



# Substance Use and Addiction Services for American Muslims: A Case Study of Alliance Wellness Center

Bloomington, Minnesota



Institute for  
Social Policy &  
Understanding



**Stanford**  
MEDICINE

Muslim Mental Health &  
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# Executive Summary

While substance use and addiction concerns in American Muslim communities are not a novel issue, they remain an area of mental health and wellness that is often ignored or neglected because of the stigma, shame, and lack of knowledge surrounding these issues. As an evolving and increasingly prevalent concern, the genesis of organizations explicitly catered to address the spiritual, cultural, and faith-based needs of diverse American Muslim communities is necessary. One such organization is the Alliance Wellness Center located in Bloomington, Minnesota, which was founded to serve East African Muslim communities in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. In this report, we highlight the stories of inception, operations, and community impact of Alliance Wellness Center, exploring its commitment to the accessibility of evidence-informed services that are novel, innovative, and culturally sensitive. Celebrating its successes and effective navigation of challenges, this report aims to share accomplishments, lessons, and advice for realizing similar feats by comparable initiatives intended to serve American Muslim communities.

## Lessons Learned from This Report

- 1. Aspiring change-makers should reflect on how their lived experience and context shaped their passions and interests when considering their future paths.** The neighborhood that Mr. Shafie grew up in exposed him to concerns that were otherwise unseen by his neighbors, friends, and family. He used this to pursue a degree in social work, which facilitated his path into creating the agency he knew was needed in his community.
- 2. Meaningful change takes time and is a slow evolutionary growth.** Mr. Shafie described how the past decade has seen a scaling up of his agency and program to continue to grow slowly and intentionally.
- 3. There are gender-based differences due to cultural values, norms, and beliefs, which make it difficult for women to access services and care.** The examples presented in this case study illustrate that the agency has frequently encountered gender-based disparities rooted in cultural norms and has taken action to intervene when deemed necessary.

- 4. Holistic care is more thorough and requires intentionality.** When delivering care and services to clients, many factors that are important from the clients' perspective may fall outside the traditional scope of mental health services. Team members attend to both basic and extended needs, thereby supplementing existing frameworks and contributing to more comprehensive and holistic care.
- 5. Sustainability is a by-product of pragmatic mindsets and culturally sensitive decision-making.** Mr. Shafie demonstrated strategic adaptability by pivoting following the setbacks experienced with the women's program, subsequently refining his branding to focus on alternative areas.

## Introduction to Alliance Wellness Center

### A Visionary Mission

"Designed by people that look like us, for people that look like us," Yussuf Shafie, MSW, LICSW, LADC,<sup>1</sup> founder and CEO, describes the Alliance Wellness Center as a space for people to feel "welcome and at home." The agency has a vision to become known for its excellence in substance abuse services with a special focus on addressing mental health by specifically serving Muslim and East African populations. Alliance Wellness Center is an addiction treatment center that provides a broad range of social services, detoxification services, sober living homes, inpatient and outpatient clinical care, medication management, community education, and a methadone and suboxone clinic in the metropolitan Minneapolis area.

### From Inception to Realization

Witnessing the marginalization of Muslim communities struggling with substance use and addiction services, Mr. Shafie set out on a path to bring the change he believed in, against all odds. As a child of immigrants, Mr. Shafie was often questioned about his chosen profession and asked, "What happened to being a doctor or engineer?" Throughout his journey, his vision and ambition to serve his community were misconstrued as an aimless pursuit because people in Mr. Shafie's community refused to acknowledge the presence of substance use and addiction within the community, saying, "We're Muslims. We don't do drugs." But as Mr. Shafie pointed out, "a mile away, there are people that are homeless, that are Muslims, that are doing drugs and maybe are struggling." His consistency and alignment with his personal values

<sup>1</sup> Master of Social Work (MSW), Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW), Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC)

and mission allowed him to establish a strong presence and agency within the community.

