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DOH awarded federal grant to establish national Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Behavioral Health Center of Excellence

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) was awarded nearly \$3.5 million from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish a first-of-its-kind national Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Behavioral Health Center of Excellence.

DOH will receive the nearly \$3.5 million in federal funds over the next five years. The Center of Excellence will promote culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral health information and practices; establish a steering committee with participants from across the country to identify emerging issues; and provide training, technical assistance, and consultation to practitioners, educators and community organizations. Key partners include Papa Ola Lokahi and San Jose State University.

“Truly responsive behavioral health services must address stigma and provide resources that address cultural trauma and culturally-informed treatment,” said Marian Tsuji, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health. “We are honored to lead this national Center of Excellence to bring together cultural practitioners, behavioral health experts, and other stakeholders to ensure that we are meeting systemic behavioral health needs of our diverse communities.”

“Today’s announcement is a key step in the Biden-Harris administration’s efforts to eliminate health disparities affecting AA and NHPI communities,” said Krystal Ka’ai, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. “This new center will provide access to culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral health services that are essential as our communities continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic and anti-Asian violence.”

AANHPIs are the fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the country, yet are the least likely group to receive care for mental illness. More than 76% of AANHPI individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness and 93% of those with substance use disorder do not receive treatment.

The AANHPI Center of Excellence will develop infographics and other materials that address behavioral health, including those that provide data disaggregated by race and ethnicity; provide guidance on best practices for improving engagement and retention of AANHPI behavioral health professionals; and serve as an accessible and trusted clearinghouse for evidence-based behavioral health resources and products.

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