



PAINTED BRAIN

FY 21-22 MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Access for All Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) subcommittee was established under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), with the goals of reducing disparities and increasing mental health access for the disabled community in Los Angeles County. They work closely with community partners and consumers in order to increase the capacity of the public mental health system to develop culturally relevant recovery-oriented services specific to the disabled community and also to develop capacity building projects.

Painted Brain was contracted to develop and implement the UsCC Capacity Building Project: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Mental Health Needs Assessment Project virtually. The project period dated July 2021 to June 2022. The objective of this project was to outreach and engage people within this population from the eight (8) service areas across Los Angeles County into a virtual discussion regarding the mental health needs of this community, as well as to reduce the stigma associated with mental health services. This project aimed to increase connections with mental health resources and provide opportunities to address concerns about mental health services. Painted Brain outreached to people within this community and engaged them in one of nine (9) scheduled virtual Focus Groups to assess their mental health needs. Additionally, Painted Brain identified gaps in accessibility to mental health services and determined how to effectively engage community members into mental health services provided by Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH).

Simultaneously, Painted Brain was contracted to develop and implement the UsCC Capacity Building Project for the Physically Impaired and the Blind Partially Sighted, and Visually Impaired. The deliverable and implementation processes were replicated for all three projects to ensure continuity of data collection. The deliverable process is as follows:

- Deliverable 1 - July 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021 - Development of Focus Group questions, resource guides, flyers and other promotional materials.
- Deliverable 2 - October 1, 2021 to November 30, 2021 - Coordination of virtual Focus Groups for community members for eight (8) service areas and recruitment of Focus Group participants. (Plus one additional Focus Group was added, inclusive of all service areas)
- Deliverable 3 - December 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022 - Facilitation of eight (8) virtual Focus



Groups to the deaf and hard of hearing.

- Deliverable 4 - June 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022 - Final summary report highlighting all data collected.

PROJECT RESULTS

The following summary charts and information have been generated to reflect project results.

Total Number of Focus Groups Facilitated

- Painted Brain facilitated a total number of nine (9) Focus Groups during the contract period. Eight (8) Focus Groups were facilitated for all eight (8) service areas, one (1) Focus Group per service area and one (1) additional Focus Group encompassing all service areas. While conducting the Focus Groups, an issue arose of participants confirming their attendance via email, but would not attend the scheduled Focus Group. This “no show” situation necessitated an additional Focus Group be conducted encompassing every service area. Thus the total number of Focus Groups per disability sector is the required eight (8) plus one (1) additional.

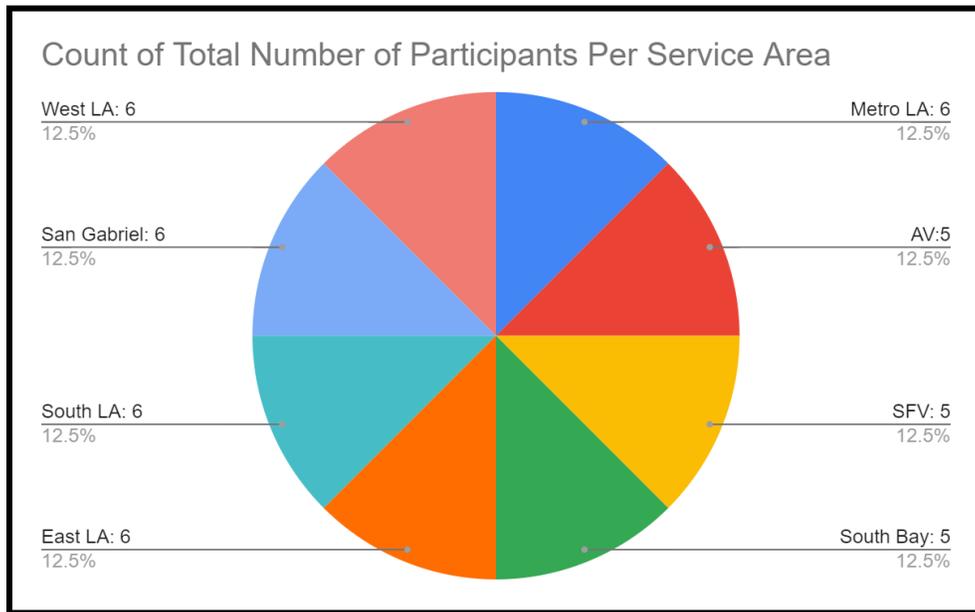
Total Number of Registrants

- 180 individuals registered to participate in the scheduled Focus Groups.



