



# Increasing Hepatitis B Screening in Asian and Pacific Islander Communities: Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Philadelphia

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## Abstract

**Objective:** Hep B United Philadelphia is a community-based coalition and citywide program led by the Hepatitis B Foundation, to address the burden and disparities of hepatitis B in Philadelphia Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities, through improved screening, vaccination and linkage to care.

**Methods:** Hepatitis B Foundation initially conducted a community-based needs assessment and local resource mapping that led to creating the **Hep B United Philadelphia** coalition in 2010, consisting of community, health, social service, cultural, business and research organizations. An innovative campaign and strategy to improve community awareness of HBV was executed via print, audio-visual, social media, and non-traditional components. Strategic trainings and seminars have been implemented to improve coalition partner knowledge and enhance participation. Free, community-based screening and education events are conducted in a variety of settings. A plan to improve citywide infrastructure has been developed to enhance sustainability of HBV-related screening and vaccination services.

**Results:** The **Hep B United Philadelphia** coalition has over 60 organizational partners, and has participated in over 125 community and cultural events in 24 months. The awareness campaign, including social media and flash mobs resulted in greatly improved awareness of HBV as a local health priority. Strategic outreach was successful in recruiting the support of the Mayor, Philadelphia City Council, and both the Mayor's Advisory Commission and Governor's Commission on Asian Affairs. Over 3,000 API individuals have been reached through public education and awareness. Evaluation of training and education seminars has indicated improved HBV-related knowledge among coalition partners and within the targeted API community. Over 1,200 free HBV screenings have been completed, and 96% of infected individuals have been successfully linked with appropriate health care. A new, free Mobile HBV Vaccine Clinic has been implemented with the Philadelphia Department of Health, to remove cultural, financial and transportation barriers and improve rates of vaccination among high-risk API adults.

**Conclusions:** Multiple barriers to HBV screening, vaccination and linkage to care continue to exist in urban API communities. Community-based, non-traditional strategies can be successful in addressing these gaps. These programs must be tailored to the individual needs of target communities. Additionally, multi-disciplinary collaboration, continued partner and community engagement, and support of city leadership are necessary to see sustainable improvements. Continued evaluation will allow us to assess the long-term impact of this community coalition and HBV campaign.

## Objective

- **Hep B United Philadelphia** is a community-based coalition and citywide program led by the Hepatitis B Foundation. Currently with over 60 community partners, Hep B United Philadelphia addresses the burden and disparities of hepatitis B in Philadelphia Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities within the Greater Philadelphia region through development of a citywide sustainable system for culturally appropriate screening, vaccination and linkage to care.
- The program seeks to improve HBV awareness, screening rates, vaccination rates, and linkage to care rates in high-risk API communities.
- The program utilizes both traditional, proven methods as well as innovative, new approaches to maximize its effectiveness.

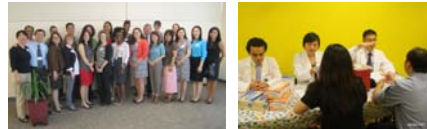
## Methods

- A community-based needs assessment and local resource mapping was initially conducted by the Hepatitis B Foundation prior to the official launch of **Hep B United Philadelphia** in May, 2010. It provided information on the lack of resources for hepatitis B care in Philadelphia and identifying key strategic community partners.
- The coalition consists of community, health, social service, cultural, business and research organizations. As the coalition grows and its community presence becomes more visible, more organizations and community leaders become aware and supportive of the cause.
- In addition to the traditional public health approach of health education workshops in the community, providing print materials at health fairs, and oral consultations in various settings: **Hep B United Philadelphia** draws on the unique strengths of community partners and have education health care professionals and community members alike through webinars, computer-based training modules, social-media based interactive contests, public service announcement videos, and live, public awareness events.



**Picture 1 (Left)** Program Manager Daniel Chen posing for social media awareness campaign "Where is the Hep B Hero?" Sweepstakes.  
**Picture 2 (Right)** Coalition partners engaging in training about patient assistance programs for hepatitis B treatments.

- Strategic trainings and seminars are held regularly to improve coalition partner knowledge and enhance participation. It also provides a platform for coalition partners to share new information and initiate collaborative projects.
- Free, community-based hepatitis B screening and education events are conducted in a variety of settings: religious organizations, restaurants, community centers, hospitals, and primary care clinics. Community based coalition partners provide outreach, recruitment and language assistance when necessary.
- A plan to improve citywide infrastructure has been developed to enhance sustainability of HBV-related screening and vaccination services. The core stakeholders converge monthly to review progress and strategize specific tactics that would help move the plan forward.



