



Faith-based Leaders and Behavioral Health Professionals: Increasing Well-Being Together

A Training and Certification Program for Faith-Based Leaders and Behavioral Health Providers

Two out of three people in crisis or distress seek support from their faith-based leader before considering behavioral health services. Faith-based leaders who understand the value of behavioral health services play a pivotal role in reducing stigma and increasing access to care, particularly for underserved populations. Behavioral Health professionals who understand spirituality as a healing factor have better outcomes of care for the people they serve. By strengthening collaboration between faith-based organizations and behavioral health services, we improve individual, family, and community health and well-being.

Stepping Higher, Inc., in partnership with the SDSU Social Policy Institute, has offered a 15-hour Faith-Based & Behavioral Health Training Academy for the past five years. This Training Academy offers an interactive, virtual approach to bridge faith-based and behavioral health stakeholders in the community to:

- Reduce stigma to increase access to care
- Foster collaboration between faith communities and Behavioral Health providers
- Enhance capacity to build family resilience
- Improve overall community wellness

Session Highlights

Session 1 :

- Mental Health, Spirituality & Wellness
- Trauma-Informed Care

Session 2 :

- Stigma Reduction & Engagement
- Mental Health Conditions & Wellness

Session 3 :

- Using Faith & Spiritual Practices
- Community-based & Justice-Related Mental Health Services

Session 4 :

- Substance Use & Recovery
- Role of Faith-based Community in Promoting Wellness, Referrals and Resources

Continuing Education Credits Available

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Stepping Higher Academy has demonstrated effectiveness in reaching new and diverse community members while fostering greater awareness and building strong collaborative relationships between behavioral health and faith-based support systems. Additionally, the Academy enhances professionals' ability to provide informed and confident guidance, along with access to necessary services.

Participant Knowledge and Comfort in Behavioral Health Services:

- 98% of participants reported feeling highly informed about accessing mental health and substance use resources, indicating they know where to get assistance and are comfortable discussing these issues.
- 99% of respondents self-report that they feel better equipped to refer others for formal behavioral health services and integrate faith/spiritual support into treatment plans.

Community Education Impact:

- 98% of attendees of Stepping Higher, Inc.'s Community Education Presentations consistently report high satisfaction, finding the information current, relevant, and easy to understand.
- 100% of participants highlighted the program's effectiveness in improving understanding of topics and introducing valuable local resources.

From 2019-2024, SHI and SPI facilitated 17 Academies, training over 500 participants

Instructions and Materials Available in Both English and Spanish

THE OPPORTUNITY

We are committed to equipping leaders and stakeholders to address ongoing behavioral health needs through collaboration between faith-based and behavioral health agencies. Our Training Academy helps to reduce stigma and build bridges that inspire and inform local leaders to create a community centered vision for health and well-being.

CONTACT

For more information, please reach out to:

Lori Clarke,
SPI Director
lscarke@sdsu.edu

Dr. Carole Rainey-O'Neil,
Development Director
steppnhigher@aol.com