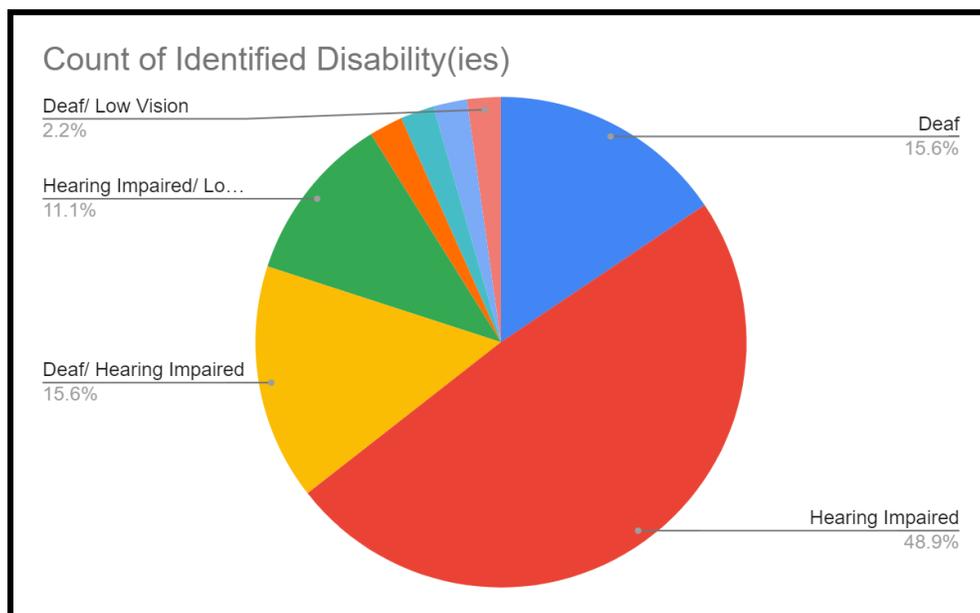
Total Number of Participants Reached Per Service Area

- A total of 45 participants were reached during the project period.



Identified Disability(ies)

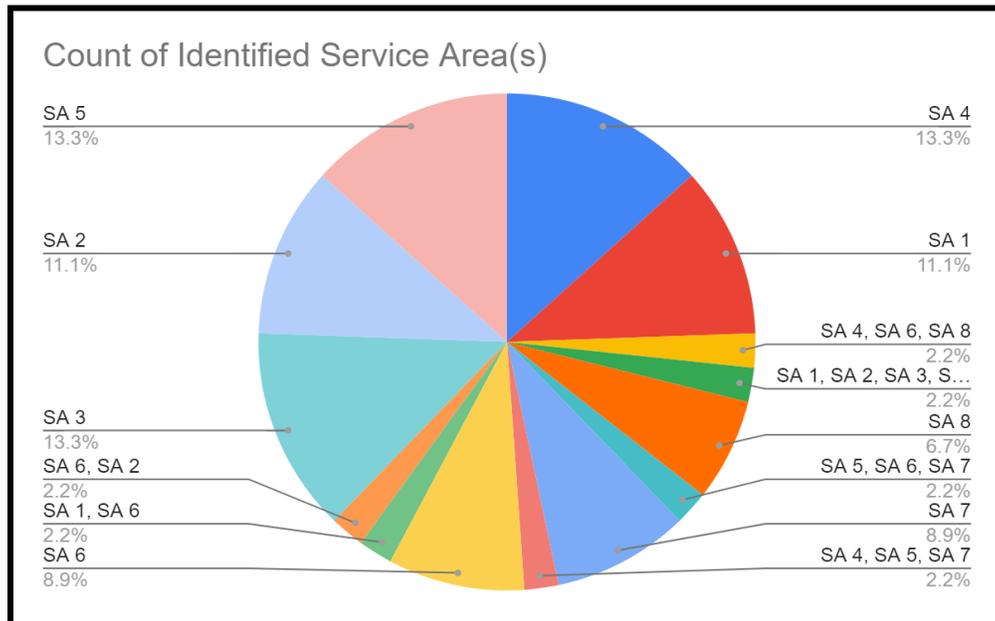
- Participants identified with one or more disability(ies), below is the summary of participants identified disability(ies) per their registration form.