**Picture 3 (Left)** The HBUP stakeholders committee convened in June, 2012 to work on the plan for improving hepatitis B care infrastructure in the City of Philadelphia.  
**Picture 4 (Right)** Medical students providing blood glucose testing as an additional service at a Hep B United Philadelphia free hepatitis B screening event.

## Results

- Coalition Partners: **Hep B United Philadelphia** now has over 60 organizational partners. Among the partners, medical and graduate public health student organizations meet bi-monthly to share knowledge and plan collaborative efforts.
- Community Involvement: **Hep B United Philadelphia** has participated in over 125 community and cultural events in 24 months, including health fairs, cultural celebrations, community gatherings, art and cultural education functions such as exhibits and film festivals, and advocacy events.
- Awareness Campaign – Social Media: "B A Hero" PSA Video Contest and "Where Is the Hep B Hero?" Sweepstakes doubled Facebook fan page "likes" and increased Facebook weekly reach of unique users by 30 fold. PSA video contest winner and runner-up was shown at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival.



**Figure 1** As a result of rivalry between two competing PSA videos, the number of visits to the contest voting page soared toward the end of the contest. There were a total of 1,661 visits to the contest Facebook page.

- Awareness Campaign – Public Events: Awareness events outside of the City Hall and in Love Park have rallied hundreds of supporters to engage in rapping and creative flash mobs. Local leaders such as the mayor, city councilman, and health commissioner have all publicly endorsed the coalition's effort. Special proclamations were given by the city council. The events were reported by radio shows, blogs, newspapers, and television news.



**Picture 5 (Left)** The winning video of the "B A Hero" PSA Video Contest was shown at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival.  
**Picture 6 (Right)** Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and City Councilman David Oh show support for Hep B United Philadelphia at the awareness event in Love Park.

- Strategic Outreach: Besides the mayor, the city council, and the health commissioners, the coalition has also successfully reached out to both the Mayor's Advisory Commission and the Governor's Commission on Asian Affairs.
- Health Education: Over 3,000 API individuals have been reached through public education and awareness. Evaluation of training and education seminars has indicated improved HBV-related knowledge among coalition partners and within the targeted API community.

## Results (Cont.)

- Hepatitis B Screening: Over 1,200 individuals, mostly first generation immigrants from Asia and Africa, have completed free HBV screening within the past 24 months. Screening events have been held in North, West, and South Philadelphia as well as in Center City.



**Picture 7 (Left)** A bilingual education seminar about hepatitis B was held in Philadelphia's Chinatown. The event was co-hosted by organizational partners that work directly with the Chinatown community.  
**Picture 8 (Right)** Hep B United Philadelphia providing free hepatitis B screening at the health fair portion of the Asian Heritage Month Celebration, which was put on by the Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Asian Affairs.

- Vaccine: A new and free Hepatitis B Mobile Vaccine Clinic has been implemented with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. The mobile vaccine clinics brings all 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccines into the community, usually the same location as the free screening, to overcome any cultural, financial, or transportation barriers that have prevented community members from accessing hepatitis B vaccines in the past.
- Linage to Care: About 96% of infected individuals have been successfully linked with appropriate health care. Bilingual staff from partner organizations communicate directly with infected individuals to provide patient navigation and link them to primary care providers, health centers, and specialists.

## Conclusion

- Multiple barriers to HBV screening, vaccination and linkage to care continue to exist in urban API communities. These barriers include, but are not limited to, language, transportation, documentation, health insurance, literacy, health literacy, cultural practices and beliefs, limited financial resources, and distrust of the system.
- Community-based, non-traditional strategies, such as the ones employed by Hep B United Philadelphia, can be successful in addressing these gaps. These strategies are grounded in theory and evidence-based practices, but are also adjusted according to the specific needs and resources existing in the community. Such flexibility is critical especially for a diverse community like Philadelphia.
- Key strategies include: tailoring to the individual needs of target communities, multi-disciplinary collaboration with a wide variety of organizational partners and community leaders, continued partner and community engagement, and support of city leadership are necessary to see sustainable improvements.
- Data gathering and continual analysis of our progress are important. Besides recording every service the program has provided and obtaining information from community members served through the program, Hep B United Philadelphia also keeps track of census information and hepatitis B prevalence data in collaboration with the city's health department. Continued evaluation will allow us to assess the long-term impact of this community coalition and HBV campaign.