

Position Paper on AADAP

September 1974

PREFACE

The following is a position paper on AADAP put together by concerned individuals, who, for the lack of a name, may be referred to as the Thursday Night Group. The Introduction contains our reasons for coming together and our purpose: "re-direct and build a community drug program which will be responsive to the needs of the community it is serving." We hope that the historical section following the introduction will clear up some of the misconceptions surrounding the controversy over AADAP. It should be noted that many of the criticisms in this paper had been made repeatedly and over a long period of time. Section III contains what we believe to be the essential criticisms of AADAP. Originally, our list contained others, however, upon investigation we found them to be untrue. Section IV attempts to place this whole issue within a larger perspective, that is, drug abuse as "one problem among many arising from a corrupt system,..." We also believe that any criticism cannot be complete without alternatives. Section V contains what we believe are solutions to the problems we have examined in the criticism section. Appendix A contains a further explanation and chart of our proposed restructure of AADAP. And finally, the paper concludes with comments made by two former staff members who found it necessary to resign in protest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Introduction	1
II. The History of the Relationship between AADAP and the Community	2
III. Criticisms	
A. The small staff or leadership body lacks real ties with the community which it is supposed to serve	7
B. Bureaucratic Drawbacks	9
C. Lack of direction and leadership, and the result: low productivity and low morale	11
IV. A Larger Perspective	13
V. Alternatives	
A. Community Advisory Board	14
B. Hiring of New Personnel	15
C. Collective Decision Making	16
D. Collectivization of Salaries	16
E. Expansion of Communications Network between AADAP and the Community	17
F. Development of Mechanisms for Assessing the Needs of the Community	17
G. Creation of Viable New Programs Based on an Accurate Assessment of Community Needs	17,
APPENDIX A - Brief Explanation of Proposed AADAP Structure	
APPENDIX B - Comments on AADAP by Former Staffs	

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, summer has brought on an intensity of drug busts and overdoses. As summer approached this year, there was the usual apprehension that many Asian sisters and brothers would be getting heavier into drugs. There seems to have been less visible work or attention given to this problem than in years past, although people still feel that much work needs to be done to minimize and prevent senseless deaths.

In July of this year, people from different community groups, organizations, and concerned individuals got together on an informal basis to renew communication, interest, and awareness to the problem of drug abuse. Out of these discussions, ideas, information, experience, and feelings were shared by people who have or were currently working in the area of drug abuse. After a while, the topics of these meetings inevitably focused on the discussion of Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP).

It was generally held by the group that it would be in the best interest of the community and those directly affected by AADAP that a more constructive objective approach be taken in dealing with the criticisms of AADAP. The group then made an effort to have more people and groups participate with an emphasis on a more thorough investigation into the criticisms and their solutions, while also looking at the positive aspects and not just emphasizing the negative points.

It is important to note, that the purpose of this paper and the group of people who put it together is not an effort to destroy AADAP, but an effort to re-direct and build a community drug program which will be responsive to the needs of the community it is serving.

II. The History of the Relationship between AADAP and the Community

Before we get into the criticisms and alternatives, we need to take a look at the history of AADAP's relation to the grassroots community movement. Here's a chronology of some of the major events that led to a strained relationship between AADAP and important sections of the L.A. Asian community.

1968-1971 The emerging Asian movement points to the reality of Asian and Pacific people's problems, needs and rights as oppressed nationalities, and insists that we are entitled to resources and programs that will meet our needs. As a result of the pressure generated by the movement (and by the spectre of Black, Latino, Native American, and Hawaiian rebellions of the 60's) the U.S. government through its representative Mo Marumoto, promises more funds for the Asian and Pacific peoples' communities (AASW National Conference, fall of 1971).

April 1972 At the NIMH-AASW Conference on Asian American Mental Health (which was a major thrust by the U.S. government to help create a national umbrella organization of Asian Americans), all the Japanese delegates and participants from L.A., except one,

agreed not to push for a particular proposal because we did not want to be manipulated by the government, nor pitted against each other. Karl Nobuyuki did not agree, and pushed for the funding of AADAP.

