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NEEDS OF MINORITY WOMEN
IN
KING COUNTY

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COMMUNICATION
DESIGN

318 6th Ave S.
Seattle 98104

PROJECT TEAM

Rita Elway
Project Director
Coordinator for Session on Asian/Pacific Women

Elizabeth Morris
Coordinator for Session on Native American Indian Women

Elizabeth Thomas
Coordinator for Session on Black Women

Tsutsumi Herrera
Coordinator for Session on Hispanic Women

Stella Ting-Toomey
Research Associate

Linda F. Dethman
Research Associate

Barbara Risman
Research Associate

Joan Yamaguchi
Research Associate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

This executive summary presents recommendations from a multi-phased needs assessment of minority women in King County, Washington. The needs assessment, conducted between December, 1979 and May, 1980 consists of four major elements:

1. Review of existing data resources;
2. Survey of selected agencies in King County;
3. "Brainstorming sessions" conducted with women for each of the four major minority groups in King County: Black, Asian/Pacific, Hispanic, and Native American Indian; and
4. Survey of minority women distributed to brainstorming session participants and to individuals through community agencies and educational institutions.

REVIEW OF EXISTING DATA

1. With the exception of employment data, there is a severe lack of information about minority women. This is because there has been little emphasis on designing services or systems with specific pertinence to minority women. This is ironic in light of the fact that the frequent justification for a lack of action in this area is that there is no data to justify the move. It is recommended that minority be specified by major racial group in all County data gathering, assembly and analysis.
2. National data indicate that women in all racial minority groups earn less than white women and are more likely to

be single heads of households. The extent to which these trends hold for County government should be determined, and strategies should be developed for systematically addressing barriers to equal employment opportunity.

3. Data of social service delivery indicate that agencies serving the general population should increase their coordination with agencies that target minority women for service, as well as provide training to staff on issues of concern to minority women.
4. Very little data is available regarding relationships of minority women with the legal system. Data do exist, however, which indicate that minority women may have a higher incidence of physical abuse than do women in the general population.
5. A surprisingly small number of minority women have filed discrimination suits with the Washington State Human Rights Commission, compared with the number of white women who have filed such complaints. It is recommended that more information be made available to minority women about their employment rights, with specific information about appropriate grievance procedures.
6. Greater emphasis must be placed in County health services on preventative health care targeted for minority women, particularly in the area of maternal and infant care.
7. Very little data is available on mental health needs of minority women, and this dearth of information indicates the need for more thorough sensitivity and outreach on the part of County mental health providers.

8. Recent needs assessments conducted in King County point to needs of minority women in the areas of multi-lingual programs, youth programs, special employment outreach, and alcoholism.
9. A reanalysis of the 1979 CAMP Needs Assessment conducted of residents in Southeast Central and the Central Area show that Black, Asian/Pacific, and Caucasian women all would like to see services for special population groups. Minority women focussed on "cost of housing" more frequently as a major housing problem, while white women named "the housing shortage." With regard to needs of low income people, minority women were most likely to mention "employment and economic development" needs, while Caucasian women focussed on "housing." "Housing" was seen as the greatest need of elderly by minority women, whereas transportation was named most frequently by white women.

SURVEY OF SELECTED AGENCIES IN KING COUNTY

Sixty (out of 150 contacted) agencies in King County serving women responded to a questionnaire concerning service delivery to minority women. Data suggest the following:

1. Only 3% of responding agencies indicated they were government-sponsored. Therefore, more services to minority women need to be provided by governmental sources.
2. Agencies tended to serve County-wide (52%) or in Seattle (18%). Few agencies serve smaller areas, indicating a need for community-based service delivery.
3. Considerable effort needs to be made toward employing

minority women and men in social service agencies. More than half of the responding agencies have no minority employees. In addition, minorities need greater board representation: 27% have no minority women and 32% have no minority men.

4. Agency purposes do not correspond to the needs which agencies perceive are felt by minority women. While advocacy and referral are the most frequent purposes, direct services are the most frequently perceived need. Therefore, comprehensive social service plans need to ensure that purposes match needs.
5. Only 9% of the agencies categorized their service population as a minority group. In addition, 42% indicated they had no targeted minority groups. Thus, a large proportion of the agencies do not direct efforts toward minority women. Annual goals and objectives of agencies and funders should direct attention to this gap.
6. Needs which agencies see as necessary for minority women are not being met. 62% of the agencies felt direct services were needed by minority women, indicating a general lack in this area of social service delivery. 48% reported a need for more advocacy and referral. 34% cited employment as a major need. An effort should be made to (1) validate that the agency perceptions of needs are indeed the needs of minority women and (2) meet needs with appropriate actions.
7. Agencies tend to mention attributes of minority women as the source of difficulties when serving them rather than attributes of the social service system. Until agencies take more responsibility for outreach and appropriate service delivery (eg. multi-lingual services), the current lack of services for minority women will

not begin to be corrected.

