

# The Institute for the Advanced Study of Black Family Life & Culture, Inc.



## The Sakhu Project: Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent Well-being and Wholeness



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The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the County of Alameda or the County Behavioral Health Care Services Agency.

# *Our Story*

The product of the Sakhu Project is a new culturally grounded provider training curriculum and model African American treatment plan that is based on African American cultural substance. This curriculum will assist in improving services appropriate to the African American community. The Sakhu Project will allow community-based providers the ability to utilize a mutually interactive application of African wisdom traditions, history, culture, philosophy, and deep thought in the delivery of mental health services to African American clients/consumers.

The Sakhu Project is a call to stop doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. In working effectively with African American clients and consumers, having an appreciation for the specific cultural nuances associated with this cultural template is important. The way African Americans think, the meaning we give to our experiences and what we do everyday is reflected in our cultural metaphors. Understanding the cultural metaphors and nuances that represent the underlying values, beliefs and behaviors is essential to the development of new and innovative culturally grounded approaches to mental health.

The Sakhu Project incorporated and utilized African and African American culture and thought in the "illumination" of culturally congruent well-being and wholeness in the planning and delivery of behavioral health care services to African American people.

*Sincerely,*

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# Sakhu: An African American Provider Training Curriculum

Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent  
Well-being and Wholeness

**INNOVATIVE PROJECT GRANT ROUND TWO AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN  
INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCED STUDY OF BLACK FAMILY LIFE & CULTURE, INC.  
& PHILANTHROPIC VENTURES FOUNDATION  
ON BEHALF OF ALAMEDA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES**

***SERVICE THROUGH SCIENCE***

*“Rain beats a leopard's skin, but it does not wash out the spots”*

*African (Ashanti) Proverb*

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## Project Abstract

*“Sakhu: An African American Provider Training Curriculum - Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent Well-being and Wholeness”*, in title and approach, is designed to intentionally incorporate and utilize African and African American culture and thought in the “illumination” of culturally congruent well-being and wholeness in the planning and delivery of behavioral health care services to African American people.

This Project, was designed to specifically answer the learning question: *What are the cultural and spiritual nuances, beliefs, practices and norms specific to the African American community that should be incorporated into the planning, delivery, and outcomes of mental health and co-occurring conditions services for this community?* The Sakhu project, in the form of an “innovative” culturally grounded provider training curriculum has attempted to: (1) Identify the specific cultural nuances, metaphors, values, beliefs, and behaviors essential to the development of new and innovative culturally grounded approach to mental health; (2) Create an overall Sakhu Prevention/Intervention and Treatment plan for working with African American populations; (3) Design and develop the practical components for the use of African and African American culture, as well as, African centered thought and Black Psychology in Behavioral Health Care services with African American people;(4) Develop a culturally grounded African American Prevention/ Intervention and Treatment (P/I-T) Protocol that identifies the (a) critical knowledge base, (b) requisite cultural congruency, and (c) demonstrable performance mastery.

## Preface

Funded by the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services’ (BHCS) Grant #: 2INN81-L1, *“Sakhu: An African American Provider Training Curriculum - “Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent Well-being and Wholeness”* project was designed to utilize the Institute’s long history as a community-based, nonprofit Black “think-tank” and scientific, educational training and research corporation that specializes in the scientific educational and cultural aspects of family life and human development to develop age-based, culturally-informed provider training curriculum designed to improve effectiveness of behavioral health care services to African American Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) clients/consumers and their families that has been 'field tested' and evaluated by BHCS clients/consumers, family members and Alameda County and its contracted community-based providers.

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) MHA Innovation Grant Program funding is intended to provide mental health systems with an opportunity to learn from innovative approaches. Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) invited members of the community to present fresh and new projects to be funded as Innovation Projects. Innovation Projects were directed to introduce a novel, creative, and/or ingenious approach to a variety of mental health practices that contributed to learning at any point across the spectrum of an individual or family’s needs relating to mental health, from prevention and early intervention to recovery supports

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## Introduction

The Institute for the Advanced Study of Black Family Life and Culture is a community-based organization committed to enhancing the development and lives of Black Families. The Institute has been in the West Oakland community for over 30 years providing programs to promote the educational, social, and cultural experiences of Black children, youth, and families. With this history, the Institute is grateful to BHCS for vision to call for systemic change in its' response to the multi-cultural fabric of the community it serves.

