



Long before culturally-informed services became mainstream, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) was among the first county agencies paving the path for diversity and inclusion.

In 1987, the department established the Asian Pacific Program (APP), the first such unit in the department dedicated to a specific racial group. The unit was formed for the purpose of providing culturally sensitive services for the county's Asian Pacific community which, at the time, was

experiencing rapid growth. Two years later, the first Chinese-speaking caseworker, who spoke both Cantonese and Mandarin, joined the program.

Today, APP provides support and resources for children and families in various languages including Cambodian, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Japanese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese, by way of 30 bilingual social workers. APP also assists families who speak less common languages with assistance from other providers.

Supervisor Angela Chau, pictured above second from left with her unit, can attest to the evolution of the unit, which she joined in 1998. Since its inception, it has become the largest Asian Pacific child protective services operation in the country and the only such program in the state. Over the years, APP has hosted international delegations from such countries as Japan, China, Taiwan and South Korea that want to learn more about how to develop culturally relevant and specialized services.

Angela attributes the program's achievements to its approximately 50-person staff who understand the difficulties experienced by immigrant children and families who must overcome language and culture barriers to navigate complex government systems and processes.

"I think the dedication of our social workers drives the program's success," said Angela, who is originally from Hong Kong and speaks Cantonese and Mandarin. "Many of our staff are immigrants or the children of immigrants, so we understand some of what these families are struggling with because we went through the same transitions. We know how important cultural sensitivity is, and the program staff is always willing to go the extra mile."

The Asian Pacific community is diverse, representing 23 major groups with different histories, cultures, languages and service needs. About half of the county's Asian Pacific population is believed to be first-generation or new immigrants and to have either limited English-language proficiency or to speak no English, according to Angela. Understanding their cultural and linguistic background helps APP connect families with the most appropriate services to address their needs.

These include parental education, counseling and case management, with many services focused on preventing child maltreatment and strengthening families. During the pandemic, APP has worked closely with [Korean American Family Services](#) and the DCFS Public Affairs Section to conduct outreach through

social media and ethnic television stations which have aired the department's Child Protection Hotline [public service announcement](#) subtitled in languages including Chinese, Korean, Tagalog and Vietnamese

In addition to providing culturally-informed services, APP also serves an educational purpose. Asian Pacific families may be unfamiliar with local customs and expectations and APP social workers help them better understand the county's socio-cultural environment, child welfare laws and processes.



“We are more than social workers,” Angela said. “In many ways we are also counselors and teachers here to support families as they work through the process.”



Watch this slideshow to learn more about the Asian Pacific Program and meet more of the team.

Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to 800-540-4000

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services | www.dcfslacounty.gov | Follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)