



# Impact Report 2021

Thriving, Healing, & Growing—Together







## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Friends,

In 2021, our goal was to deepen and expand our impact of supporting young Black women with their mental wellness through Sista Afya Community Care. Black women face significant disparities in mental health care; fewer than 10% of Black Americans get mental health counseling or treatment, compared with more than 18% of white Americans. Women are half as likely as men to seek treatment. Addressing this begins with understanding the multiple roles that we play in society and the racial and social injustices we have historically faced—often simultaneously experiencing racism, sexism, and financial inequality. This same concept makes us some of the most resilient people on the planet.

Sista Afya Community Care continues to highlight and reinforce the resilience of our community. Given the proper tools, our community can confront whatever traumas and stressors are keeping them from truly thriving.

We've only just surpassed our one year anniversary in summer 2021 and already SACC has grown beyond what we expected. Our brand new Thrive in Therapy program is so popular that we are working to expand it, offering more women more time to attend therapy without the worry of cost. We also opened our new mental wellness center in South Shore so that women would have a beautiful, easily accessible place to find sanctuary. SACC would not be where we are today without a solid team, so I'm happy to report that our team grew with the addition of two new therapists and five wellness & arts practitioners.

We are all committed to doing the best work to care for Black women and our community. Thank you for joining our efforts—we couldn't do it without you.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Camesha L. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

**Camesha L. Jones, LCSW**  
Executive Director, Sista Afya Community Care

# Thriving Together:

## A look at the growing Thrive in Therapy program

This was the first year of our Thrive in Therapy program, which provides free community mental wellness care—including but not limited to individual therapy with a trained mental wellness professional—to women experiencing barriers to care. At launch, we offered 12 free therapy sessions over a 4-month period to qualifying participants. The feedback was so positive, we decided to extend the program to a 6-month period (about 24 sessions for someone attending once a week.)

2021 Thrive in Therapy By the Numbers:

**72**

Number of People Served

**650**

Free Therapy Sessions Provided

**94%**

would like to continue therapy  
after completing the program

**100%**

would recommend Sista Afya  
Community Care to a friend

**88%**

identified as Black or African  
American

**85%**

said their mental health improved  
as a result of therapy

**91%**

Female participants

**95%**

rated their overall satisfaction  
with Thrive in Therapy at 5 stars

## Thanks to Thrive in Therapy, our participants learned...

"To think before I react to situations. And sometimes when I fall back on old habits I quickly assess how to move forward for the better."

"Journaling helps me identify the way I speak to myself as well as release without exhausting people around me, while affirmations help me speak life and motivation into myself."

"To deal with distressing situations with new coping thoughts. [It] gives me a more positive view on things."

## Three Cheers for Thriving

"This was my very first time going to therapy and it was amazing. I felt completely safe and that allowed me to be open and honest about what I was experiencing. [My therapist] Candice was very attentive, patient and kind. She also made sure to guide my thoughts in a way that made me see my "a-haaah" moments, connections and behaviors... Overall, It made therapy less frightening and awakened my self-awareness in a way that makes me want to continue."

P., Age 25

"It feels good just to have someone to listen to who is supportive, understanding, and non-judgmental. I loved my sessions and was excited each week to be able to attend them knowing that I would get a lot back, more than just a listening ear but someone who is listening and also offering solutions to whatever you feel your issues are. They acknowledged that my feelings were valid, no matter what they were."

D., age 31

"This program changed my life. I lost my job in the pandemic and as I started to rebuild, I needed to rebuild my mental health. This program allowed me to do that without the added stress of the financial aspect of therapy. Very thankful this exists to help."

S., Age 33





# Healing Together:

## Reviewing therapeutic group offerings

Sista Afya Community Care provides low-cost workshops and wellness classes where Black women can connect, learn, and support one another with their mental wellness. Over the past year, we've been completely virtual because of the pandemic. In October 2021, we were able to open our doors to the community to host groups in person.

We tackled a variety of mental health topics and also got together to participate in positive, healing outlets. "I always feel welcomed in Sista Afya events," said participant I., age 26. "I always gain so much from the sessions."

**This year, Community Care took place in the form of:**

## 20 Workshops

Overcoming anxiety, self-love, self-forgiveness, navigating social media, rebuilding after grief and loss

## 10 Wellness Classes

Yoga, Zumba, Creative Movement, Meditation

## 5 Creative Arts Classes

Women's Drum Circle, Musical Healing

## 200 Women Served



## Participants' takeaways from being a part of a Community Care event...

"Everyone had a challenge(s) during the pandemic but we made it through. Also, I should be more kind to myself."

"Self love is an important part of taking care of myself; Decluttering makes room for me and for my life and my clarity- it is an act of self love."

"To have increased empathy for myself. Happiness from listening to other Black women as they deal with this."

