



KAHI MOHALA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EWA BEACH, HI December 2004

Executive Summary:

In 2004 Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health established an adolescent enhancement program for children receiving treatment at the facility for an extended period of time. The “Kohua Ho’okele”, or the “Foundation for Navigation” program is a values-based program founded on the Hawaiian values of “Aloha,” or self-worth and self-love, respect, self-care and self-awareness, adapting and coping skills, and responsibility. The children and their families are assigned two “Alakai,” or coaches to assist in the healing process of treatment, helping them to enhance their personal and family functioning in all aspects of living and encouraging the children to have cultural acceptance and cultural humility. In addition to the Alakai, the program consists of clinical assessments, group therapy, and cultural activities. The children participate in weekly “Ohana Nights,” or family nights, a bi-monthly luau, and an annual Aloha Day that includes a variety of cultural activities and performances by the children. Each child in the program moves through a series of levels, beginning as a novice and becoming a navigator before leaving the facility. To achieve navigator level the children must have cultural acceptance and cultural humility, understanding that no one culture is better than the other.

Organization Size: 88 beds

Program/Initiative Description:

Adolescent Enhancement Program: Although Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health has had a successful program targeting positive behavioral supports for acute treatment of children and adolescents for some time, the organization was looking to improve and better sustain the interests of adolescents moved into continuing treatment. The facility established a similar program for children receiving treatment at the facility for an extended period of time, with the mission of “instilling specific core values and skills, enhancing personal and family functioning in all aspects of living.” Employees work closely with families to support growth and change in the children, using the Hawaiian culture as the backing of the program. Called “Kohua Ho’okele,” meaning “The Foundation for Navigation,” the values-based enhancement program is founded on the Hawaiian values of “Aloha,” or self-worth and self-love, respect, self-care and self-awareness, adapting and coping skills, and responsibility.

Two coaches, or “Alakai,” are assigned to each child and family to assist in the healing process of treatment. The children also receive clinical assessments and group therapy, and participate in cultural activities during the weekly “Ohana Nights,” or family nights. Families come to each Ohana Night to participate in cultural activities with their children, teaching the families the importance of playing and interacting together and learning to communicate and respect one another. Children and their families also participate in a bi-monthly Luau hosted by the organization, and each year at Aloha Day the children put together a dance, song, or skit to perform. In addition, Aloha Day includes a variety of Hawaiian cultural activities, such as a performance by professional dancers.

Each child in the program moves through a series of levels, based on the navigation theme. Participants generally begin as a novice, represented by an outrigger canoe tied

to the beach, and move through several levels before becoming a navigator when they leave. The outrigger canoe is a theme throughout the program, with the hull representing holding patients together and providing a family environment, unity, and harmony. The outrigger portion represents the staff as the support group providing stability and balance, and the lashing twine and sail are the bonds between the canoe and outrigger itself, tying the staff and clients together into one entity. The oars are viewed as the power that moves the children forward toward their ultimate goal, guiding their steering.

Before achieving navigator level, the children must have cultural acceptance and cultural humility, understanding that no one culture is better than the other. The program emphasizes the value and different strengths and weaknesses that different cultures bring to the environment in all settings, including the treatment setting, work, or school. In 2004 the program had the advantage of a connection with one of the 12 local community members chosen to participate in a Hawaiian cultural activity. The 12 individuals chosen sail an outrigger canoe for one month under “traditional” conditions, with no amenities on board. The canoe sails across the native Hawaiian Islands performing a variety of environmental studies and tasks, such as a focus on coral reef issues. One of the individuals chosen in 2004 connected with the children on a daily basis via televideo feed from a satellite to describe her experience throughout the voyage, helping the children to learn more about the island’s culture and heritage.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: March 2004

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address: A variety of different races brought together in the region, including Hapa (a combination of Caucasian and Hawaiian ancestry)

Major Objectives: Teach children to begin taking responsibility in management of their behaviors and learn skills for containing and coping without relying on external forces to do so; encouraging the children to take responsibility in life decisions and understanding what is good and harmful to themselves and other people

Significant Results: Interaction with the children and feedback from the kids demonstrates the impact of the program

External Partners in the Program/Initiative: N/A

Limitations or Problems Encountered: Achieving staff continuity when the facility has a shortage of nurses and needs to pull additional nurses in on an as-needed basis. When this occurs, there is discontinuity that impacts the program.

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: N/A

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program:

- Evaluate your patient population and tailor a program to their specific needs, rather than utilizing “best practices” from other organizations that may not fit the organization’s unique patient needs.
- Adapt to the population needs by seeking feedback from clients and families.

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