Growing up in a neighborhood where drug and alcohol use were prevalent, his curiosity empowered him to keep searching for answers to why these challenges existed in his primarily Muslim and immigrant community. He recalls seeing people struggle and feeling too sheltered to understand what these families were experiencing. As his journey progressed, he sought to create accessible services for individuals struggling with substance use and addiction issues. He described his motivations for starting Alliance Wellness Center as stemming from his upbringing in the suburbs of Minneapolis, saying, “and then, when I saw . . . a lot of people that were struggling, and I was like, ‘Wow, there is a need for services in this community.’” The early exposure to the silent struggle of Muslims in his community and beyond shaped Mr. Shafie’s commitment to helping people and choosing social work as his path to do so. During his internship at a federally qualified health center (FQHC) in South Minneapolis, Mr. Shafie gained even more exposure to drug and alcohol use. That experience gave him the confidence to say, “There’s a need for this, and I should go do something about it and help my people, and that’s how I got the idea of Alliance Wellness.”

## Services Provided

### Services

The past decade has witnessed an evolution at the Alliance Wellness Center. As a for-profit company that bills either through insurance or directly, the center has grown over time, employing approximately 75 staff members and serving nearly 370 clients. The organization is served through strong internal systems with an intentional approach to growth, as Mr. Shafie reported, “I’ve put systems in place to make sure that we do things the right way, grow slowly, and then don’t overgrow.”

Alliance Wellness Center provides various services for every stage of care, from early intervention to long-term recovery, focusing specifically on the needs of the individual. The agency primarily provides treatment to individuals seeking to recover from their substance use and addictions. Mr. Shafie shared that they offer outpatient treatment for substance use and mental health care, for which they have addiction counselors, mental health therapists, and psychiatric services that can prescribe and manage medication. Other services include inpatient residential facilities that house 52 beds for men, wherein people can stay between 90 days and six months. Mr. Shafie also shared that they

are working to build a community mental health clinic. Alliance Wellness Center takes pride in the culturally sensitive practices that are infused into their services. Mr. Shafie detailed the diversity of services: “We take them to Jummah. We all wear khamis, and the girls wear the abaya, because spirituality is something that’s important to them. They have a place where they can pray. The food is halal. Half of the staff are from the community that we serve. They’re Muslims. They are trained in cultural diversity before they start working with us.”

Not only do they cater to individuals seeking treatment, but they also provide psychoeducation about addiction as a disease to help families better understand how to support their loved ones. “We are the bridge between the family and the community,” Mr. Shafie stated. “Alliance Wellness focuses on the things that many other treatment centers may not focus on because of the holistic approach that emphasizes spirituality, community connection and personal growth.”

The team goes beyond clinical care to meet basic needs, such as buying living essentials or providing calling cards and WhatsApp access so clients can stay connected with loved ones—an essential service for members of his community who often have family internationally. Encompassing care for their clients in this way is unique to Alliance Wellness Center; similar care remains unaddressed at other agencies that do not emphasize cultural sensitivity. Mr. Shafie and his team prioritize the creation of community through meeting the basic needs of the individuals as well as their treatment needs. Mr. Shafie reflected, “A lot of these treatment centers that are based on Western culture might not understand that. But for us, that’s important.”

While the services may not be entirely novel, offering them all within a single agency marks a major breakthrough. Alliance Wellness Center is among the first culturally sensitive agencies to provide such comprehensive care for traditionally marginalized and underserved communities. In conjunction with the intentionality behind the services at Alliance Wellness Center, the community members’ representation in the team demonstrates a commitment to comprehensive and sensitive wellness and healing.

### Frameworks or Methodologies Followed

Alliance Wellness Center employs evidence-based modalities and practices in the services it provides. Specifically, Mr. Shafie identified Temperament-Based Therapy (TBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT),

and Motivational Interviewing as integral frameworks at the organization. Oftentimes, these frameworks can be unfamiliar to the community, but they are well researched and offer effective pathways to recovery. As a brief overview, TBT focuses on developing an understanding of one's temperaments and how they relate to a behavior that they are intending to change. DBT, in a similar vein, prioritizes the possibility that multiple things can be true at the same time and helps individuals form more nuanced perceptions of themselves and their world through the development of practical skills. Lastly, Motivational Interviewing uses a series of questions to empower individuals to assess their current circumstances, overcome barriers, and prepare for change.