### The Reviews Are In

"I am so grateful for Sista Afya! It has made a huge positive impact on my mental healing. Thank goodness I came upon this amazing organization."

- L., Age 33

"Learning How to Thrive workshop was breathtaking and well needed. The workshop allowed us women to be in tune with ourselves and become vulnerable with our needs and wants."

- V., Age 30

# Expanding our reach through Mental Wellness Warriors

Developing Mental Wellness Warriors provides low-cost professional development training to local organizations and businesses that focus on supporting people with mental health conditions. This includes Mental Health First Aid training and topic-based training that are relevant to communities served.

## 2021 Partner Organizations:



READI CHICAGO  
A HEARTLAND ALLIANCE PROGRAM

## How we trained Mental Wellness Warriors:

**31 people trained  
in Mental Health  
First Aid**

**3 Virtual Trainings**

**1 In-person training**



# Looking Forward

Our plans for 2022 build upon the foundation we laid in 2021. Below are ways we want to sustain our mental wellness care for our community.

## Thrive in Therapy program:

Provide 6 months of free therapy to 100 women.

Promote our part-time Therapists to full-time status.

Begin the process to provide therapy to Medicaid recipients - making our high quality care available to women with income & healthcare barriers.

## Community Care program:

Provide holistic mental wellness care through community and group offerings, including but not limited to quarterly retreats, support groups, wellness classes, social outings, and psychoeducational workshops.

Form partnerships with South Shore community stakeholders and organizations to build capacity to provide mental wellness care that's most needed in the community.

## Developing Mental Wellness Warriors:

Train 60 people to be Mental Health First Aid responders.

Partner with local organizations and businesses on the South Side of Chicago to offer training virtually and in-person.

Hire a MHFA trainer to expand the number of people we can equip with the knowledge to be mental health advocates in their communities.

# Our Mission in the Media

We are so grateful to have been featured in multiple outlets and publications in 2021. The recognition that both Community Mental Wellness and Community Care receive helps spread our message of culturally centered mental wellness care.



[‘Sista Afya Community Mental Wellness’ is Destigmatizing Mental Health for Black Women](#) Cheddar News, August 4, 2021



[Grand opening of mental wellness center targeting Black women aims to meet growing need](#) ABC 7 Chicago, July 16, 2021

“Sista Afya aims to not only help struggling residents afford its services, but encourage all residents to treat mental wellness as a necessity — especially in Black communities like South Shore.”

[Sista Afya, A Mental Health Resource Centering Black Women, Expands To New South Shore Storefront](#) Block Club Chicago, July 21, 2021

“Why not us? Black women continue to make contributions in all areas of our world. We deserve to be prioritized.”

[Social worker Camesha L. Jones is delivering assistance through Sista Afya rollout](#), June 5, 2021

“...it’s important to also encourage people in positions of power to make funding mental wellness services a priority to contribute to our society’s wellness as a whole.”

[Organization Spotlight: Sista Afya - How Camesha L. Jones Made Mental Health Care Affordable and Accessible for Black Women in Chicago](#) re-spin, January 2021

# Partners in Impact

Thank you to our committed donors for making it possible for Sista Afya Community Care to offer free mental wellness care to Black women in Chicago. We couldn't do it without you!

## Major donors:



chicago  
foundation  
for women



GUCCI  
CHANGEMAKERS



## Corporate donors:

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Chicago Compass Counseling

Head/Heart Therapy

Andersonville Psychology

Chicago Mindful Psychotherapy

Hanahana Beauty

Inclusive Therapists

Mind Chicago

Warby Parker



# We Need You in '22

Become a volunteer to support our work in Chicago:

[www.sistaafya.com/communitycare](http://www.sistaafya.com/communitycare)

Sista Afya Community Care has worked to expand our services this year, in part due to growing demand for mental health care caused by the pandemic. We couldn't do this without you. We need your help to keep growing and keep working to provide access and education.

Here is how you can be part of our community:

- 1** Donate to Sista Afya Community Care at [www.sistaafya.com/support-us](http://www.sistaafya.com/support-us)
- 2** Sign up for our email list to have a more intimate experience getting to know us and our work at: [www.sistaafya.com](http://www.sistaafya.com)
- 3** Share our services with women in your area seeking holistic mental wellness care by signing up for services at: [www.sistaafya.com/services](http://www.sistaafya.com/services)
- 4** Spread the word - share our posts that resonate with you and others on social media and tag us [@sistaafya](#)

**Thank you for your continued  
support of our mission.**



# Leadership

## **Executive Director**

Camesha L. Jones, LCSW

## **Board of Directors**

LaCreshia Birts

Iris Patterson

Natalie Keeton

Dana Davenport

📷 @sistaafya

f @sistaafya

## **Learn more:**

[sistaafya.com/communitycare](https://sistaafya.com/communitycare)

