lack of exercise
3. high blood pressure
4. cancer

Parents –

1. Concern re: cuts in interpreters at Drs. Office (Dr. Whiting?), now some appt’s have to be cancelled if an interpreter can’t be present.

Housing:

Elders/Elderly – It’s not as bad as it was 5-6 years ago. We’re employed now and can buy a home now.

One problem mentioned was that the homes are big and hard to re-sell?

UWSP

1. Lack of Affordable housing
 - Section 8 – Aid for housing has been cut, we need more.
 - Low incomes w/ big families
2. Zoning Laws – families are so large, laws didn’t fit this culture.
3. Language – discrimination
4. Home care education needed – cleaning, emergencies, fire alarms, etc.

Youth – Most people want own home, multi-family housing due to extended family needs for housing.

Parents – Needs bigger homes. Difficult to find.

Educational Programs: (K-12 experience, drop-out problems, college prep. For high school students, older adults, cont. ed. Classes)

Elders/Elderly – Yes; Concerns about dropping out of high school and in the middle of college!...but it goes back to our not being able to do anything and not having any power.

Parents

1. College funding - Want children to be able to go to college. Would like to see more funding available to help other than financial aid.
 2. ESL –
 - Not challenging enough for the children.
 - Drop at high grades and keep at Grant school
-

What are some educational topics you or others would like to learn more about?

Elders/Elderly -

- Teens/discipline/respect!
- Economy
- Gas prices
- House on fire – how to escape
- What to do if feeling short of breath
- Safety issues
- Culture/respect
- Taking care of self
- How NOT to disturb our neighbors
- How to be a friend to our neighbors
- Healthy foods/what to buy, etc.

Youth –

- History of Hmong Culture and traditions (Example: Hmong Tapestry – Because young/teen Hmong have not learned about history from home.)
- Hmong Written Language – reading and writing it....because young/teens don't know how to
- HSL – Hmong as a second language...so culture is maintained
- Sexual topics – discussed by educated Hmong adults*
- Continue to provide race/ethnic classes at high school

Parents –

- Parenting - respect
- Communication - listening
- Housekeeping
- ESL for adults/parents
- Crochet (more arts and crafts)
- More education.

What would be the best way for you to learn about those topics?

Elders/Elderly – HMONG RADIO STATION!!

Youth – *

1. Older Hmong person as mentor
2. Through plays and entertaining means

Parents –

1. Meeting of the clans w/ strong leadership present, to discuss school issues, citizenship, etc.
2. Radio
3. With Hmong Instructors – (So they can understand better)
4. Group++ – sharing of ideas w/ Hmong person leading
5. Home Observation – build parenting and communication ed. Skills from what was observed
6. Books
7. Outside the Home!
8. Classes at Golden County Foods – precedent set w/ Portage County Literacy Council @ McCain Foods for the Hispanic Population.
9. In the home – for those who can't afford child care

Are there any additional thoughts you would like to share?

Elders/Elderly - Thank you for the gift certificate for food and for being interested in what our concerns and needs are. You are a very caring person.

Youth –

1. Concern about loss of Hmong art and cultural activities

Parents –

1. Want to keep Hmong Language and culture for the children.
2. Want children to be able to translate, but there are not words in Hmong for all English words.
3. Want children to know both languages.
4. Americans should learn the Hmong language.
5. Parents feel powerless, and while supporting this assessment...they feel this won't help. They really feel they need leadership, change and help from the Hmong Association.
6. Americans need to learn who Hmong are. (Vietnamese, Cambodian or Chinese?) They need more education about us and why we are here.
7. Some feel they should spend their time earning and let their children learn.

Portage County Hmong Needs Assessment Demographic Data

12 female Hmong youth, under age 20
22 female Hmong college women, ages 18-24
4 female Hmong Headstart Parent, ages 18-24
3 female Hmong Headstart Parents, ages 20-30
7 female Hmong Headstart Parents, ages 30-40
8 females in elder/elderly group, ages 40-65+ (*)
9 male Hmong college men, ages 18-24
1 male Hmong Headstart Parent, age 24-30
3 male Hmong Headstart Parents, ages 30-40
4 males in elder/elderly group, ages 40-65+ (*)

* (Of elders/elderly, 1 was 40-55, 3 were 55-65 and 5 were 65 and older)

subtotal

56 females
+17 males

73 total (Total does **not** include facilitators/translators, as listed below)

2 female Hmong translators, ages 30-40
1 female Hmong facilitator, age 40-55
1 male Hmong facilitator, age 30-40
3 female Caucasian facilitators, age 40-55
1 male Caucasian facilitator, age 30-40