

# Program: Essence of MANA

## Asian American Recovery Services, a Program of HealthRIGHT360

### Location

San Mateo County, CA



### Groups Served

- Pacific Islanders
- Urban Setting
- Families
- Youth

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### Overview

**MANA** is a Pacific Islander concept that represents a connection to and spirit of a higher power (e.g., gods, ancestors, the universe). This concept is used to promote a holistic view of wellness (body, mind, and soul) among the Pacific Islander populations through a series of workshops that emphasizes conversation, education and resource building, for all parts of the family so that they can begin a healing process to wellness.

The Essence of MANA Program aims to:

- Increase awareness of mental health
- Reduce stigma
- Create access to care and services among the Pacific Islander population, with a particular focus on Samoans and Tongans, in North San Mateo County (SMC).

We believe it takes a village to raise a child and to create change in our community. Our goal is to reach caregivers and youth (ages 3-17) and begin conversations on taboo topics that impact our community wellness including: domestic violence, rape/molestation, substance abuse, and mental and physical health.



### Goals



**GOAL 1. Increase Access to Mental Health Services for Unserved, Underserved, and Inappropriately Served Populations:** The first step in reducing disparities in mental health is making services more available to those in need. MANA aims to *increase access to culturally supportive care and services.*



**GOAL 2. Improve the Quality of Mental Health Services for Unserved, Underserved, and Inappropriately Served Populations:** Services must not only be accessible, but also of the highest quality and meet the needs of the communities. MANA aims to *reduce stigma around mental health conditions and other taboo topics, and increase knowledge on signs, symptoms and risk factors of mental health conditions (including offering and receiving support).*



**GOAL 3. Build on Community Strengths to Increase the Capacity of and Empower Unserved, Underserved, and Inappropriately Served Communities:** Access to quality services means nothing without the community engaged in local mental health programs. MANA aims to *aid community members in finding their voice and understanding of spiritual beliefs, increase leadership skills & community involvement, and improve communication skills among family members.*

### Strategies

- **Storytelling** – Sharing and encouraging lived experiences and validate those experiences (not putting down how people have been raised)... e.g. cultural disciplinary actions... Being able to validate, inform and “plant seeds.” How to go and practice new information, and break the cycle.
- **Culturally & Spiritually Responsive** – Welcoming, friendly, family atmosphere and bringing people in and trying to connect them (i.e. a safe space, hoping to build a relationship and trust with them... Serves as an intro to follow up to future resources – e.g. fathers and resources).. Help nurture adults and their children.
- **Community Grounded** – Parents sign up, but cannot always participate (e.g. family issues and challenges), messages are sent to parents that they are welcomed in the future and contact is maintained with them.



### Outcomes

*“Me and my kids love going to the Essence of MANA class! I get to learn better ways to deal with my children in a comfortable environment without being judged. I just wish this program was available to us a long time ago! Thanks Essence of MANA for helping me become a better person/mother.” -33 year old single parent*

- Analysis of weekly evaluations have found that participants averaged 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 5 for “mastering” behavior skills learned.
- Comparison analysis of pre/post data found that all items measuring relationship with child shifted in for the positive, with more participants reporting desired behaviors (reporting “Always”) at post.



### Next Steps

The Essence of MANA continues to connect participants to community events within the county that will help them and their families build trust and learn to be part of a larger community. As a result, they are able to apply the skills they have learned in the workshops.



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