



**SAHARA**   
South Asian Helpline and Referral Agency

**2024-2025**

# ANNUAL REPORT





# Introduction

Dear Friends,

As we close out the year for 2024-2025, SAHARA continues to demonstrate its strong commitment to its mission and values. This year several challenges were faced including an overwhelming fear that tried to silence our community in the 1st quarter of 2025. This fiscal year has been a time of change, reflection, restructuring, and regrowth. Through this time, keeping true to our foundational pillars, values, vision and mission has been a priority. As our annual Gala approaches, we navigate to our core and remember our mission as this is what helps us overcome challenges and steer with intention.

Ending Domestic Violence is a team effort that involves not only our case managers and advocates, but it takes community leaders that help educate and support this cause. Keeping this in mind, our impact reflects our increase in outreach through community events and partnerships developed through this fiscal year. During this time we provided over 146 community tabling events, provided 11,120 services, 600 Support Groups, and assisted over 1,500 community clients with citizenship and public benefits. Assistance with public benefits and citizenship prep classes and other legal related support, skyrocketed to unforeseen numbers showing over a 300% surge. This speaks to the high need and ongoing work that needs to be done. Overall, our programs saw a 93% increase of clients served in comparison to last fiscal year.

During times of uncertainty SAHARA co-hosted know your rights webinar as it was crucial for our community to be informed and make educated decisions. Uncertain times will continue to prowl, and the only thing that is certain is our mission in combating domestic violence. I expect several more challenges in the year to come but I indulge in the impact of saving lives, our supporters that believe in our mission and the trust bestowed upon our dedicated staff to service our vulnerable communities. I look forward to continuous support like yours in ending domestic violence and caring for our community for years to come.

Sincerely,



Marisol Sanchez, Executive Director

---



# About SAHARA



## SAHARA STORY

South Asian Helpline and Referral Agency (SAHARA) is an organization that lives up to its name as SAHARA means “support” in Hindi. It was founded in 1991 by 5 Clinical Social Workers and 2 physicians who saw the need for linguistically and culturally specific services to South Asians domestic violence victims.

Over the past 34 years, SAHARA has created a safe space where survivors can learn to thrive, with safe and confidential shelter, legal advocacy, public benefits including health insurance enrollment, mental health therapy, life skills training, housing, elder abuse and neglect services and/or referral to other needed resources.

## THE MISSION

SAHARA is a grass root organization focused to end all forms of abuse in the South Asian Community, the underserved and the marginalized. We raise awareness, overcome barriers, and create new beginnings where survivors reclaim their independence with dignity and respect through cultural and holistic healing, access to opportunities, and pathways to stability

## THE VISION

Rooted in values of empowerment, compassion, and community, we strive to leave a lasting legacy by guiding individuals through challenges with dignity and integrity. By passing down these core values across generations, SAHARA ensures that future leaders continue our mission of advocacy and support, creating a lasting impact on both the South Asian community and the world at large. We envision individuals and families successfully participating in the Southern California culture and economy, by overcoming the cultural, emotional, legal, and economic barriers that have hindered them.

## VALUES

SAHARA's services are like a tool kit used to improve well-being, reduce and overcome barriers, increase opportunity, and meet the essential needs of the disadvantaged members of the community through its comprehensive array of services. SAHARA's advocacy is focused on building awareness and life skills, finding educational and family resources, creating an understanding of financial stability, and crafting lives of economic independence, free from violence. Creating a new beginning for many of our clients seeking services.