*“Sakhu: An African American Provider Training Curriculum - Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent Well-being and Wholeness”* has taken seriously the full range of possibility of innovative projects that can contribute to new learning relative to mental health. Grounded in the intellectual research and scholarship of the Institute, this curriculum has been developed and crafted through the insights, expertise and opinions of African American consumers, their families, contract providers, senior Black Psychologists and cultural brokers/experts. The results of this exercise in innovation has gone beyond addressing the singular question of, “What are the cultural and spiritual nuances, beliefs, practices and norms specific to the African American community that should be incorporated into the planning, delivery, and outcomes of mental health and co-occurring conditions services for this community?” While addressing that specifically and providing valuable identification and strategies for utilizing African American metaphors, norms and customs in the delivery of mental health services, this curriculum went beyond the scope of work. The provider-training curriculum produced provides Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services the opportunity to interrogate the limitations of the existing discipline supporting its practice and explore a new frontier in the field of psychology that is directly supporting of culturally congruent PEI practice.

In our opinion, we have gone beyond the contract expectation in this service to the County. This curriculum and the provider training it is designed to guide has the potential to not only assist BHCS in achieving system-wide Quality Improvement Services to the African American community, it will give license to and set a standard for truly multi-cultural service and locate Alameda county as the forerunner and national leader in behavioral health care services.

## Paradigm Shift: African Centered

The proposed Sakhu Project is a call to stop doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. In working effectively with African American clients and consumers, having an appreciation for the specific cultural nuances associated with this cultural template is important. What has greater importance, especially for diagnosis and/or differential diagnoses and culturally grounded treatment is the ability to detect, appreciate and utilize the “nuanced” expressions within African American culture and the utilization of cultural “metaphors” and “ethos” that help to give meaning to behavior. The way African Americans think, the meaning we give to our experiences and what we do everyday is reflected in our cultural metaphors. Understanding the cultural metaphors and nuances that

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represent the underlying values, beliefs and behaviors will be essential to the development of new and innovative culturally grounded approaches to mental health. The unquestionable innovation of the proposed Sakhu Project is that it will be guided by a longstanding and deep understanding of African American culture as both a “skill set” and a “paradigmatic prism.” As cultural prism, it will assist mental health practitioners in understanding and interpreting what is a clarification and what is a distortion in the lived experiences of African American people. The Sakhu Project will explore, design and develop a new culturally grounded provider-training curriculum.

## **Theoretical and Philosophical Foundation**

The question of African American culture helps us to understand the “distinction” of being African American. Being “distinct” is not the same as being “different”. Understanding what makes a thing distinct requires an exploration and analysis of its nature, attributes, qualities, features, etc. Too often the understanding of African American human functioning was attempted by comparing African American life with that of White American life. African American life and living is grounded in both environmental conditions and a complex structure of cultural precepts, virtues, values, customs, themes and prerequisites. These traditional African American cultural components serve as the crucial (more often than not disregarded and misunderstood in Mental Health services) African American cultural template. Sakhu Sheti/Djaer emerged from the work of the Institute as a further refinement and deeper extension of Black Psychology’s African essence. Sakhu Sheti/Djaer is the process of understanding, examining, and explicating the meaning, nature and functioning of being human for African people by conducting a deep, profound and penetrating search, study and mastery of the process of “illuminating” the human spirit or essence, as well as all human experiences and phenomena. The Sakhu curriculum design will have a dual focus. It will be designed to (1) serve as a tool used to provide training to improve the “culturally grounded services” of existing non-African American county and contracted community service providers and (2) increase availability and greater involvement of “culturally congruent services” with African American service providers. In resulting in a radically new and innovative skill set, the Sakhu Project will allow County and contracted community-based providers the ability to utilize a mutually interactive application of African wisdom traditions, history, culture, philosophy and deep thought.



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## Contextual Grounding: The Need for Radical Change

**Alameda Call for Innovation:** Provide the mental health system with an opportunity to learn from innovative approaches

### Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services

*African American Utilization Report*

Our Values

Collaborative partnerships with consumers, families, service providers, agencies and communities

Support and encourage consumers and their families to exercise their authority to make decisions, choose from a range of available options and to develop their full capacity to think, speak and act effectively in their own interest

Clinical excellence through the use of best practices, evidence-based practices, effective outcomes, including prevention and early intervention strategies, to promote well-being and an optimal quality of life.

Honor the voices, strengths, leadership, languages and life experiences of ethnically and culturally diverse consumers and their families across the lifespan. We value operationalizing these experiences in our service settings, treatment options, and in the processes we use to engage our communities.

Advocacy and education to eliminate stigma, discrimination, isolation and misunderstanding of persons experiencing mental illness and substance use disorders.

Social inclusion and the full participation of consumers and family members to achieve fuller lives in communities of their choice, where they can live, learn, love, work, play and pray in safety and acceptance.

