



## **LEAFA TUITA TAUMOEPEAU**

Leafa Tuita Taumoepeau was born and raised in the Kingdom of Tonga until 1970 when she migrated to Los Angeles, California due to the curiosity of the United States and all it promised to offer. Although apprehensive at first, she thought there would be more educational and employment opportunities. She later moved to San Mateo, California in 1992 and began working for San Mateo County Health, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. Witnessing the health inequities and disparities first hand within her own Tongan community and the dire need for culturally specific and linguistically appropriate services, Leafa, along with other key and influential members within the local Tongan community, created Taulama for Tongans in 2001 to serve the health needs of the Tongan population in the Bay Area. She witnessed improvements in accessing preventative care, increased awareness and decreased stigma around mental and chronic health diseases. Leafa anticipates that the information, education, and interventions that she helps to cultivate will lead to improving the health outcomes of Tongans and other Pacific Islander communities.

Leafa has worked on numerous research projects specifically researching health outcomes of Tongans in San Mateo, CA. She has participated in gathering data for Pacific Islander health studies and disparities, conducted interventions for breast cancer, conducted preliminary research on tobacco usage, and provided nutritional programs. She is a core member of the Regional Pacific Islander Taskforce, partnering with the Public Health Departments for San Francisco, Alameda and San Mateo Counties to develop partnerships in health and improve the overall health of our Pacific Islander communities.

Leafa believes that communities can change and their attitudes and approach to a healthier lifestyle. She envisions a future with more agencies, organizations and providers who understand Pacific Islanders and can help to establish effective, generational change to sustain the longevity of our beautiful people.