

Town Hall Brings Issues Home at Edelman Mental Health Center

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On December 19, 2016, LACDMH hosted a town hall meeting to discuss countywide healthcare concerns and answer questions with regard to mental health services. The town hall meeting, broadcast from Edelman Mental Health Center on the west side, was the first to be broadcast from a clinical setting.

Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., introduced himself as the new LACDMH Director and talked about engaging those most in need of services, allowing for access to mental health services and other needed resources in a cohesive, thoughtful and strategic way.

Health Agency Director Mitch Katz, M.D., thanked co-panelist LACDMH Chief Deputy Director Robin Kay, Ph.D., for her stewardship of the department over the past year as Interim Director and stressed what the LA County Board of Supervisors is currently looking for—a focus on the people in our county most in need—those on the streets, in jail, those suffering from violence or in violent relationships, children in foster care.



“The challenge is finding a strategy to meet people where they are,” Katz said. He stated that mental health professionals are sometimes better at having a broader view of what clients need because they see the “full person” and can

see “life circumstance issues.” To make that meaningful, Katz said, the Health Agency has to go the next step, providing solutions to housing, education, socialization, family, etc. His goal as Health Agency Director is to make sure that every mental health client has a primary care provider and that all three departments are on the same platform. “IBHIS actually is a good fit for DPH substance abuse services,” he said.

Interim Department of Public Health (DPH) Director Cindy Harding, M.P.H. reviewed a list of possible and successful departmental collaborations, such as the response to the Exide battery plant disaster and the use of DMH Promotores, informing local residents about getting medical attention.





Union representative Lawrence Reyes was on hand, serving as moderator for the panel during the Q & A session.

Here are a few of the questions asked and answers given:

Q: How will DMH services be more integrated?

A: Dr. Katz answered, “By making sure medical and mental health needs are met.”

Q: How will the election of Donald Trump and his promise to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) change our priorities/strategies for the Health Agency?

A: Dr. Katz answered, stating that our challenge is same; providing best possible service to clients and the community. “No matter what changes happen, it’s our job to focus on the people we serve,” Katz said. “Regardless of the national agenda, California is prepared to lead the way with a program that leads everyone.”

Dr. Sherin added that if the ACA is repealed, our work will become more compelling. “We’ll be proactive in leading and not be victimized by a change and react.”

Q: With regard to Adverse Childhood Experiences – is there room to look at what Washington State is doing and replicate their work?

A: Robin Kay answered: Through MHSAs Innovations Plan, DMH is implementing a trauma-focused, prevention early intervention plan this winter, which will

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address young children 0-5 and those in school. DMH will work with caregivers and teachers to identify trauma, understand it and refer to services—this would include how to restructure learning environments so that kids can overcome the impact of trauma.

Q: What’s happening with IBHIS and ORCHID?

A: Katz answered: To communicate well, we need IT systems that work well across the agency. Kevin (IT Director for DHS) responded from audience, stating that BOS read-out will come in January. “Maybe not ORCHID for all, we need to identify data fields that we can share and then officially share those.”

Dr. Sherin added that we need to be careful about merging infrastructure, making sure that we don’t lose capacity to take care of people best.

Stay tuned for the next Health Agency Town Hall meeting, tentatively scheduled for mid-February, 2017.

The Edelman Town Hall meeting is available for viewing here: <http://dmhhqportal1/sites/th/default.aspx>.