In a different vein, Mr. Shafie presented an anecdote about the circumstances in the communities he works with, sharing that the philosophy of the agency is to "meet people where they are at" and empower them to recover at a pace that they are amenable to. This principle, however, is often met with resistance, with families asking the agency to move their loved one from their home into inpatient services. Mr. Shafie will intervene by introducing the concept of harm reduction. He stated: "A lot of our communities don't understand harm reduction. They're like, 'You still want them to use drugs?' Well, yeah, they're going to use either way, at least let them use safely.' Some people might struggle with that. But as Muslims, I know it's hard for us, but that's just reality."

There may sometimes be a misalignment in the family's expectations of the agency and how the agency functions, indicating the prevalent need for these services. Mr. Shafie highlighted that, considering these valid concerns, the agency operates to build more of a connection and therapeutic alliance with the client to prepare them for change. Abiding by these principles in the face of the growing demand and the conflicting expectations from the community presents particular successes and challenges for Alliance Wellness Center.

## Success and Challenges

### Successes

The steady growth at the Alliance Wellness Center over the last decade indicates significant success that has allowed the center to prosper and become a transformative cornerstone for culturally and spiritually centered healing. One of the definitive markers of success is its alumni program. As Mr. Shafie shared, "We've been very successful. Honestly, half of our staff are alumni. So they went through the program

two, four, or five years ago, and we hired them to be managers. So they do all the work right now. They're helping the same people they used to use drugs with three years ago—now they're helping them."

Mr. Shafie uses the alumni program, upon completion and becoming employees, as a measure of success, because they become beacons of hope and healing for others in similar circumstances. Reflecting on measures of success for alumni broadly, Mr. Shafie said, "The center is a safe space for them, and they just hang out. That's how we measure success. Some of them get a job, some of them go back to their family, and some are divorced and remarried. There are so many ways that we measure success."

Another key success of the agency is the intersections that it caters to, as the Muslim and, particularly, the East African immigrant Muslim community was otherwise neglected. Growing up in Minnesota, Mr. Shafie saw many people in his neighborhood struggling and suffering with no space to access care. The very existence of Alliance Wellness Center, which has served approximately 400 individuals over the past decade, represents a significant achievement. Each of these 400 individuals embodies a narrative of renewed opportunity, and the center's impact is further amplified as these individuals contribute to the well-being and resilience of their communities.

Recognizing his role in a larger, interconnected system, Mr. Shafie has prioritized forming collaborations to create well-connected treatment solutions and smoother transitions between different parts of the system. He described Alliance as "very well connected with other programs," sharing that the organization "works with the hospitals and a lot of different nonprofit agencies. We work with a lot of different people, honestly, from all over the country." One of the organization's accomplishments, specifically in Minnesota, is training other programs. Mr. Shafie recalled, "They've asked me, 'Hey, how do you better work with the Muslim community?' or 'How do you do that?'" As a center that is focused on spiritually centered and culturally sensitive solutions, Mr. Shafie has the opportunity to bring his years of experience to the broader community, with the hope that it will reach more people.

An unacknowledged success of Alliance Wellness Center is withstanding significant hardships, challenges, and skeptics that encouraged Mr. Shafie to ignore his instinct to serve his community in this way. In the early stages of his work, members of the community attempted to dissuade him from pursuing social work and, over time, sought to undermine the legitimacy of the needs he had identified. They questioned both

the reality of these needs and his capacity to exercise agency and effect the change he aspired to bring about within the community. For 10 years, Mr. Shafie's persistence and resilience have been a testament to the dedication of the team at Alliance Wellness Center and have likely contributed to the formulation of the safe space that the center has become. Mr. Shafie remarked, "The system is not really successful. It doesn't make it easier for us to be successful business owners. I got lucky, and I worked hard, honestly. It took a while for them to trust me."