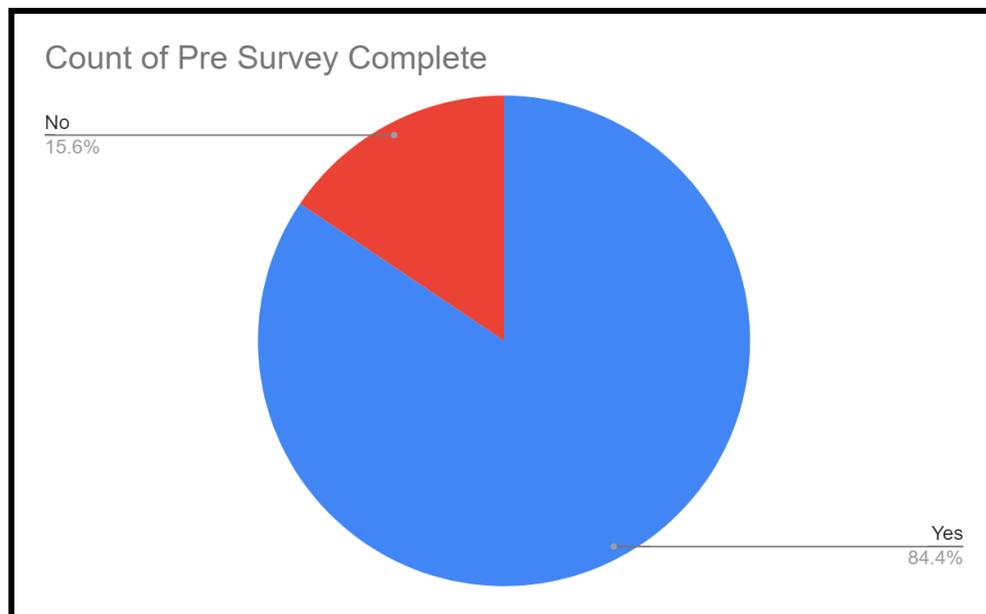
Identified Service Area(s) on Registration Form

- Participants identified with one or more service area(s), below is the summary of participants identified service area(s) per their registration form.



Completed Pre-Surveys

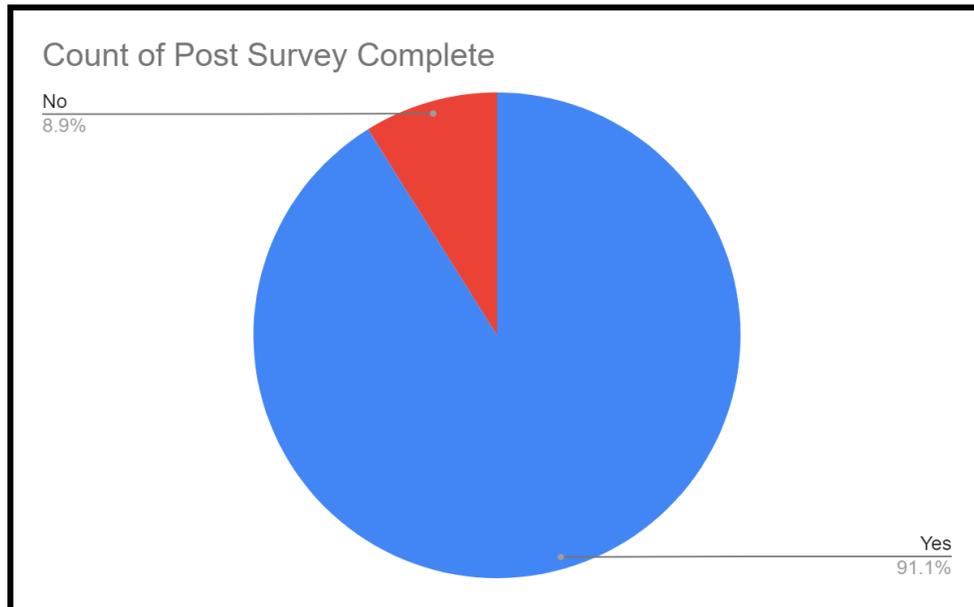
- 84.4% of participants completed a pre-survey. Despite follow-up, there were participants who did not complete the Focus Group pre-survey.





Completed Post Surveys

- 91.1% of participants completed a post-survey. Despite follow-up, there were participants who did not complete the Focus Group post-survey.



Development of Focus Group Subjects Areas and Questions

The development of the Disability Mental Health Needs Assessment Subject Areas and Questions were co-developed through meetings with the LACDMH and UsCC. Key areas of inquiry for the Disability sectors were identified to gauge mental health service use and mental health needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community. These key subject areas were then further developed into Focus Group questions that would best illustrate the current state of affairs within the disabilities community in Los Angeles County. The subject areas and questions were uniformly applied across all three (3) Needs Assessment projects to create a continuity of the data collection.