# SAHARA Values



Respect



Community  
Collaboration

Cultural  
Humility



Confidentiality

Healing



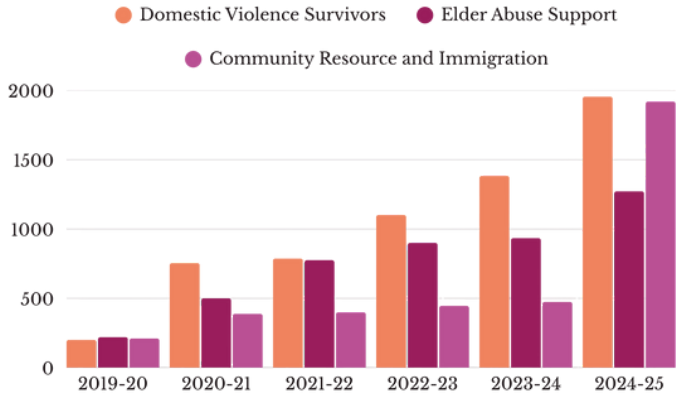
Accountability

Resilience



# Programs

Most of SAHARA's non-sheltered clients come for multiple free services. Many of them have no caring family or any other kind of support system in this country. SAHARA isn't just an organization that provides services, SAHARA is their lifeline.



**Shelter** - Provided a total of 8640 shelter bed nights. SAHARA's has two homes. One is Supportive Housing and the other a Transitional Living Home. Both are unique and tailored to culturally specific needs and have different criteria for eligibility. Supportive housing can house up to 90 days to 120 days while Transitional will provide stay up to 6 months. Culture and religion are fully supported as this is an integral part of the healing journey to address cultural factors. Note that Shelter kitchen and groceries are divided to provide respectful space for vegetarians, non-vegetarians, Vegan, and halal meal preferences.

**Domestic Violence Supportive Services**- Our team of professional staff have taken nonviolence parenting training to help support our clients who are parents from a cultural lens. Support groups are held weekly for clients with a variety of topics ranging from wellness, technology, parenting, Domestic Violence, safety planning, workforce development, financial literacy and more.

**Elder Abuse** - 1,272 elders received critical support and advocacy. SAHARA takes pride in providing services to this vulnerable population and acknowledges the need to increase social interactions, wellness, and spark a sense of belonging and acknowledgment. SAHARA hosts weekly support groups to support our elder's wellness. Following our mission, we envision a place where our seniors can call home.

**Housing First**- Assisted 103 clients with rental assistance and avoided the eviction process and or assisted with other financial support to maintain housing stability.

**Domestic Violence**- 1955 survivors were assisted with resources and safety planning.

**Community**- 1,919 individuals were connected to public benefits and immigration assistance. Most of our community clients seeking services are through word of mouth. Community clients rave about customer services

**Helpline Calls**- 6,215 helpline calls were answered, offering safety planning, crisis intervention, guidance and hope at a second chance.

**Legal Advocacy**- 165 cases received legal guidance and support through our network of pro bono attorneys

**Outreach and Prevention**- 4,774 people educated through SAHARA's outreach events following our vision to combat violence through educating the community on domestic violence and resources available.

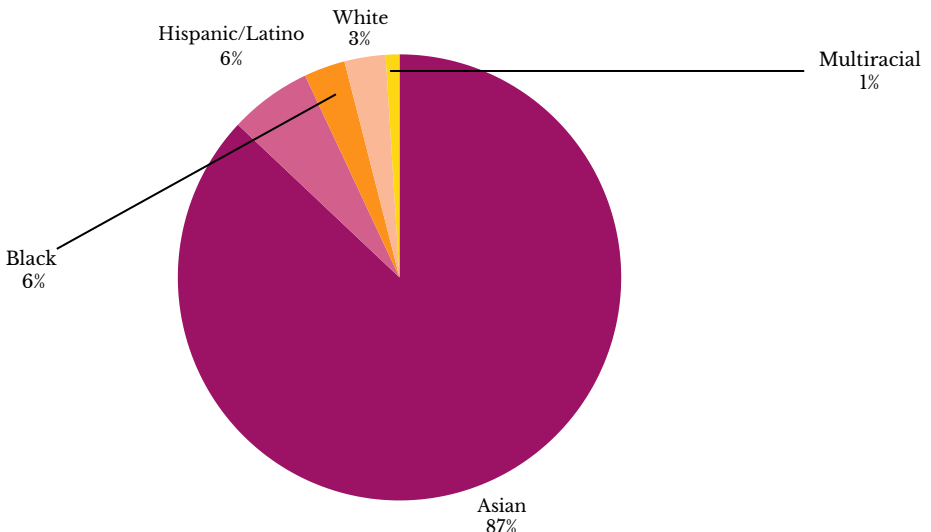
**Youth Ambassadors** - 22 youth ambassadors engaged in leadership and advocacy initiatives to carry on the mission. Preparing young advocates to become community leaders and advocates of change and social justice.