June 1972-May 1973 AADAP proposal is shared with, and endorsed by, the Drug Offensive (which from 1971 to the end of 1973) served as a coordinating body for the various self-help groups and agency people for the drug abuse work in the Japanese community and by almost all other community and movement groups engaged in fighting the drug problem. Several movement people (Russel V., Tommy C., Marc K., Marlene W., Janice Y., Craig S., and Gary U.) actively work in the planning for AADAP, while others are indifferent, lukewarm, or simply too busy with community work.

May-July 1973 Funding becomes imminent and a philosophy statement is drawn up by the Board of Directors for the basic stance, direction, and policies of AADAP. The statement emphasizes a commitment to: 1) social-cultural-political (rather than medical-individual) perspective on drug abuse; 2) community (not government) control; 3) allegiance to the basic interests of our people (not to individualistic goals or to the government guidelines); 4) creative use of people's knowledge and power (not dependence on conventional "expertise"); 5) work democracy (not elitism or bureaucracy); 6) collectivization of pay, sharing of as much resources with the grassroots communities (not creating a pool of highly paid "community workers"); and, 7) being an integral part of the movement for social change.

August 1973 A major debate and struggle takes place within the community movement: "What are we going to do with AADAP, and all this money?". At a large meeting of Drug Offensive, concerns about the negative aspects of outside funding are expressed; e.g., cooptation of the movement people, professionalization of community workers, divisions within the movement and communities, confusion, demoralization, and allowing outside guidelines to determine our priorities. The AADAP people present at the meeting--Craig S., Mas Fukai, Gary U., Kay Kokubun, Karl Nobuyuki, and Ron W. (though he was not yet associated with AADAP)--express their agreement with many of the concerns, and vocalize their willingness and commitment to work for the goals and direction outlined in the Philosophy Statement.

Marc Kondo resigns as the chairman of the AADAP personnel committee and Tamiko Hirano leaves her position on the Board when People's Clearinghouse consultants are hired and assume a central role in gearing up the program, and this hiring is done without proper consultation with the Board and other concerned people. Also many other grassroots and movement people who were on the original Board of Directors during '71-'72 period are encouraged to move out, in order to make space for more established people with a "greater credibility". A new Community Advisory Board is promised for grassroots input.

October 1973 Drug Offensive requests AADAP to take up a research into the nature of Asian American drug abuse, and do a summation of the experiences of the self-help groups of 1968-1972 period.

Some staff support for Drug Offensive is asked for. During this period (fall, winter, spring '73-'74) other groups like YB, AWC, and ELA Outreach Team also make various requests for assistance and support--with mixed results, at best, Omai Faatasi and Pagkaka-isa do receive some assistance.

March 1974 Drug Offensive mini-conference is called to share ideas on, among other things, positive and negative effects of government funding. Basic concerns raised in the Philosophy Statement and in the August '73 struggles are raised again. These concerns are acknowledged and shared by the AADAP leadership present. AADAP along with AJC and AWC accepts the responsibility of taking over the functions of Drug Offensive, and agrees to take the initiative in setting up a quarterly community meeting to review progress and problems in drug abuse work.

May-June 1974 Community movement meetings take place at AWC to probe into the problems and issues underlying conflicts between Victor Shibata and the AADAP leadership. Several other movement people leave AADAP around this time or soon after, e.g., Steve Chin, Steve Tatsukawa, Gina Chin, Riki Uno, and Kenny Chin. Basic criticisms are made re: 1) level of productivity of some sections and staff; 2) agency and employee mentality; 3) lack of systematic input from the rank and file staff; 4) absence of systematic collectivization of pay; 5) insufficient aggressiveness and lack of wholehearted effort in reaching out to, and sharing resources with the grassroots community groups engaged in drug related work; 6) absence of systematic political education among the staff, insufficient

struggle, and lack of direction, etc. The AADAP leadership--Ron, Richard, Seigo, Mark--accepts the substance of many of these criticisms, promise their best efforts to deal with them, and ask for support and constructive criticisms.

