



Southeast Asian Assistance Center

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RE: Letter of Reference for Yang Xiong

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Grants Manager at CA Dept. of Public Health and a Board member at Southeast Asian Assistance Center (SAAC). We hired Yang as the executive director of SAAC in November 2015. At that time, SAAC was badly organized and had an all-time low in staff morale. On top of that, the organization was facing a potentially huge deficit. Much was needed to be done to stabilize the agency.

Upon coming on board, Yang quickly developed relationships of trust among the staff to bring back a positive work environment. He evaluated and identified the areas of need that must be immediately addressed and took necessary actions which included a tightening up of staff work hours while still meeting the demands of our clients and obligations to our funders. Because of this action, SAAC had a sizable reserve to carry over into the new fiscal year when Yang completed his first year at SAAC.

Working with both staff and the Board, Yang also fine-tuned several operational policies and procedures to reduce organizational liabilities. At the time when he was hired, SAAC was still using a record keeping system that involved staff taking much time to manually document their work hours, and much money was used to address the organization's IT needs. With his strong end-user IT skills, Yang developed Excel spreadsheets with built-in and protected formulas that automatically calculate staff's work hours. He also maintained the agency's Access database and network. This enabled staff to easily get IT support when needed and be more accurate with their calculations and more efficient with their time resulting in higher staff productivity.

Yang contributed significantly to the positive image of SAAC. Occasionally, a need to work collaboratively with Sacramento County's network of behavioral health providers arises when SAAC staff performance fell short of expectation. In these situations, Yang tactfully calms and addresses the providers' concerns and thoughtfully works with his staff to address the shortfalls. Yang is careful, detailed, and thorough and ensures that he has documentation to support his decisions. If a situation is unfamiliar to him, he consults and gets support from the SAAC Board. Consequently, SAAC continues to be viewed as the "go to" agency for language access needs by Sacramento County's network of behavioral health providers.

Yang is also creative with bringing in unrestricted funds to SAAC. Instead of just relying on grants and contracts with SAAC's current and previous funders, Yang establishes relationships with other entities which do not necessarily share SAAC's business model. One of these relationships was the forging of a partnership with a for-profit medical call center to provide

language access needs. The formation of this partnership along with others have enabled SAAC to have a sizeable amount of unrestricted funds.

In summary, I find Yang to be a conscientious, personable, and intelligent executive director with good administrative, financial and IT skills. Yang took the agency from being badly organized with poor morale to a well-run, efficient agency with clear expectations and the potential to increase unrestricted funds through strategic partnerships with other organizations. He will be missed. He would be an asset to any organization.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at: (916) 549-7093 (work), (916) 322-2199 (cell) or email: Lauraleo524@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Laura Leonelli
Board Member
Southeast Asian Assistance Center