



Case Study: CAAAV Report - No Access: The Need for Improved Language Assistance Services for Limited English Proficient Asian Tenants of the New York City Housing Authority

Background on Organization and Issue

CAAAV is a pan-Asian community-based organization working to build the power of low-income Asian immigrants and refugees in New York City. One of CAAAV's emerging campaigns involves organizing Asian residents in public housing, which is managed by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

While conducting outreach in public housing, CAAAV organizers noticed that Limited English Proficient (LEP) Asian tenants in public housing were having trouble communicating with NYCHA, specifically due to issues of language access. Since NYCHA is responsible for handling repair issues, rental payments, emergency management, and more, it was troubling that Asian tenants identified language access as a primary issue, despite NYCHA's official policies and procedures for providing interpretation and translation to LEP tenants.

CAAAV partnered with the Community Development Project in order to identify NYCHA's shortfalls in providing language access and the associated impact on Asian LEP tenants.

WHAT...

Were the Organizing Goals connected to this research?

- Identify the biggest issues and greatest needs of Asian tenants in public housing.
- Develop recommendations for NYCHA based on the issues and greatest needs of Asian tenants.
- Build a base of Asian public housing residents as members of CAAAV, as well as develop leaders in public housing.

Overall questions did CAAAV want to answer through their research?

- What existing data is there about Asian residents in NYCHA housing?
- What are existing NYCHA language access policies that impact Asian residents?
- What are the biggest issues and needs facing Asian NYCHA residents?
- How are Asian residents already involved in organizing efforts and/or support systems?

WHY...

Is this research useful or important for CAAAV?

- To build a base of Asian tenants in public housing.
- To determine NYCHA's shortfalls in addressing the language access needs of LEP tenants.
- To strengthen CAAAV's campaign to reform NYCHA.



WHO...

Are the Stakeholders in this Issue?

- LEP Asian tenants living in public housing

Was the coalition trying to influence?

- The Mayor's Office and NYCHA's chair and CEO

HOW...

Did CAAAV gather information (what methods did they use)?

- **Surveys:** CAAAV surveyed 221 NYCHA tenants in 14 public housing developments in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island about their access to interpretation and translation, experiences with repairs and maintenance, and language access needs. Surveys were conducted in Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, and Bangla.
- **Interviews:** CAAAV conducted targeted interviews with members who were NYCHA tenants, to inform tenant profiles for their report. Interviews were conducted in Korean, Mandarin and Bangla.
- **Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) Request:** A FOIL request was submitted to NYCHA in order to gain access to relevant data regarding NYCHA's language services. The FOIL request was drafted following an extensive analysis of NYCHA's language access policies, and the request was crafted to solicit information that NYCHA claimed to be tracking. Over 1,000 pages of documents were received in response.
- **Legal Research:** Research was done to investigate NYCHA's legal obligation under federal, state and local laws to provide language assistance for LEP residents of public housing.

Did Research support CAAAV's organizing efforts?

- Developed the leadership of its members, and of Asian public housing residents who are not already members, through their direct participation in the research.
- Generated data to support existing campaign goals and identify new ones, develop leaders, and strengthen multi-racial public housing organizing.

Did research impact policy change?

- In conjunction with the report release CAAAV and CDP also met with officials from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and NYCHA to discuss and advocate for the recommendations in the report.
- CAAAV and CDP convened a call with representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to discuss issues of language access as they relate to public housing.
- With the help of Congress member Nydia Velasquez, Mandarin and Cantonese were implemented as automated language options in NYCHA's resident calling center.