Alliance Wellness Center has built a strong community presence, delivered intentional holistic care, expanded access to culturally responsive services, and, above all, proven its ability to sustain and thrive. The cyclical model of hiring individuals who have completed the program to "pay it forward" not only creates employment opportunities for those who have embarked on a journey of sobriety and recovery but also increases the long-term sustainability of the organization by allowing for continued authenticity of the cultural and faith-centric programming and service provision. Such successes are often layered with barriers and challenges, which the Alliance Wellness Center has worked to overcome.

## Challenges

Naturally, as Alliance Wellness Center grew into a pioneering organization, it faced significant challenges. When asked about the challenges that he faced in the last 10 years of leading Alliance Wellness, Mr. Shafie shared two of the most salient: stigma and misunderstanding and community mistrust.

### Stigma and Misunderstanding

Community members often view addiction as a series of poor choices rather than a treatable disease, further reinforcing the stigma faced by those struggling with it. There are complex neurobiological and social factors that reinforce the use of substances, which can turn into an addiction that can be very difficult to break. Without awareness and understanding, community members may shame others, or those who use substances may internalize a sense of shame, leading to perpetual stigma. Mr. Shafie detailed the experience of stigma:

“When I talked to the mosque four or five years ago, they're like, 'No, no, you're creating problems, stop telling people about this, we do not have addiction problems.' They just kind of shamed people, which is unfortunate. But now this stuff is getting everywhere. The community leaders are struggling; one of the imam's

sons overdosed. It's like you can't hide it. The imam's son was leading Taraweeh two years ago. Now he's using fentanyl. It's becoming a big problem in our community. We can't hide it anymore; before, you could hide, but this thing is just everywhere.

In this powerful anecdote, Mr. Shafie shared how stigma within the community has historically led to the denial of addiction concerns. Mr. Shafie's account of the imam's son presents a harrowing and unfortunate example of how deeply rooted and connected mental health concerns, substance use disorders, and stigma related to both can be. His story highlights how insidious and unsparing addiction concerns can be in the community, dispelling the myth that a certain level of religiosity or inclination to faith alone can be protective of substance use or addictive tendencies. The powerful example forces a painful but necessary confrontation with the harmful effects of stigma on the community. As Mr. Shafie stated, the problem has become too widespread to ignore, breaking the illusion that silence could serve as protection.

Stigma is even more severe for women, often creating significant and unique barriers to care, services, and treatment. Mr. Shafie shared that a women-specific program at Alliance Wellness Center had to be shut down due to financial constraints: "We started a women's program, and it didn't go so well. I was losing money for over 12 months, and I couldn't do it anymore." The reason for the lack of use of the program leading to its shuttering was not due to a lack of need. Rather, as he described, gender-based differences in the cultural communities he serves and how identities, cultural norms, and values all lead to gendered stigma and barriers for women accessing care. He described the assumptions about women accessing care and their character, which is why the inpatient program did not work: "If some woman is struggling with addiction, she can't just be in inpatient treatment for 90 days and just be out of her home. People are going to ask, 'Where's so-and-so? Where did she go? Why was she gone if she's not married? She's 25. Why has she gone with some guy?'"

In a similar anecdote, Mr. Shafie explained how a woman from his community who was carrying lifesaving Narcan requested his support in providing psychoeducation to her mother regarding the drug. The mother had found the naloxone, which comes with a needle, medication gloves, and alcohol wipe, "and she was freaking out." The mother's reaction was to assume that her daughter was using drugs, which resulted in the call to Mr. Shafie, where he explained to the concerned mother that "she's not using drugs. She's helping someone who might be overdosing,

and she has this medication, which is a lifesaver.” The mother responded with, “Well, why would you use that? Do you have friends who are using drugs?” Mr. Shafie explained, “She doesn’t understand that we might be at a grocery store someday, and someone might be overdosing there, but her mother doesn’t understand that concept. It is two different generations.” The dichotomy of the two generations is contrasted in this mother’s sense of fear related to substance use and her daughter’s proactiveness in having access to resources to respond to a potential crisis. The understanding that this kit could be used for anyone in a lifesaving way could not seem to alter this mother’s perceptions of its utility, illustrating how deep the stigma against substance use is.