Looking back on this sketchy history, it is clear that both the movement (at least many sections of the movement) and AADAP leadership made mistakes that created the strained relationship existing today.

On the movement's part:

1. Many of us could have provided stronger support and input to our brothers and sisters on the Board of Directors during the '72-'73 period.
2. Too many of us ended up saying "fuck it" after one or few difficulties arose, instead of staying to struggle with and support AADAP in various capacities (as Board members, as staff, or just as concerned community people).
3. We did not provide support to some brothers and sisters who did go into AADAP out of concern and commitment, but instead, we created an atmosphere of defensiveness and guilt about dealing with funded programs.
4. We as a movement did not demonstrate a mature capacity in terms of administrative and leadership qualities in taking hold of a large program like AADAP and guide it (with other concerned community people) to serve the people, but instead, at times, tended to be outside critics.

On the part of AADAP leadership:

- 1., In the initial period, some key people showed a go-it-alone attitude (especially at the April 1972 NIMH Conference) and assumed a "technocratic" attitude about planning and organizing a program.
2. When opportunistic or questionable acts appeared on the part of a few people, others did not thoroughly and seriously struggle with them, i.e., People's Clearinghouse, collectivization, personnel practice, etc.
3. The practice of AADAP of the past year has departed from the original promise contained in the Philosophy Statement in some key
4. AADAP leadership failed to respond to the commitments it made to the Drug Offensive, and at the March '74 mini-conference, nor have they taken any initiative to respond to the major criticisms raised at the May-June '74 meetings.

III. CRITICISMS

A. The small staff or leadership body lacks real ties with the community which it is supposed to serve.

1. AADAP has not created any viable mechanism for assessing the needs of the community. There is no systematic means for obtaining input from the community, nor is there any staff study group exploring and seeking solutions to problems that plague our communities. It was felt that a lot of subjectiveness and frustration was created on the part of AADAP due to its not making any effort to respond to past input and criticisms. Although quarterly

conferences were supposed to be set up by AADAP with assistance from Asian Joint Communications and Asian Women's Center, in order to continue struggle of important questions, none ever materialized. This left the community without any vehicle in which to make input, criticisms--worse, it had no one to hold responsible. This situation led to the so-called "bad-mouthing" of AADAP, and created an air of apathy.

2. Although AADAP has given some positive support to existing programs such as Omai Faatasi, Pagkakaisa through rent allocations, there has been no creation of viable new programs, i.e., outreach, counseling, alternative center, etc., where half the funds go.

3. There has been poor or non-existent communications with the community. AADAP has failed to take "special effort" and resorted to a few mass media type spots, rather than using flyers, newsletters, posters, community educationals, etc. to inform and educate the community about services available and problems pertaining to Asian drug abuse.

4. From its inception, hiring policies of AADAP have been questionable. There are few ex-addicts represented on the staff--approximately 5 out of 30, and although most people are sincere in their desire to work in the area of drug abuse some people are there just because it's a job. Some good community people with experience were hired, and they were either fired or quit because, "there was no room for disagreement with AADAP. Anyone who questions program policy is squashed." (Steve Tatsukawa)

5. It was also felt that the effectiveness on certain communities were questionable. This is due to lack of direction of the leadership body or its lack of understanding of what the community can relate to. As Steve Chinn put it, "AADAP has not fitted the needs of Chinatown. I do not feel I can develop a relevant program within AADAP."

B. Bureaucratic Drawbacks

1. The decision-making process has been questioned and criticized throughout the life of AADAP. It appears confusing, inconsistent, and individualistic. There does not appear to be a clear line of responsibility, that is, who is responsible to whom, and for what? At times, important decisions have been made by the small staff without consultation of the larger staff. Some have stated that important decisions have been made by only two or three, or even one person. Regardless of the exact number, the decision making process is in need of change.