Recommendation, partial list:

- Adopt community-based consultations by calling on expert(s) from the consumer's community to provide insight into a specific behavior, symptom and possible influencers or triggers, prior to assigning a diagnosis.

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- Solicit input from the consumer and family members and include them in treatment planning.

## **African American Issues Committee (AAIC) and Pool of Consumer Champions (POCC)**

*Having Our Say: Honoring the Experience of African Americans*

- “Informal peer support groups, formal peer provider training, and mental health and spirituality trainings on all levels.”

## **California Department of Mental Health**

*“We Ain’t Crazy, Just Coping with a Crazy System: Pathways into the Black Population for Eliminating Mental Health Study Disparities”*

documents lack of access in Black population. The Report articulated 274 PEI practices, strategies, and recommendations.

Partial list:

- “Seek to heal the whole person instead of addressing various symptoms.
- Mandate culturally congruent mental and emotional assessments to determine needs.
- Establish a set of culturally grounded principles for the Black population and fund only programs and interventions that utilize them.
- Establish oversight and accountability with community appointed “African American Mental Health Community Commissions” in each county
- Establish a funding system that allows community based organization to successfully partner with government on community defined practices, and fund neighborhood mental health prevention efforts for sustainability over time.
- Fund existing culturally grounded congruent integrated programs, projects and practices.
- Support statewide culturally congruent crisis level spirituality interventions.
- Establish a Black care paradigm and certify professionals in culturally congruent mental health care.
- Advocate for and financially support initiatives for positive image of Black culture.

## **California Institute of Mental Health**

*Redefining the Definition of an African American Community Defined Practice*

- “The issue of access, funding application, governing policy, implementation procedures as well as assessment and evaluation, including the actual instruments, i.e. forms, tone, etc. to record and document the experience should all be equally held to the requirement of African American cultural congruency.”

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## **Contract Provider Focus Group Summary**

- There needs to be a buy in from the county. How invested is the county in this?
- The training needs to be deep and dirty. May have to do some shaming the same way it was needed to roll out the co-occurring disorders.
- Culturally specific training for African American people is needed.

## **Consumer and Families Focus Group Summary (4/11/13)**

- *...so I really think the system does a disservice to African Americans there when you just really set your foot down, because I don't believe that...that you know if a people are coming to access health care and are continuous (?) with that and are going along with whatever the higher program is*
- *, I think there's a disconnect between...culture and...and what happens in the experience of getting care you know whether it's in a medical setting or whether it's in a...a clinic and...um..*
- *-- most people are very uncomfortable having to sit in the presence of a person that have visible signs of mental illness, you couple that with being white as a therapist and being Black I mean even if you're not a therapist, I mean just the Black-white relationship, white people are uncomfortable in the presence of Black people when you put a mental issue there, it's a total uncomfortability*

## **Learning Question One:**

“What are the cultural and spiritual nuances, beliefs, practices and norms specific to the African American community that should be incorporated into the planning, delivery, and outcomes of mental health and co-occurring conditions services for this community?”

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## Curriculum Training Approach

The specific approach for the training associated with *“The Sakhu Project: Incorporating the Illumination of Culturally Congruent Well-being and Wholeness”* curriculum framework will be African Centered and designed as a structurally interlocking learning/development experience that builds on the application of African American cultural orientation and mutually reinforcing training techniques. The three interlocking mutually reinforcing training techniques are as follows:

1. **Instruction/Discussion (didactic, provocative and inspirational)**  
The systematic introduction and discussion of basic ideas and background information  
Format: Lecture and Discussion
2. **Experiential/Applications**  
The intentional arrangement of interactional learning situations that are designed as applications of specific concepts, ideas and/or experiences designed to demonstrate levels of mastery  
Format: Structured Experiences and Interactions
3. **Mock Clinical Trials (Demonstration/Performance)**  
The appropriation (reproduction) of simulated scenarios reflective of real world possibilities  
Format: Small Group, Role Playing, Development Team Interactions and Exercises

## Curriculum Framework

*“The Sakhu Project Culturally Grounded Provider Training Curriculum”* consists of five 2-hours sessions. Through its training, *“The Sakhu Project Culturally Grounded Provider Training Curriculum”* will connect providers with positive aspects of African and African American culture and traditions; ways in which to incorporate cultural nuances in the delivery of mental health services to African American populations.

## Module Objectives

The objectives of *The Sakhu Project Culturally Grounded Provider Training Curriculum* are to:

- Connect service providers with positive aspects of African and African American culture and traditions
- Improve the capacity and ability of existing county and contracted community service providers to deliver

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“culturally-grounded services” to African American populations

- Increase the availability and greater involvement of African American service providers with the delivery of “culturally congruent services” to African American populations

Each “Module” will be supported by intentionally selected guiding proverbs, a thought for the day, music, films, study materials, and reading assignments.