### Community Mistrust

As a recognized leader in culturally sensitive services, the agency may encounter community expectations that diverge from its internal protocols and professional standards. Discrepancies between the community’s expectations—such as the pace of treatment, structure of care plans, or anticipated outcomes—and the realities of clinical practice may foster skepticism regarding the agency’s competence, authenticity, or efficacy. Mr. Shafie noted that even well-intentioned organizations like his own can initially face community doubt. Using fraud, a recurring challenge in his community, as an example, he reflected, “When, like fraud happens, I’m like, please, please don’t be from my community, and oftentimes, it happens. So, they don’t know if you’re legit or not. But after a while, you build trust.” His remarks underscore the importance of sustained engagement and consistency in building credibility within communities that have experienced past breaches of trust.

Furthermore, most preexisting established or traditional healthcare systems have oppressed clients and families seeking care at Alliance Wellness, which makes the struggles with navigating the existing healthcare, correctional, and social services systems even more challenging. Mr. Shafie acknowledged that “the system is hard sometimes for people” and that he “is the part of the system.” Reflecting on the challenges of navigating the various systems that individuals struggling with substance use must go through and the systems that businesses like Alliance Wellness must work with(in), Mr. Shafie said:

“It’s hard for people when they get in the system to get out of the system. Like, go to jail. Come out. Lose hope. Do drugs. Steal. Go back to jail. Come out. Commit another crime. Go to another county and commit another crime. Come back. Go to jail. Overdose. Go to the

hospital. Here’s a Narcan. Come back to treatment and then go out. Overdose. Come back again. Go to jail. Now, immigration is bothering you. You missed your immigration appointment. Go to treatment. Didn’t like it. Come out. Go to another treatment. Come out. Go back to jail. Overdose. Go to the hospital. It’s like, oh my goodness, you know, and all these systems won’t talk to each other.

Here, Mr. Shafie highlighted the time-consuming, frustrating, and often merciless experience of someone trying to break out of multiple oppressive systems that prevent them from aligning with their personal values, healing, and leading a life of dignity, empowerment, and agency. He also pointed out that some of the flaws in the systems are a result of the siloed nature of services. This leads to service providers and institutions not being well connected to one another, which means that people do not receive end-to-end or wraparound services and can, unfortunately, fall through the cracks between systems and services. He described:

“That’s the frustrating part. The hospital will literally say, ‘Here’s a Narcan. Okay, have a good day. You’re fine. You’re alive. Now get out.’ Instead of holding that person and saying, ‘Okay, you need to go to treatment,’ or ‘Where can I take you?’ or ‘What can I do for you?’ I mean, the system is like when you see a doctor—they’ll talk to you for 10 minutes, and they move on to the next patient. It’s the same idea.

Finally, reflecting on his personal experience starting Alliance Wellness Center as a young leader, Mr. Shafie sometimes encounters resistance from older professionals. “I think there are a lot of microaggressions. I’m young, you know,” Mr. Shafie stated. “Some of my staff are 45, 50 years old, and I’m a 35-year-old telling them what to do. Sometimes people don’t like that.”

Without a doubt, systems are created through a distribution of power. Consistent with certain cultural values reflected within this community, there may be a bias underlying the notion that a leader or someone with power ought to be older to command a certain respect. This dynamic reveals how cultural expectations around age and authority can create challenges for young leaders like Mr. Shafie, even as they provide essential, lifesaving services that are critically needed within the community.

