

CDEP Title: Shifa for Today Peer Counseling Program

IPP Grantee: Muslim American Society - Social Services Foundation



LOCATION

Sacramento, CA



GROUPS SERVED

- South Asian Muslims
- Urban and Rural Settings
- Adults
- Dari, Pashto, and Urdu Speaking Clients

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OVERVIEW

Shifa for Today is an early intervention program that aims to reduce trauma, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts among South Asian Muslim (SAM) adults by developing a culturally competent mental health workforce, increasing access and utilization of mental health services, increasing social support, and decreasing psychological distress. SAMs trace their ancestry to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

As part of CRDP, Shifa for Today is focused on building a strong workforce that can provide culturally and linguistically compelling services to the diverse Muslim communities in the greater Sacramento area. Shifa for Today is part of MAS-SSF's continuum of services, which also include:

- **Amala Youth Hopeline**, which provides an accessible, confidential, and culturally competent means of peer counseling and resource referral for American Muslim youth.
- **Al-Afia for Seniors**, which works to prevent depression, anxiety, isolation, and feelings of helplessness associated with aging.
- **Community Education Workshops**, which engage and inform Muslim communities around mental health, parenting, immigrant integration, and other topics as requested by the community.



GOALS



**Peer Counselor
Training
Curriculum
Development**



**Training Peer
Counselors**



**Individual
Peer
Counseling
Sessions with
SAMs**

STRATEGIES



Faith-based approaches rooted in Islamic traditional concepts and culturally-sensitive approaches



One-on-one with non-judgmental approach, developing trust and rapport and having confidentiality and sensitivity



Honoring family context and cultural considerations in an ethical manner when they promote healthy family relationships and dynamics



Providing counseling in the native language of the clients/consumers



Using flexible practices to accommodate the diverse prevention and early intervention mental health needs of clients/consumers

OUTCOMES

MAS-SSF is pursuing a formative evaluation to document the process of curriculum development, peer counselor recruitment, and peer counselor training. Key outcomes for Shifa for Today include:

- Reduce psychological distress and improve hopefulness and recovery by increasing functioning, social support, empowerment, and access and utilization of mental health services
- Identify clients/consumers' inherent and acquired strengths and develop and maintain a healthy life after counseling
- Develop skills to cope with the political climate of religious discrimination and bigotry, and immigration issues
- Develop and maintain support systems – including religious organizations and networks outside of the immediate family system

NEXT STEPS

MAS-SSF has recruited and trained three cohorts in peer counseling and is currently working with 40 counselors. In addition, MAS-SSF has developed a specific training curriculum that integrates Islamic cultural practices, values, and histories with a special focus on mental health, and will be training peer counselors in this proprietary curriculum. Simultaneously Shifa for Today will increase outreach and engagement efforts to connect community members with peer counselors.