The process of developing the subject areas and the Focus Group questions took place over a series of Access For All meetings until approval of final questions was achieved. The subject area feedback and comments were received from the UsCC members, community stakeholders, and LACDMH staff.

Focus Group subject areas:

- Available Services
- Challenges/Gaps in Services



- Stigma
- Improvements
- Outreach Suggestions

Focus Group questions:

1. What mental health services are you currently using or know of?
2. What are some challenges to accessing mental health services you or the deaf and hard of hearing community experience?
3. What stigma related to mental health do you experience?
4. If you could change one thing about mental health service delivery for the deaf and hard of hearing community what would it be?
5. What are some suggestions you have for outreaching about mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing community?

The following are results to the Focus Group questions:

What mental health services are you currently using or know of?

Focus Group participants identified various mental health services currently being used or known of. Some of the mental health services being accessed included group therapy, medical supervision, and recreational therapies with ASL and interpretation services. Some practices engaged in included meditation.

- **Participants quote:** “ *Virtual counseling services are provided in my city. In my case they [counseling sessions] were not covered by insurance.*”

What are some challenges to accessing mental health services you or the deaf and the hard of hearing experience?

Participants of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Focus Groups identified four major challenges in accessing mental health services:

1. Lack of supportive and caring people in caretaker roles
2. Discrimination
3. Cost of services
4. Language barriers

Lack of supportive and caring people in caretaker roles: Participants shared consensus with feelings relative to mental health service providers being unaware of how to effectively engage with the target population. Participants shared that they have experienced unwelcoming



treatment where their needs and concerns are dismissed, leaving them feeling dismissed and further contributing to hesitations in accessing mental health services.

- **Participant quote:** *“Create awareness that people living with disabilities are important in the community and [they] should be respected, show love and help [them] get the effective services.”*

Discrimination: A common type of discrimination experienced by the target population and is a result of their disability being unseen/undisclosed, is that their disability can often be overlooked contributing to feelings of isolation in social interactions.

- **Participant quote:** *“Most health providers don’t like to deal with folks with a disability , so deaf are stigmatized while trying to [access] the services.”*

Cost of services: Participants accessing individual counseling services now or in the past expressed a difficulty in being able to financially afford the cost of services. The financial strain experienced as a result of their disability and other living expenses makes budgeting for mental health services unattainable. Thus restricting individuals of the deaf and hard of hearing community from prioritizing their mental health needs.

- **Participant quote:** *“[I] am facing various challenges such as lack of enough capital to access the available services.”*

Language barriers: Language barriers contribute to social isolation and the lack of accessibility of mental health services. Participants expressed that there is minimal access to mental health service providers that provide services in American Sign Language (ASL), consequently hindering their ability to access those services. Participants shared that since language barriers exist, that mistreatment from mental health service providers is experienced in the form of frustration and apathy.

- **Participant quote:** *“The challenge is lack of ASL interpreters available in the County - I was told there [are] only 7 interpreters on the roster for [the] entire LA County, which isn't enough.”*

What stigma related to mental health do you experience?

Many participants expressed experiencing stigma at work or in social settings and for that reason face trauma related to the discriminatory experiences. Their trauma related to stigma has had a significant impact on whether participants seek mental health services. Stigma was correlated to a misunderstanding of participants' disability from families, friends, co-workers, or others. Participants' reluctance in seeking mental health treatment/services contributes to



fewer opportunities for employment, education, social activities, and housing since mental health challenges go untreated.

- **Participant quote:** *“Stigma and discrimination can also make someone's mental health problems worse, and delay or stop them [from] getting help. Social isolation, poor housing, unemployment and poverty are all linked to mental ill health. So stigma and discrimination can trap people in a cycle of illness.”*

If you could change one thing about mental health service delivery for the deaf and hard of hearing community what would it be?

Listed below are Focus Group participants suggestions that may improve the quality of mental health services provided, they are as follows:

- Increase availability of translation services/support
- Have an easier and accessible process of navigating online resources to support service utilization
- Make supportive devices (e.g. hearing aids) affordable and accessible to all
- Train and educate frontline staff and mental health service providers on disability etiquette as to ensure quality of services that are safe and welcoming of all
- Accessibility of affordable service centers throughout Los Angeles County, including availability of online therapy
- Disability, mental health and resource education in public spaces
- Early child education on disability awareness and etiquette to combat stigma and promote inclusivity
- **Participant quote:** *“The most common barriers are fear of stigmatization, lack of awareness of mental health services, sociocultural scarcity, scarcity of financial support, and lack of geographical accessibility, which limit the patients to utilize mental health services.”*

What are some suggestions you have for outreaching about mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing community?