## Overcoming the Challenges

Mr. Shafie shared that his primary way of addressing and overcoming these challenges is through education and collaboration. He frequently attends conferences, engages in cross-sector training, and builds partnerships with diverse organizations, service providers, and agencies. Mr. Shafie also provides training to organizations seeking to serve Muslim clients better and highlights that. A few of the approaches he shared include “education, going to conferences, seeing what other people are doing, seeing what other models people are using, learning from my mistakes, learning how to cope with the system, knowing my privilege, being part of the system, knowing what I’m good at and what I’m not good at, collaborating with other agencies, helping other people in the community [to better serve the Muslim community].”

Mr. Shafie takes a multidisciplinary approach to ensure that the challenges he faces do not become pitfalls or barriers for the center. Mr. Shafie takes an intentional and holistic approach to overcome these hardships. He engages in continuous learning and teaching to address issues such as the lack of awareness and education. He believes in breaking those siloes and forming greater connections, working with hospitals and nonprofit agencies to ensure that the dialogue he hopes to have translates into meaningful system changes and collaborations.

## Impact on Community

Alliance Wellness Center has served hundreds of clients, many of whom return as employees or continue giving back to the community in other ways. Mr. Shafie’s work in his community also has a bidirectional emotional impact on him, as he stated: “We went to a funeral yesterday. We do a lot of funerals, and we talk about addiction and using naloxone and always carrying Narcan.” Even in these moments of profound grief, Mr. Shafie uses those opportunities to serve the community through the sharing of knowledge, tips, tools, and resources. Reflecting on the impact of Alliance Wellness on the community, Mr. Shafie shared: “We’ve helped so many people. I can’t count. There are about 30 or 40 alumni who are working, who are sober, who went to jail four or five times, but finally came to our center and got their life together. Some of them are married.” Furthermore, the example of the mother and daughter discussed previously highlights the generational work that Mr. Shafie can do through conversations and education on the importance of the larger community being a part of substance use addiction and overdose prevention.

The services provided by Alliance Wellness Center generate ripple effects throughout the community, as each individual who engages with and successfully completes the program contributes to broader patterns of healing and resilience. The recovery and sustained sobriety of clients not only transform their own lives but also positively impact their families, social networks, and the wider community. In this way, the center’s influence is cumulative and far-reaching, expanding its impact through each interaction and successful outcome.

## Advice for the Future

### Room for Growth

A decade-long road of successes and challenges allows Mr. Shafie to reflect on the potential areas of growth for Alliance Wellness Center. He believes that preventative efforts need to be made in younger populations, specifically youth aged 10–12, even though “there is not a lot of money in prevention,” because “that’s when they start smoking weed, doing drugs, experimenting, and experiencing peer pressure. So, I think we need to do more education on this.”

Another area that requires more growth, according to Mr. Shafie, is aftercare following discharge from rehabilitation programs. Typically, treatment programs are three or six months, and once these programs are completed, clients return to the same environment that facilitated the problematic habits and behaviors. He suggested that newly discharged clients need more housing, and organizations like Alliance need buildings to be able to provide that critical resource because “they might be sober for two weeks, and then their brother’s using drugs next to them. So what do you think is going to happen? They’re going to relapse, and then they get back again. It’s like the same cycle over and over.” Since the clients are the only ones accessing long-term treatment programs, it becomes difficult to sustain that sobriety and healing when they return to an unchanged environment. Mr. Shafie associated a lack of funding and attention given to aftercare services with disruptions to the transition back into society. He also presented another hindrance to transitioning to the community—many of these clients also have a felony record, which precludes them from employment opportunities. In these circumstances, the options available to earn a livelihood for these individuals are severely limited, according to Mr. Shafie:

“Guess what they are going to do. They are going to start selling drugs. They sell drugs for a while and then, now, they are using again. They use their own product, and then they

overdose, or they might go to jail or prison. Then they do two or three years, but they still have that mentality that they can get away with anything. So they sell again, you know, or they steal the drugs from another person and shoot them, and now they've killed that person, so their friends come to shoot their friends and family. So now you've got two families that have lost people. It's a big, vicious cycle.

