

# Asian Pacific Community in Action (APCA)

Phoenix, AZ

www.apcaaz.org

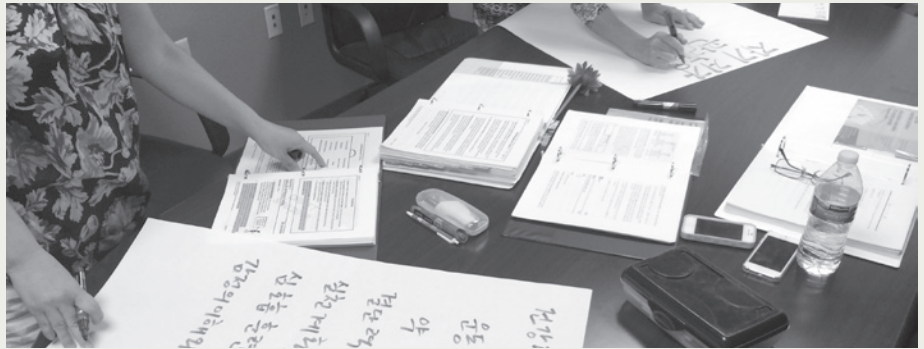


**NCRP: If foundations could know one thing about APCA, what would it be?**

**APCA:** Asian Pacific Community in Action (APCA) serves a very diverse and dispersed community. Founded in 2002 to serve the health needs of Asian Americans in Arizona, we now serve more than 30 language communities, including Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) and emerging communities. We provide culturally competent multilingual services to all who present, and feel a particular responsibility to smaller language communities that often are bypassed by mainstream health systems.

Like many Southwest communities, the greater Phoenix area spreads out; it has more than 9,224 square miles with a population of more than 4 million. It is a large urban area filled with dozens of sprawling cities and towns, and our communities are dispersed throughout. There are no Chinatowns, no Little Saigons or Koreatowns. We do not have ethnic enclaves like you would see on the coasts. This further reduces our visibility and challenges our service delivery.

AA and NHPI and emerging communities are the fastest growing segment in Arizona. Asian Pacific Community in Action is the only nonprofit with full-time staff that serves this diverse and dispersed community, and though we are primarily a community health organization, we find ourselves holding responsibility for a range of community needs. Clearly, more investment is needed to build the capacity of smaller AA and NHPI serving organizations to support this work in Arizona, as



APCA team members translate a chronic disease self-management workshop into Korean, one of the 30 language communities APCA serves. Photo courtesy of APCA.

well as investment by mainstream organizations to serve our communities.

**NCRP: How do cultural and language barriers hinder access to health care, and how is APCA trying to address this challenge?**

**APCA:** We invest our limited general funds in training bilingual community members to be professional medical interpreters or cultural brokers. This builds a culturally competent and multilingual workforce for Arizona and also provides economic opportunities for community members. Our goal is that all language communities receive equal access to health services and that community members create sustainable microenterprise. This empowers our community and advances our mission to increase meaningful access to culturally competent healthcare.

We are fluent in 30 of the languages regularly used in Arizona. Our professional medical interpreters receive specialized training and are qualified to provide interpretation for limited English proficient community members in medical settings. We serve all who present, not just Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. The largest language community of our medical interpretation service is not an AA and NHPI language but Arabic.

APCA is a licensed site for Breaking Boundaries in Healthcare: A Medical Interpreter Training program. The curriculum is nationally endorsed by the International Medical Interpreters Association and provides qualified interpreters with the skills to deliver complete medical interpretation in health care settings, with an emphasis on cultural competency. Our commitment to quality and full access is driven by a lack of state licensure requirements and varied institutional practices. We invest in this work to build a culturally competent multilingual professional health workforce and raise the standards and practice of the profession. This is increasingly difficult in a state that passes English-only laws and is generally hostile to this effort.

**NCRP: Arizona is known as having a challenging environment for progressive change. How has this affected your work?**

**APCA:** There is a progressive space in Arizona but it has not yet achieved critical mass. We create our own spaces for this work and convene and facilitate our own cross-cultural collaborations so that issues faced by all communities are present in the work. It is a heavy lift to ensure that AA and NHPI and emerging communities are not bypassed and that our solutions are incorporated and prioritized. ■