2. The seven members of the small staff receive a combined salary of approximately \$86,000. This is too much. Although the cost of living has risen and real wages have dropped, an average salary of better than \$12,000 is more than necessary for survival and comfort while carrying out the struggle for social change. A portion of the salary may be better utilized to help fund important existing organizations, or to aid in the creation and implementation of much needed new programs. The amount of taxpayers' monies directed to community service projects has never been enough to realistically meet needs, therefore, such a large portion of funds should not go to salaries.

3. Sisters are not encouraged to participate in other levels of work (i.e., major decision-makings) other than to function as a secretary/receptionist. Many sisters are unwilling to try new things; we continue to keep ourselves oppressed. Sisters play a very vital role in the movement for social change. Every chance should be given to encourage sisters and all workers to speak up and take active participation.

4. Some members of the small staff engage in a double standard when practicing office discipline. Every organization needs some rules in order to function efficiently. However, these rules must be applied equally. A few should not be criticized for being late, or not reporting in, while others remain above criticism. Everyone should be equally accountable.

5. Bureaucratic decision-making, AADAP self-definition as an agency, wide differentials in pay, and sexist roles--these factors all contribute in creating a 9-5, "employee mentality". This "time-clock" orientation to service is a far cry from the whole-hearted dedication that we often saw in 1969-72 period in self-help drug groups such as Asian-American Hardcore, Yellow Brotherhood, Go For Broke, and Asian Sisters. While this employee mentality may be adequate in business, it is highly inappropriate in community-based drug abuse work.

6. It is not appropriate to use funding proposal guidelines as an excuse for not acting on legitimate criticisms. For example, it is a cop-out to say that we cannot have collective decision making or cannot collectivise salaries, because it is not

stated in the guidelines. We should not follow conventional bureaucratic procedures at the expense of those practices, which, through past experience, we have found best implement our goals without sacrificing our integrity.

C. Lack of direction and leadership, and the result: low productivity and low morale.

Finally, AADAP does not have any core direction. There has been "several restructurings and revisions of the program." Ideas are developed, but rarely implemented fully, and then dropped, often without a clear rationale either for starting a project or terminating it.* Since there are no mechanisms for assessing community needs, and translating these needs into a programmatic direction, and then holding the leadership and the staff accountable for achieving the programmatic objectives, it is no wonder that the AADAP leadership wavers between meeting the community need: and mechanically abiding by the government guidelines.

Furthermore, because the original proposal and the government guidelines do not necessarily reflect the current community needs, some program areas (notably the Alternative Center component) have had a relatively unproductive year. When a program design does not meet a need, some make work or play ping pong. The AC component that cost roughly \$65,000 a year in personnel and tens of thousands more in overhead and equipment doesn't seem to have produced much. Compare it, for example, to the Joint Counseling Center that handles 300 plus clients and delivers 600 units of service per month for less than one-tenth that budget. Another

* taken from Steve Chinn's resignation letter

example, the Chinatown Health Team provides multiple services to several hundred Chinese families in its first year of operation with a budget of \$27,000 and a staff of 3½ positions.

When relatively well paid and well meaning community workers are not productively and fully engaged in work, a likely result is low morale. This indeed seems to apply to AADAP. "There is no social fabric that ties people together. Very little sense of overall purpose. A lot of people don't enjoy coming to work or staying around AADAP." This is a description given of the staff morale by one member of the small staff.

Without a clear direction rooted in the communities that they are to serve, lacking a strong and principled leadership, not having enough work to do because of mechanical compliance with the guidelines and the original proposal, the program and many of its staff often appear to be coasting, at best. Not all of this or even the major part of it should be attributed to defensiveness and demoralization created by the outside critics. This is a cop out. If you are doing a solid piece of work, and function as a part of a viable, principled organization or project, you can overcome the defensiveness and whatever obstacles created by "outside" views and pressures. In any case, if you are a community organization, you wouldn't view the community people and critics as "outsiders."