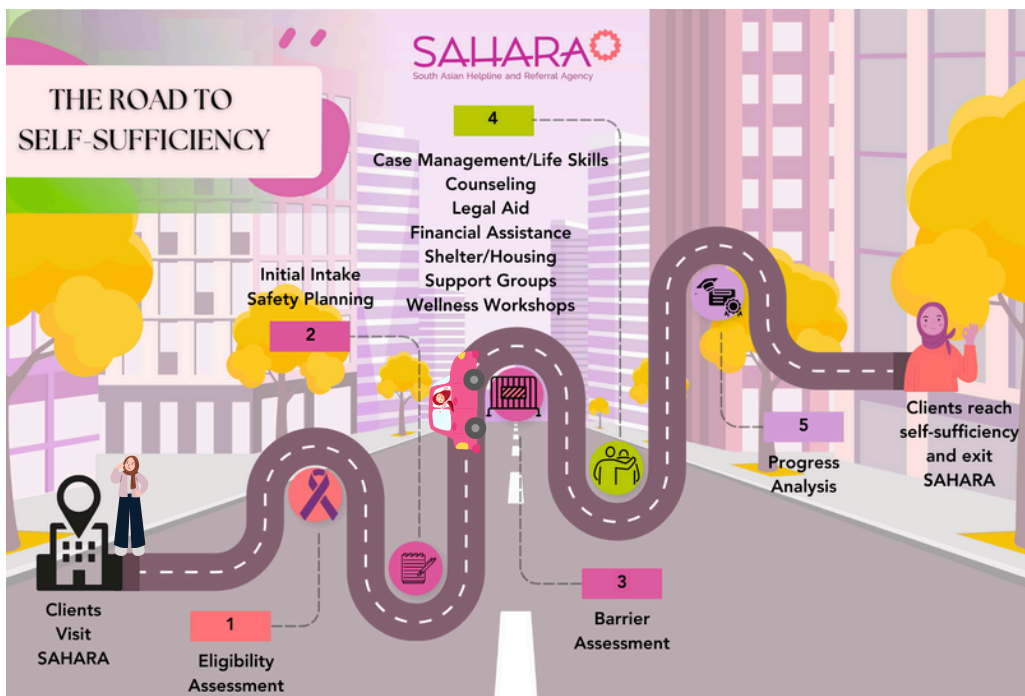
# Who We Serve



SAHARA is committed to providing the necessary assistance to the underserved. Most of the clients that seek support are low income or no income challenged by violence in its different forms and are faced by unique cultural and linguistic barriers. SAHARA listens and is in sync with the community providing the necessary support by offering services in different languages: Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Bangla, Urdu, Punjabi and Spanish. SAHARA services extend to all of LA County, Orange County, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego, Ventura County, Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara County.

Population Served by Race





## SAHARA's Impact



22 Youth  
Ambassadors



4774 Individuals reached in  
community outreach and  
prevention training



165 Cases were provided  
with legal advocacy through  
pro-bono attorneys



103 Participants in  
Housing First  
Rental Eviction  
Prevention Program



6215 Crisis  
Helpline Calls

8640  
Shelter  
Bed Nights



Over 600 support groups were conducted to provide  
compassionate care and healing for our clients