## **Preparatory Readings**

### **African American Utilization Review: Goals and Objectives**

**We Ain't Crazy, Just Coping with a Crazy System: Pathways into the Black population for Eliminating Mental Health Disparities**

**Redefining of the African American Community Defined Practice**

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## **MODULE ONE: Cultural World-view, Mental Health Practice and the Limitations of Western Psychology**

**TRAINING OBJECTIVE:** To provide an orientation to, and understanding of, African American culture and its importance and relevance to the therapeutic (clinical) setting and the limitations of white psychology and its applicability to providing culturally responsive services to African Americans.

### **GUIDING QUOTE(S)/PROVERB(S):**

<b>Specific Objective(s)</b>	<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Instructional Aids/ Source Material(s)</b>	<b>Outcome Measure &amp; Evaluation</b>
Provide an overview of technical meaning of African American culture  Explain the “Three-tiers of Culture” figure  Identify and define the nine cultural themes of Authentic Behavior  Identify and define the eight cultural precepts of Authentic behavior  Understand ways in which one’s values influence how they provide services  Examine paradigms, epistemology, logic of western psychology  Understand the basis for culturally congruent clinical training	Discuss concept of culture  Provide an overview of African American culture  Lead dialog/discourse on “Three-tiers of Culture” figure  Lead dialog/discourse on the nine cultural themes of Authentic behavior  Discuss ways in which culture influences behavior  Discuss paradigm, epistemology, and logic of mainstream (White) Psychology  Discuss grand narrative of mainstream (White) psychology and implications for treatment and service delivery	Charts: • Institute’s Culture Chart  PowerPoint : “Cultural World-view, Mental Health Practice and the Limitations of Western Psychology”  Books: African American CRDP Population Report “We Ain’t Crazy”  Music:	Practitioner(s) will be able to: 1. Discuss “ the Three -tier of Culture” figure  2. Identify and recognize behavior consistent with nine cultural themes.  3. Identify and recognize behavior consistent with eight cultural precepts.  4. Classify behaviors as belonging, to one of the four types of cultural manifestation  5. Identify limitations of traditional (White) psychology

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	Discuss ways in which providers own cultural orientation influences delivery of services		
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## MODULE TWO: Revisiting African American Mental Illness and the Utilization of Spiritual and Cultural Nuances

TRAINING OBJECTIVE: To review African American conception of mental illness and provide an understanding of African American spiritual and cultural nuances and their utilization in providing culturally responsive services to African Americans.

### GUIDING QUOTE(S)/PROVERB(S):

Specific Objective(s)	Learning Activity	Instructional Aids/ Source Material(s)	Outcome Measure & Evaluation
<p>Examine nature of African American metaphors and cultural nuances</p> <p>Examine nature of African American norms, customs and beliefs</p> <p>Understand how to use cultural lens (metaphors and nuances) in assessment and treatment</p> <p>Examine theory of culturecology and its importance in understanding mental health issues</p> <p>Explore the importance of family evaluation</p> <p>Examine treatment as a partnership</p> <p>Integrate culturecology in clinical interventions</p>	<p>Discuss grand narrative of African-centered psychology and implications for treatment and service delivery</p> <p>Discuss African American norms, customs and beliefs relative to mental well-being</p> <p>Discuss African American conception of health and well-being</p> <p>Discuss nature of culturecology and its importance in understanding mental health issues</p>	<p>Charts: Rescuing and Reframing African American customs, norms and metaphors (beliefs)</p> <p>PowerPoint: “Revisiting African American Mental Illness and the Utilization of Spiritual and Cultural Nuances”</p> <p>Books: African American CRDP Population Report “We Ain’t Crazy”</p> <p>Culturecology article</p> <p>Music:</p>	<p>Practitioners will:</p> <p>Understand African American norms, customs and beliefs</p> <p>Know nature of African American metaphors and cultural nuances</p> <p>Know how to use African American norms, customs and beliefs in diagnosis and treatment process</p> <p>Understand theory of culturecology</p>



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## MODULE THREE: Toward a New Nosology: Black Mental Illness, Diagnosis and Misdiagnosis

TRAINING OBJECTIVE: To provide a framework for re-examining the issue of mental illness in the African American community and to obtain an understanding of a new paradigm for the delivery of mental health services to African American populations