Aftercare programs provide individuals with the opportunity to make different choices—ones that align more closely with their values and goals. While breaking free from oppressive systems and environments can be incredibly difficult, such programs offer a pathway out of the cycles that often leave people feeling stuck and powerless. Relapsing after returning to the same environments highlights how substance use is deeply connected to broader life circumstances, including social, environmental, and personal factors. Alliance Wellness Center not only supports individuals in breaking these harmful cycles but also remains committed to growing and adapting its services to better meet the evolving needs of the community.

## Looking to the Future

After years of developing programs and services while cultivating community trust, Mr. Shafie shared an inspiring vision for the future of Alliance Wellness Center, which is focused on growth. He described wanting to revisit the delivery of a woman's program and investing in more comprehensive transitional services, specifically "a building that has 30 beds, so when we graduate clients from the program, we can give them housing, give them jobs. Do some sort of employment service." Consistent with the ideology of the center, Mr. Shafie wants to implement a holistic approach beyond treatment that empowers graduating clients to have "a job and a purpose. I think all those things are important."

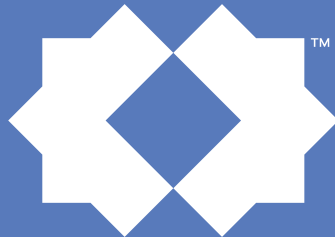
As Mr. Shafie continues to connect the individuals accessing Alliance Wellness Center to care that is both holistic and culturally responsive, plans also aim to cover other social determinants of health, ensuring that care happens on multiple levels. Social determinants of health include things like education, access to healthcare, and other factors that contribute to quality of life. Mr. Shafie posited that the mosque is a key stakeholder in facilitating access to education of the community, holding space for dialogue about the issues that are prevalent in the ummah, and ensuring that the needs of the community are met. When considering the community's role in the future of substance use prevention and treatment, Mr. Shafie said, "These kids are so smart, and it's important that we talk

about these things. That's the only way we're going to get better—education, education, education."

As a young, inquisitive child who transformed into a visionary leader, Mr. Shafie is a valuable resource for the community, offering knowledge and experience. His service to the community creates an example for other young leaders to learn from and follow as they create their own paths. Over the last 10 years, Mr. Shafie has worked tirelessly to establish Alliance Wellness Center for the community, and he advised individuals that "it's a lot of work. Get ready. But it's doable, and I think we need a lot of us." He believes firmly that with Muslims spread across the nation, "every state should have a program like ours. We can duplicate it, and I'm willing to share the blueprint so we can serve more people." Knowing that this has been his life's work, he presented a reminder: "Just be patient. It's a long process; it's a long journey. You're going to make mistakes, and that's okay. Be willing to make mistakes, be willing to learn from other people. Ask questions. Be patient; we can do this."

## Conclusion

In reflecting on the history, current state, and future direction of Alliance Wellness Center, Mr. Shafie materialized his visionary approach for responsive services to the East African American Muslim community, a vision that is formed by the coalescence of his lived experiences, clinical expertise, and dedication to the community. At its inception, Alliance Wellness Center was a transformative organization that began tackling the substance use and addiction needs of a community in alignment with its broader spiritual, familial, and communal context. Alliance has continued to grow in a direction that sets it apart from its contemporaries. The future for Alliance Wellness Center includes continuing evolutionary growth, attempting to rebuild past services with more wisdom, emphasizing reduction of stigma, dedication to collaboration, and intentional inclusion of lived experiences as the foundations upon which the organization is built.



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RESEARCH MAKING AN IMPACT

## About the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)

ISPU provides objective research and education about American Muslims to support well-informed dialogue and decision-making. Since 2002, ISPU has been at the forefront of discovering trends and opportunities that impact American Muslim communities. Our research aims to educate the general public and enable community change agents, the media, and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions. In addition to building in-house capacity, ISPU has assembled leading experts across multiple disciplines, building a solid reputation as a trusted source for information for and about American Muslims.

**For more information, please visit: [www.ISPU.org](http://www.ISPU.org).**

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