8. Many agencies (47%) reported that they had no special methods or services which they felt were helpful in meeting the needs of minority women. Only 7% noted they had a multi-lingual staff and 5% had culturally sensitive programs. Programs directed toward helping minority women are urgently needed.
9. Likewise (see #8), 45% of the agencies felt they could provide no help to other agencies in trying to serve minority women. Only 4% reported they could help with minority participation.
10. Data indicate that agencies desire the development of referral systems for minority women (77%) rather than the development of specific outreach programs (32%), staff training (35%), or employment referrals of minority women for staff positions (32%). While referral services are important, there must first of all, be good facilities to which minority women may be referred.

BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS WITH MINORITY WOMEN

1. All minority women placed a major emphasis on the need to improve accessibility to all services by overcoming such barriers as lack of multi-lingual support and lack of culturally sensitive staff and administrative structures.
2. Occupational safety, wage structures and labor practices of industries which hire large numbers of minority women should be aggressively monitored, and information about employment rights should be broadly disseminated.

3. Programs which focus on re-entry to the work force have not typically targeted minority women. Such programs should develop outreach programs which clearly outline their relevance to minority women, and should be designed in a manner which takes into account the special experiences of women of color.
4. Unmet employment needs identified included job referral and training, assistance with discrimination complaints, career development and childcare.
5. Participants expressed strong support for existing minority community social service agencies. However, there was a broad feeling that general social service providers need to strengthen their own in-house capabilities to serve minority women, rather than "passing the buck" to community agencies which are already over-extended. The following special groups of minority women were identified for the attention of King County agencies: a) social service needs for elderly minority women; b) family planning needs for Black youth; c) legal and employment needs of immigrants; d) advocacy needs for Asian wives of U.S. servicemen; e) alcoholism services for Native American Indian women.
6. In developing outreach programs for social services, it is necessary that agency staff understand cultural and social barriers to seeking services in many minority communities, as well as perceived legal barriers by immigrants.
7. Unanimously, program participants expressed the opinion that most education programs are culturally biased. More emphasis should be placed on ESL programs in all

minority communities and on the development of unbiased curricula in public schools, community colleges and four year institutions.

8. A culturally sensitive approach must be adapted on a broad scale, including sensitive and co-ordinated multi-lingual materials. This is particularly important for the very young and elderly minority women.
9. Preventative mental health programs including community education should be given greater priority for minority women.
10. Police-Community relations need to be strengthened, and efforts should be made to include concerns of minority women in law enforcement, human relations and community relations training.
11. Legal information and assistance referral resources need to be developed for minority women. Existing resources should be more widely publicized in Spanish and the major Asian languages, as well as in English.
12. Affirmative action of minority women and men should be a priority in King County government and the agencies which it funds. If this can be achieved, it will be easier to make cultural sensitive programs and administrative structures a reality.

SURVEY OF MINORITY WOMEN

1. The data from this survey of minority women in King County is comprised of the responses of 242 women. Over 1000 questionnaires were distributed to minority women throughout King County through community groups, social service agencies, post-secondary institutions and at the community brainstorming sessions which were held as part of this needs assessment.
2. Most of the respondents (62%) felt that the needs of minority women are not currently being met by social service agencies in King County. Some 56% reported that they had in the past felt the need for help or information from a public agency, particularly women in the younger and middle-aged categories (26-35 and 36-45 years of age) and with middle incomes. Similarly, as income increases, so does utilization of community agencies. Thus, groups of women who are typically seen as having the greatest social service needs, are least likely to seek or obtain help from agencies. This finding strengthens the case for aggressive outreach.
3. Respondents were given a list of ten employment issues from which they were to choose three which needed most attention for minority women. Some 54% named "job search skills" and 49% named "equal employment opportunities." Some 36% pointed to unfair labor practices and discrimination.
4. The three most frequently named social service issues were "the attitude of social service providers (45%), inadequate information about where to go for services (45%) and adjustment problems of women who lose their husbands (42%). Thus, the two issues named most frequently pertained to attributes of the social service delivery system, rather than on gaps in existing services.

The services exist, but they are not perceived to be accessible to minority women.

5. The educational need which stands out above all others is "job training" (65%). In addition, 44% named the need for academic credit for job experience and 40% wanted more educational emphasis on survival skills. Education needs, therefore, were clearly related to economic survival.
6. A remarkable majority (75%) of respondents pointed to the need for "mental/emotional support." The other top issues are "the need for preventative medicine and nutrition" (40%) and "women's gynecological health concerns, including sexuality" (39%).
7. Virtually all questionnaire respondents (93%) felt the need for "better access to adequate legal representation." It will thus be necessary for a thorough examination of barriers to adequate representation. Data from the brainstorming sessions can be helpful in this regard, but a more thorough investigation is needed. Some 47% of respondents named the need for "placement of more multi-racial people in the legal system: and 35% felt that multi-racial women need more legal information about human rights.