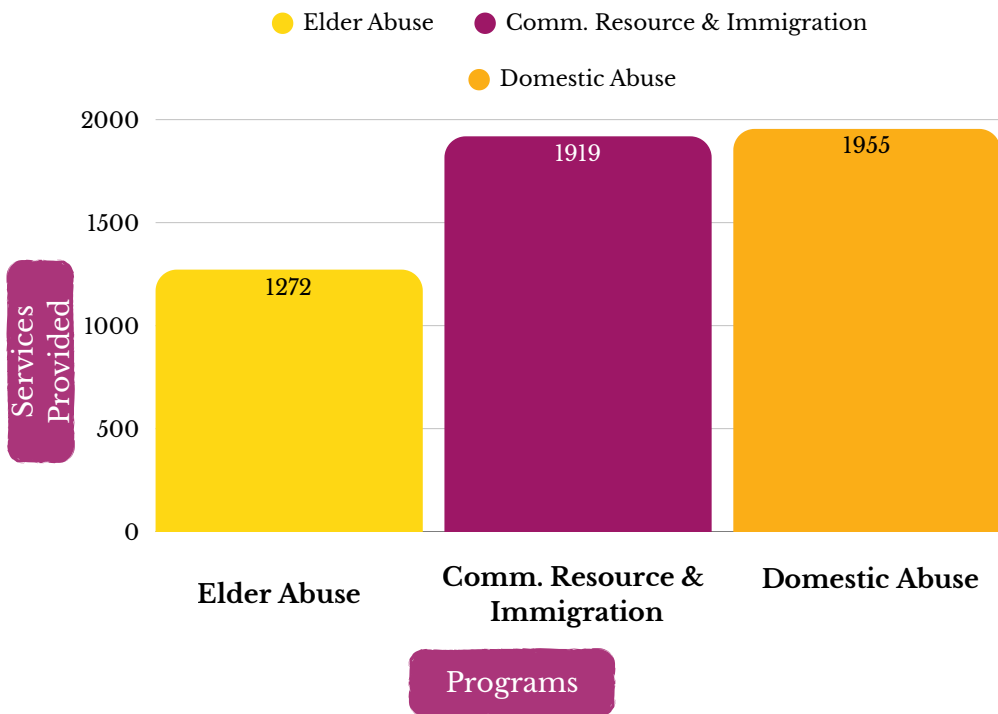




# Statistics

## Clients Served

### July 2024 - June 2025



“The care and attention I’ve received through this program have made all the difference. I now have the support I need to live independently and stay active in my community.”

*Elder Services Program Participant*

“Thanks to the assistance with public benefits, I was able to get the support I needed during a tough time. It helped me stay afloat and focus on rebuilding my life without the constant worry.”

*Public Benefits Recipient*

“The shelter and support I received helped me rebuild my life after escaping an abusive relationship. I finally feel safe and have the resources to start over.”

*Survivor of Domestic Violence*

"I truly enjoyed participating in both the DV and Peace Parenting courses. Your stories, in particular, were both valuable and inspiring, and I deeply appreciated the openness within our group-it reflected the trust and safe space we were able to build together.

Once again, thank you for sharing your knowledge. I hope you continue creating meaningful and impactful work."

*Survivor of Domestic Violence*

## Highlights

recap

prevention

collaboration

proposal

accomplishments



### recap

SAHARA is a direct service provider. We tailor our services to meet the fluctuating needs of the community. We have increased and shifted services as we adapt to the generational and population changes. These changes have included and are not limited to: option for telehealth, in office services, field services, increasing our weekly support group to twice a week to meet the demand. Overall SAHARA has amplified the number of educational workshops and has hired additional staff to support our mission as we continue to expand services. Training our staff continues to be essential and a priority to continue this mission with purpose.



# prevention



- **Prevention & Early Intervention:** SAHARA prioritizes proactive approaches to raise awareness about domestic violence in the community.
- **Community Outreach with Transparency:** Each week, our team connects with the community through tabling events and presentations, carefully counting only those who directly approach us—reflecting SAHARA’s vision of ending domestic violence one person at a time.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** We partner with countless organizations to educate and break barriers of stigma, stereotypes, and taboos.
- **Collaborative Awareness:** SAHARA has conducted over 21 collaborative awareness presentations to further community education and prevention.
- **University Engagement:** Staff educate students at UCLA, USC, UCI, UCR, Occidental, Cerritos College, and Loyola about the signs of domestic violence.
- **Podcast:** SAHARA launched its own podcast, Udaan: Wings of Strength, to spread awareness and prevention through storytelling and conversation.
- **Love Shouldn’t Hurt Campaign:** In June 2025, SAHARA launched a Public Service Announcement across Orange County to spread awareness.
- **Innovative Outreach:** Partnering with OC and Cal OES, SAHARA circulates bus-line public service announcement’s reminding the community that love shouldn’t hurt and help is just a call away.
- **Growing Reach:** The need for outreach in OC continues to increase, showing the necessity for ongoing education and access to SAHARA’s life-changing services.





