

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**Black & African Heritage  
UsCC MONTHLY MEETING  
October 21, 2021 – via MS Teams**

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order and Facilitator Roll Call**

Desiree DeShay called the meeting to order. Members introduced themselves and engaged in a popcorning to one another with introducing.

**Review/Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from August and September will be approved at the next UsCC meeting due to tight schedule.

**Updates from Black Mental Task Force**

Nakeya Fields discussed the update of capacity building project The family Conversation series with the August event, the topic was stigma around mental health and physical health in the Black community. Forty people registered only 20 people attended, the event was featured in the Pasadena Star-News. The next event will be September 18th at Jackie Robinson Park, this conversation series topic will be called “Supporting life skills building for transitional age Black Youth” this is essentially a cultural experience while learning about mental health. The October conversation series will be “New and Expecting Black Parents. The following one in November will be “Black and Unhoused”, then the final one is “Cannabis and LGBTQIA community in the Black community, and then end with a Community Awards Gala. The next capacity building project is coming up call the Minding Our Village Elders Project, in which youth will be trained, ages 16-25. In this project the focus is to find peer mentors, who are people with lived experience as seniors, or who have worked with seniors in the past and have a little bit more elevated experience. The goal is to train all our community service leaders. December 9th is the first training date.

BMTF have become advocates for the Black health promoters’ program and looking forward to having conversations with Dr. Partida.

**Updates from African Coalition**

N/A

**Guest Speaker – Flip The Switch To Feel Better & Do More It's All About the Little Things**

**Focus: Cancer, nutrition, inflammation, (neutralize, energize & revitalize) Presentation:**

**Charmène M. Vega & Tirza:**

**Tirza Presentation:**

Tirza presented on her experience with cancer. She is from the Netherlands and was born in South America by way of the Netherlands, Europe. Currently, she lives in the Midwest part of the country; Iowa to be exact. Tirza is a biochemist and has a PhD in biochemistry and a Master's in clinical nutrition, she is also a culinary chef, and she has had the pleasure of living in six different countries and speaks four different languages. Tirza was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer which was 0.04 of the kind of cancer; very rare. She discussed that no one in her family had cancer. She discussed her treatment regime which consisted of Neutragenomix, chemo treatments, radiation, surgeries, and 18 months she walked out of the hospital cancer free, January 4, 2011, and has now been cancer free for 12 years. Tirza has created a whole career around helping people maintaining a healthy lifestyle to fight disease. To this present day she has helped 88 cancer patients, 350 patients with various illnesses. Tirza is an advocate for all things healthy in particular Gut Health and is a champion for the Black community

**Mama Vega Presentation:**

Dr. (Hon) Charmène Vega is known as Mama Vega, a name affectionately given to her by her students. She is a fourth-generation nutritionist who was honored to cater to the United States State Department sub-committee on Health and Wellness (Washington DC).

Currently, she is working with clients to boost their immune systems to prevent and mitigate health concerns and underlying conditions that could potentially impede healing.

As a Functional Nutrition/Dietician Coach, under Choices N Nutrition, she has created a Tandem Eating Program for her Spectrum Eating clients that have produced evidenced-based positive astonishing lifestyle changes.

**Mental Health Promoters' Program Presented by Adriana Carrillo and Elidia Olmos**

The Mental Health promoters' program was developed through the Department of Mental Health they spoke today about how to make it a little bit easier for community members to complete their application process. The United Mental Health promoters' program, and the main goal is to reduce stigma associated with mental illness by increasing awareness about Mental Health issues, removing barriers, and improving timely access to culturally and linguistically services in the county.

Some of the services that are provided are outreach and engagement, educational workshops on 15 different topics and linkage and referrals all services right now are both conducted in person and virtually. The promoters was developed in November of 2011 and began in service area 7 with a small

pilot program that began to expand to service area 8 during the periods of 2012 through 2013 and then slowly progressively we expanded to service areas 4 and 6. Then the Spanish speaking program in between 2017-2018 and started in service areas 2 and 3 and during 2018-2019; we finalized the expansion to service areas 1 and 5 and during all this time frame it was primarily to the monolingual Spanish speaking community. Last year there was a motion by the Board of Supervisors to expand the program to reach additional Underserved Cultural Communities which was early Spring of last year, and in the fall of 2020 began the expansion program to other multi-diverse communities, and the goal was to hire 300 people.

### **DMH Updates**

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- The board unanimously voted to optimize recruitment and retention; how do we recruit and retain the workforce? Specifically for field-based staff, this is expanding our home Teams, FSP Teams, PMRT and MET Teams because in light of COVID it is important that these Teams are solid and how urgent the need is in the service area to expand on these Teams.
- The board recognized this past Tuesday was the Inauguration of the community health workers. So, October 21 is officially community health worker appreciation day and includes all of the community health workers that the Department seeks to hire around the promoters and the promoter residence programs, Mental Health advocates, that whole workforce of people with lived experience definitely and our peers in lot of SB 803. So as of today, October 21st other than officially community health worker appreciation day.
- The Department is -- and every county worker being held accountable for the vaccine mandate. We are required to be vaccinated and submit proof of vaccination or religious and medical exemption by October 1st, long past. Our Department as of a couple of weeks ago was at about 85 percent fully registered in the system to show proof of vaccination.
- As of next week, we will have a new address. Just a hop skip and jump away from the regular address. We were at 550 south Vermont and moving next door to 510 south

Vermont, so you will notice transitioning happening in the next week or so as our teams start to deploy all the employees our moving into a new building.

- The exciting thing about the new building, we have a new peer resource center that will be housed on the main floor of the new building, and then with that looking at expanding peer resource centers in all the service areas, and service area 7 and making headway and starting to see construction coming together for the new peer resource center.

### **Public Comments**

Nakeya Fields discussed writing a written statement on behalf for the Haitians in Texas. It is an issue for us as Black Americans, to have witnessed. We can have conversations in the middle about maybe creating a statement as the Black Mental Health community about having witnessed that and expressing our displeasure in some way.

### **Announcements**

**N/A**

**The meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm. The next UsCC meeting will be held via MS Teams on December 16, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 pm**