### GUIDING QUOTE(S)/PROVERB(S):

Specific Objective(s)	Learning Activity	Instructional Aids/ Source Material(s)	Outcome Measure & Evaluation
<p>Explore new language and logic of African centered healing</p> <p>Understand Skh Djr and the process of culturalization</p> <p>Examine concept of <i>Serudja Ta</i>: Reciprocal Rebirthing of Personhood and Neighborhood</p> <p>Understand African-American culture and context and misdiagnosis</p> <p>Understand difference between “spirit damage” and mental illness</p>	<p>Discuss ways in which one’s theoretical orientation and training influences the process of diagnosis and treatment</p> <p>Discuss Skh Djr and the therapeutic process</p> <p>Provide information on healthy behavior based upon African American culture, metaphors, customs and traditions (Ma’at)</p> <p>Discuss culturecology and the process of Serudja Ta as innovative Behavioral health model</p>	<p>Handouts/Charts:</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation: “Toward a New Nosology: Black Mental Illness, Diagnosis and Misdiagnosis”</p> <p>Articles/Books:</p> <p>Films/Music: “Ray Charles clip”</p>	<p>Practitioner(s) will:</p> <p>Understand the link between culturally congruent nosology, diagnosis and treatment with African American populations.</p> <p>Be able to utilize African American cultural and spiritual nuances</p> <p>Understand Skh Sdi and Sku Djr as a new and culturally congruent therapeutic process</p>

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## MODULE FOUR: *Skh Sdi/Djr*: Initiating Treatment Planning and Therapeutic Process with African American populations

TRAINING OBJECTIVE: To understand the Culturally congruent process of engagement with African American clients

### GUIDING QUOTE(S)/PROVERB(S):

Specific Objective(s)	Learning Activity	Instructional Aids/Source Material(s)	Outcome Measure & Evaluation
<p>Understand <i>Skh Djr</i> and the process of culturalization</p> <p>Examine the process of engagement with African American metaphors, customs and traditions</p> <p>Examine concept of Serudja Ta: Reciprocal Rebirthing of Personhood and neighborhood</p> <p>Review African American psychologists theories, models, paradigms and concepts</p> <p>Understand the nature of culturally congruent treatment planning and therapeutic process</p> <p>Examine treatment as a partnership</p> <p>Integrate culturecology in clinical interventions</p> <p>Discuss nature of African-American spirit illness (mental illness)</p> <p>Recognize multiple traumas and dual diagnosis: complex personal trauma, historical trauma, generational trauma</p>	<p>Discuss ways in which one’s self-awareness and perception influences the process of engagement.</p> <p>Recognizing and utilizing culturally congruent “grand narrative” and culturally specific boundaries</p> <p>Discuss traditional patterns of engagement of clients</p> <p>Examine ways in which African American culture has different sets of rules for engagement</p> <p>Sample mock clinical assessment (sample vignettes), treatment planning and therapeutic intervention</p>	<p>Charts:</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation:  <i>“Skh Sdi/Djr</i>: (Illumination of the Spirit): African American Treatment Planning</p> <p>Articles/Books:</p> <p>Films/Music:                      Daughters of the Dust</p>	<p>Practitioner(s) will be able to:</p> <p>Identify areas of “bi-cultural diagnosis”</p> <p>Construct culturally congruent treatment plan</p> <p>Co-craft culturally congruent therapeutic process (recognize and utilize cultural/ spiritual nuances)</p>

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## MODULE Five: The Sakhu process and Procedures System wide Quality Improvement Advance and Implementation of Services Appropriate to African American Populations

TRAINING OBJECTIVE: To examine the contours, conditions and constraints associated with implementing culturally congruent (African American) professional development training and organizational capacity enhancement

### GUIDING QUOTE(S)/PROVERB(S):

Specific Objective(s)	Learning Activity	Instructional Aids/Source Material(s)	Outcome Measure & Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide basic orientation to the implementation of system-wide Quality improvement and manpower development</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to apply Sahku process and strategies to contract providers serving African American clients</li> <li>• Guide County supported development of new African American culturally congruent PEI services</li> </ul>	<p>Conduct organizational self-assessment</p> <p>Review new skill set, knowledge base and language and logic of healing</p> <p>Align Sahku with existing agency procedures and policies</p> <p>Develop training of staff implementation plans</p> <p>African American culturally congruent assessment</p> <p>Creating culturally congruent therapeutic (Sahku) practice</p>	<p>Charts:</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>-Sahku system wide quality Improvement/ Implementation</p> <p>Articles/Books:</p> <p>Films/Music</p>	<p>Practitioner(s) will be able to:</p> <p>Retrofit existing practices to Sahku</p> <p>Design new culturally congruent practices appropriate to African American clients</p>