# collaboration



- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Built strong relationships with the District Attorney's Office and LA County Domestic Violence Council (DVC).
- **DVC Recognition:** Received a certificate of acknowledgement for contributing to the development of LA County's multilingual access project.
- **Community Forum Panelist:** Invited by the District Attorney's Office to speak on Breaking the Silence: Mental Health in Communities of Color.
- **Partnerships:** SAHARA has successfully developed over 25 Memorandum's of Understandings with community-based organizations focusing on trauma-informed client care.
- **South Asian Focus:** SAHARA's Mental Health Therapist highlighted the unique challenges and needs of the South Asian community.
- **Commitment Reflected:** These recognitions and partnerships highlight the strength of SAHARA's intensive case management and the dedication of its well-trained staff.





## proposal

SAHARA submitted a proposal to OVW to provide a cultural perspective on how our services are culturally tailored. SAHARA's proposal to teach our techniques of "healing through dance" was nominated among other proposals nationwide. The OVW summit that was scheduled in June for this presentation was unfortunately cancelled until further notice. However, SAHARA will still be presenting once the summit has been rescheduled.





# accomplishments

## Trusted by the Community:

SAHARA has earned love and trust through high-quality, meaningful services.

## Transparency & Ethics:

Awarded Candid's Platinum Seal, the highest recognition earned by only the top 20% of nonprofits, showing our exceptional commitment to accountability and impact.

## Honored Recognition:

Proudly awarded by the U.S. Congress and California State Assembly for continued advocacy and distinction.

## Safe at Home Certified:

Registered to protect survivors with confidential addresses, ensuring safety from abusers and retaliation.



# Leadership

MARISOL SANCHEZ- EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

LILIANA BRANDEIS- DIRECTOR OF  
PROGRAMS

NEETA DAYAL- DIRECTOR OF  
OPERATIONS, COMPLIANCE AND  
CONTRACTS

BHASKER SHAH- SENIOR  
ACCOUNTANT

## SAHARA Board of Directors FY 2024-2025

PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR COMMITTEES  
KRUTIKA PRANAV  
CEO OF HIGHGLOW JEWELERS

VICE-PRESIDENT  
KINNARI BHAVSAR EDUCATION  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE

GENERAL SECRETARY  
MIJI VELLAKKATEL, ESQ. GOVERNANCE  
DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY, LOS ANGELES COUNTY

FINANCE CHAIR  
VIBHUTI BHUTA, CPA FINANCE

JANAK PATEL  
FUNDRAISING PRESIDENT, ULTIMATE PAPERBOX

SUREKHA ACHARYA  
EDUCATION ASSOC. PROFESSOR, RIVERSIDE CITY  
COLLEGE

DIVIYA LOOMBA SHARMA  
FUNDRAISING VICE PRESIDENT, EAGLE FABRICS

RUBINA NAJEEB, MD  
FUNDRAISING ADULT, CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIST

AJITA CHOPRA  
FUNDRAISING CHAIR FOUNDER & CEO CHOPRA EVENTS

SMITA BAGLA  
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE  
EXECUTIVE TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT  
STRATEGIST & ARTIST

DR. NITIN BAJAJ  
TECHNOLOGY FOUNDER & HOST- THE INDUSTRY SHOW

ROHINI BEDI  
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE | CEO FASHION BY ROHINI  
PRESIDENT-CITY OF ARTESIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WAZMA TAHERI  
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVE

