



OHA-4

Addressing Native Hawaiian Mental Health Needs Through Culturally Informed Programs and Services

This bill seeks to address the significant and pressing mental health needs of the Native Hawaiian community, by ensuring that at least three members of the Hawai'i State Council on Mental Health have a background in Native Hawaiian cultural concepts or practices relating to mental health.

NATIVE HAWAIIANS AND MENTAL HEALTH: CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Research shows that Native Hawaiians suffer from alarming rates of negative mental health-associated risk factors and outcomes. For example:

- Native Hawaiian keiki are over-represented as victims of **abuse and neglect**.
- **Youth suicide ideation, attempt and death rates** are highest among Native Hawaiians.
- The Native Hawaiian female **self-harm** rate is 8.8% higher than their non-Native Hawaiian female peers.
- 20% of Native Hawaiian mothers ages 20 and younger experience **postpartum depression**, 5% more frequently than their non-Native Hawaiian peers.
- Native Hawaiian adults have the highest rate of **self-evaluating their overall mental and physical health as "not good."**
- **Depressive Disorder** among Native Hawaiian kupuna is 13.4%, higher than the state average.

Unfortunately, despite their overrepresentation in mental health-related statistics, Native Hawaiians also tend to **underutilize existing mental health services, seek therapy only after their illness has become severe or leave treatment prematurely.**

CULTURAL APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH

Health experts and research suggest that mental health programs and services that are **aligned with Native Hawaiian cultural identity, values and beliefs** can significantly increase the number of Native Hawaiians who utilize mental health services. Where they do exist, such culturally grounded programs in Hawai'i have also demonstrated **remarkable success** in effectively improving their clients' mental health and associated outcomes. Unfortunately, for many Native Hawaiians throughout the islands, there may be **a lack of consistently available mental health programs and services** that are sufficiently rooted in Native Hawaiian cultural identity, values, and beliefs.

OHA-4: INFORMING CULTURALLY GROUNDED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

OHA-4 would require at least three members of the **Hawai'i State Council on Mental Health** to have "knowledge of or work experience involving **Native Hawaiian concepts of well-being, culturally-grounded mental health methodologies, or traditional healing or health practices,**" as evidenced by academic training, work history, or substantial community experience as a Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practitioner in healing.



The Hawai'i State Council on Mental Health **advises, monitors, reviews, and evaluates the spectrum of mental health services** provided throughout the islands. The Council also serves as an **advocate for state planning, policies, and services** that treat and support mental health issues.

Members with cultural expertise will help the Council ensure **broader and more consistent access to mental health services and programs that are congruent with Native Hawaiian cultural identity, values and beliefs, and cultural identity**, and that can more effectively close the gap on Native Hawaiian mental health-associated inequalities.

IS THERE A NATIVE HAWAIIAN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON MENTAL HEALTH?

In the Native Hawaiian view, mental health is part of the **larger continuum of physical emotional, and spiritual well-being** that is tied to the well-being of and connections to **our families, the larger community, and the land**.

Culturally grounded programs based on a Native Hawaiian perspective accordingly often seek to address or mitigate underlying risk factors for both mental and physical health, such as **personal or family history, environmental factors, stressful life conditions, lack of social support, and poor access to high quality prevention and intervention services**.

Such programs can be particularly helpful for addressing the Native Hawaiian community's disproportionate negative mental health-associated outcomes; as the Native Hawaiian Health Task Force has reported, ". . . a strong positive Native Hawaiian identity and a supportive environment can help to **mend the cross-generational transmission of cultural trauma** and **lessen the psychosocial and sociocultural stressors** associated with chronic mental and physical diseases."

ARE THERE EXAMPLES OF CULTURALLY GROUNDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HAWAI'I?

Highly successful institutions that provide or integrate culturally grounded mental health services in Hawai'i include: I Ola Lāhui, Waimānalo Health Center, Papa Ola Lōkahi, Kōkua Kalihi Valley, Wāhine Wa'a, Keiki O Ka 'Āina, Molokai Child Abuse Prevention Pathways, The Salvation Army-Family Treatment Services, YWCA of O'ahu, Hāna Ulu Pono, Wahi Kana'aho, Ho'omau Ke Ola, Kū Aloha Ola Mau- Hui Ho'ola O Na Nahulu O Hawai'i, Hina Mauka, and Women's Way, among others.

Where can I find additional resources and information?

Additional information, citations, and readings include: Maui Ola: The Determinants of Health, <https://www.oha.org/health>; Haumea: Transforming the Health of Native Hawaiian Women and Empowering Wāhine Well-Being, www.oha.org/wahinehealth; Kānehō'ālani: Transforming the Health of Native Hawaiian Men, www.oha.org/kanehealth; Integrating Cultural Values Into Mental Health Treatment, http://www.ksbe.edu/assets/spi/hulili/hulili_vol_7/7_Hulili_2011_Vol7_Carlton_et_al.pdf; The National Center on Indigenous Hawaiian Behavioral Health study of prevalence of psychiatric disorders in native Hawaiian adolescents, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16327578/>; Report to the Twenty-Ninth Legislature State Of Hawai'i (2017), Pursuant To Senate Resolution 60, SD1, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313752823_NATIVE_HAWAIIAN_HEALTH_TASK_FORCE_2017_PRELIMINARY_REPORT_AND_RECOMMENDATIONS/download.