

Expanding Promotora/es Programs to Reach more Culturally Diverse Communities in Los Angeles County

Promotora/es, also known as community health workers, play an important role in promoting community-based health education by serving as a cultural bridge between healthcare agencies and the community, particularly for populations that have been historically underserved. The Latinx community recognizes promotora/es as lay health workers who come from the community and help remove barriers to healthcare by building trust and establishing rapport with families. The use of promotora/es has been a key strategy to reducing stigma and improving health equity throughout Los Angeles County (County).

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) currently has a Promotores de Salud Mental (Mental Health Promoters) program, where trusted community members share the ethnicity, language, and life experiences of the community they serve. These individuals are trained by DMH and their role is to provide free educational workshops to individuals and families seeking needed resources on

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prevention and early intervention. These promotora/es enhance provider-patient communication, adherence to treatment recommendations, and assist with the navigation of the health care system. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) also has a Promotores program, which allows community health workers to deliver nutrition and health education to the various Latino communities throughout the County. DPH's promotora/es connect community members to resources and become a trusted source of nutrition information in that community.

In 2017, DMH and DPH promotora/es raised community awareness about Exide. Promotora/es worked alongside public health nurses and visited 174 local private clinics to inform them about the contamination and encourage blood lead testing. They conducted door-to-door community outreach to homes within 1.7 miles from the Exide facility. Outreach teams visited households in Vernon, East Los Angeles, Commerce, Maywood, Bell, Boyle Heights, and Huntington Park. More than 194 outreach campaigns and 23 presentations were conducted to offer families resources, health education information, and health screenings. Promotora/es continue to advocate for these communities and are assisting with outreach for the lead abatement programs.

Currently, the promotora/es programs are only available in Spanish. However, according to the 2018 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog are the three most spoken languages in the County. The data also indicates that close to 3.5 million Los Angeles County residents were born outside of the United States. Thus, there is a dire need for community health workers to reach the rest of our linguistically and ethnically diverse communities, which are found throughout the County's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Often times,

communities of color and immigrant communities have a general mistrust of doctors and our health care system. Community health workers can help close that gap. The County promotora/es can disseminate health education information in a manner that is culturally sensitive. The DPH and DMH Promotores' programs serve different purposes, but they have been able to successfully provide crucial health information and workshops to the Latinx community for many years. It is time we expand this important program to include other languages, which will serve the public health needs of even more constituents in Los Angeles County.

I, THEREFORE MOVE, that the Board of Supervisors direct the Departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Public Health (DPH) in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office (CEO), to:

1. Examine the feasibility and cultural appropriateness of expanding their respective Promotora/es programs in geographic areas where there are large populations of communities of color whose native language is not English, taking into consideration the threshold languages, including Arabic, Armenian, Cambodian, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Mandarin. As part of that feasibility assessment, conduct a cross-walk between the roles of Promotora/es and those of other disciplines such as home visitors, doulas, community health workers, and navigators.
2. Include an assessment of potential funding streams, funding opportunities, and recommendations for funding and resources needed to expand the programs including staffing needs.

3. Identify a proposed implementation plan that would indicate how each Department will expand their programs to further connect community members in underserved areas with resources and information.
4. Metrics that will be used to evaluate the expansion of the programs.
5. Provide a report back to the Board in 90 days.

I, FURTHER MOVE, that the Department of Mental Health (DMH) report back to the Board in writing within 30 days on the following:

6. Direct the Department of Mental Health to explore opportunities to expand the Promotora/es Program through existing DMH contracts including but not limited to its Innovation 2 – Developing Trauma Resilient Communities Contracts to advocate for and meet the needs of communities suffering the effects of COVID-19.
7. Direct DMH to consider developing and implementing an “Ambassador” type program through existing DMH contracts as described above wherein community members are trained to provide community outreach and mobilization related to:
 - a. Social determinants of Mental health,
 - b. COVID-19 Trauma Recovery;
 - c. Service navigation for testing and contact tracing
 - d. Census participation

8. Delegate authority to the Director of DMH to increase the Total Contract Amounts for the above referenced DMH contracts, as necessary to expand the Promotora/es Program.

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