DR. SHUBHA JAIN  
COMMUNITY ADVOCATE PAIN MANAGEMENT, PRESIDENT OF LA CHAPTER OF  
TVIMA

# Thank You To Our Partners



Sarva Mangal Family Trust  
<http://www.sarvamangaltrust.org>



ASIAN AMERICANS  
ADVANCING  
JUSTICE  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



THE  
NEW AMERICANS  
CAMPAIGN



SoCalGas



PROSPERA  
HOTELS



LEGAL AID  
FOUNDATION  
OF LOS ANGELES



KAISER  
PERMANENTE



NSR  
HOTELS



PRIVATE WEALTH  
MANAGEMENT

CHUGH



H4H FOUNDATION  
HOPE, HELP & HEALING FOR HUMANITY



ILLUMINATION  
HEALTH + HOME



Cal OES  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES



U.S. Department of Justice  
OVW  
Office on Violence Against Women



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health

On behalf of SAHARA, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners for standing with us in our mission.

Your continued support, collaboration, and trust make it possible for us to serve survivors and community members with compassion and dignity.

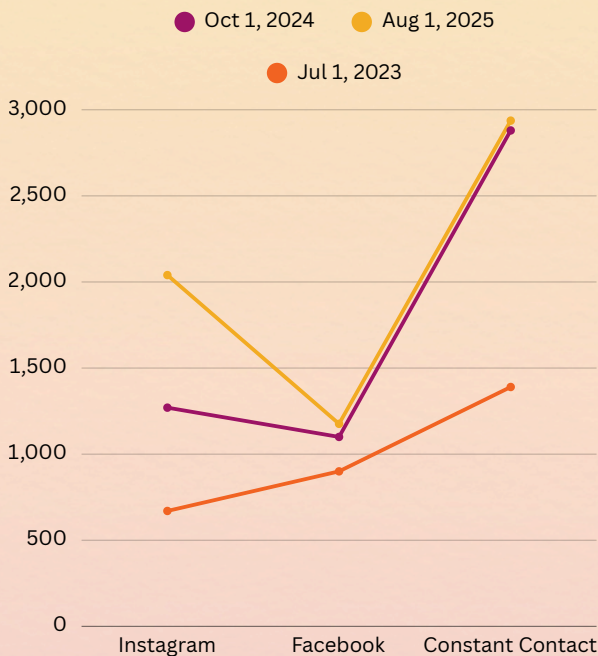
Together, we are creating meaningful change, uplifting lives, and building a stronger, more resilient community.



# Social Media Highlights



Platform	Jul 1, 2...	Oct 1, 2...	Aug 1, ...	Total
Instagram	670	1,270	2,040	1,370
Facebook	900	1,100	1,176	276
Constant	1,390	2,880	2,937	1,547



# All The Best Moments 2024-2025

DVAM  
Multilingual  
Access Project  
Award!



**SAHARA**  
South Asian Helpline and Referral Agency

Speakers Event



SAHARA presented  
to the students in  
Mann Mukti at UCR

DV Candlelight Vigil at  
UCLA hosted by  
SAHARA & Mann  
Mukti



2024 Gala!



API  
Youth  
Forum





Love Shouldn't Hurt Campaign



Mental Health Art Activity at UCR

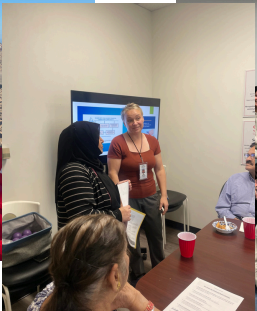


Toy Donation Drive





Outreaches within community and universities



17100 Pioneer Blvd Suite 320  
Artesia, CA 90701

Office:  
(562)402-4132

24-Hour Crisis Hotline:  
1-888-724-2722

[www.saharacares.org](http://www.saharacares.org)



Follow us on  
Instagram



Follow us on  
Facebook



Listen to Udaan  
Now on Spotify



Donate Now



Volunteer Form

SAHARA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Tax Identification Number: 26-0736033