

# Community Ambassador Network

## Investing in Communities

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) believes deeply in the talent, commitment, and capacity of our communities to help improve the overall mental health and wellbeing of our entire County. LACDMH is therefore investing in individuals to serve as trusted resources for other members in their own communities through the Community Ambassador Network (CAN). The CAN program is designed to hire, train, and certify community members who will be able to function as “lay” mental health workers in their own neighborhoods (where they actually live). The Community Ambassadors, as such, can become local access agents, problem-solvers, and system navigators to help those in need find relevant resources.

## Providing Integrated Training and Career Advancement

Through LACDMH’s partnership with the University of California (UCLA and UCSD), the CAN offers comprehensive training to Ambassadors. Once training has been completed and certified, those who are appointed as Ambassadors in their communities are able to provide outreach and engagement, as well as deliver COVID-19 education, steady support and linkage to services as indicated. Ambassadors will have the opportunity to advance in their careers by becoming Senior Ambassadors who are prepared to offer community consultation, organize advocacy and convenings, and provide thought leadership. All the Ambassadors will take an equity-centered, trauma-informed approach to care, engaging members of the communities they serve with empathy and a focus on the goal of improving the emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of the collective in time.

## Creating Opportunities for All

Benefiting from a unique and creative problem-solving process based on equity, humility-building and healing practices, the CAN offers career pathways to those living in LA County’s underserved neighborhoods, many of whom have lost jobs due to the COVID-driven economic downturn. The CAN prioritizes support of those who identify as Black, Asian, Indigenous, and People of Color, many of whom live in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by systemic racism and inequality. The CAN leverages existing networks of trusted community-based providers and organizations and, along with County services, can become a core piece of LACDMH’s capacity building initiatives. The Ambassadors help nurture healthy and racially equitable communities by empowering others, raising awareness, and mobilizing change at the same time it infuses much needed funding and jobs into our most disenfranchised populations.

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