The following are Focus Group suggestions to increase awareness of mental health services:

- Develop awareness campaigns to reach target communities to increase knowledge of services available and navigating points of entry
- Hosting in-person and online community events that can be promoted and archived on social media platforms



- Linkages through mental health services that support other basic needs (e.g. housing and food insecurity)

PROJECT COSTS

\$46,500

LESSONS LEARNED/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Fraud

The presence of a \$50.00 gift card incentive may have skewed the demographics of the participants towards a lower financial segment of the disabled population. Further, issues of fraudulent registrations, and participants were a concern.

- *Recommendation:* Marketing the gift cards as a raffle, may reduce fraud. Though marketed as a raffle, all participants would receive a gift card at the conclusion of all Focus Groups.

Vetting Process for Participants

Applying a vetting process for disabled participants is strongly recommended for future LACDMH Focus Groups.

- *Recommendation:* Collaborating with disability service providers and University disabled student service departments, to recruit Focus Group participants may aid in the verification of participant disability and vetting processes. Additionally, we suggest receiving referrals from a trusted source/agency who can vet participants.

Service Area Selection

Having multiple Service Areas able to be selected on the Registration form, caused logistic issues in regards to where a participant would be scheduled for a particular Focus Group. Further, a pattern of registrants selecting multiple service areas & multiple disabilities, raised fraud concerns.

- *Recommendation:* It is strongly suggested that only one (1) Service Area option be selected on the Focus Group Registration form.

Security

The majority of Focus Group participants did not enable their video camera or share their facial image. This raised security concerns, as it was not possible for the Focus Group Facilitators to visually vet the participants.



- *Recommendation:* A discussion of how to best ensure the safety of Focus Group participants is strongly recommended for LACDMH to further develop the balance between privacy and security issues.

Disability Resources

The Disability Resource Guide produced by Painted Brain, that is posted on the LACDMH website is in PDF form with no method of being updated & searched. The resource guide appears as three (3) separate PDF files.

- *Recommendation:* Have the Disability Resource Guide in Web Page template that can be updated and additional resources can be added. Add a search engine feature to the template.

Tutorial Video

Focus Group expectations sent via email communications were not clearly understood by selected registrants.

- *Recommendation:* The creation of a tutorial video on how to register and participate in a Focus Group, is strongly recommended as an outreach tool, to better inform potential Focus Group participants of these processes/expectations. For the disability sector in particular, American Sign Language Interpretation within the Tutorial video is also recommended.

Threshold Languages

We did not reach many communities that are native speakers of the 13 Threshold Languages.

- *Recommendation:* Outreach materials translated into the fourteen (13+ASL) currently identified Threshold Languages within Los Angeles County is strongly recommended. Requirements to conduct translation of outreach materials is suggested as a line item of the contract Scope Of Work.

Engagement Challenges

Focus group participants had very low verbal engagement, making fluid dialogue difficult. In spite of having access to ASL interpreters, the majority of participants were reluctant to turn on cameras to utilize ASL to communicate and strictly contributed responses through the Zoom chat box feature. By limiting engagement to solely written communication, participants' contributions were short and often fragmented in an attempt to be concise. This form of communication also created delays and disruptions in flow of dialogue.

- *Recommendation:* LACDMH should consider policies regarding security for vetting and weighing them against privacy concerns.



OUTCOMES

Project Pre-production

- Project planning meetings with LACDMH and the UcCC to discuss project and project deliverables.
- Draft of Project Roadmap highlighting all activities to be performed during the project period.

Project Coordination

- Painted Brain internal staff meetings to discuss project deliverables, timeline and activities. 1-2 times per week.
- Meetings with contract liaison to discuss project updates and supports needed. Once (1) per month.

Development of Marketing/ Outreach Materials

- Development of marketing e-flyers and promotional videos (TikTok) for the recruitment of deaf and hard of hearing participants in each of the eight (8) Service Areas. Marketing flyers were in PDF and Alt Text format. Promotional flyers/videos included voice over accessibility.
- Development of Resource Guide with Countywide resources for the deaf and hard of hearing community to provide to Focus Group participants.
- Development of a compilation Resource Guide with Countywide resources for all disabilities to provide to Focus Group participants. PDF version posted on LACDMH website, Get Help Now Page - Resources Disabled.

Marketing, Outreach & Recruitment for Virtual Focus Groups

- Utilized social media platforms to recruit deaf and hard of hearing community members in each of the eight (8) Service Areas.
 - Twitter
 - FaceBook
 - Instagram
 - Club House
 - Twitter Space
- Conducted motivation outreach in each of the eight (8) service areas to recruit deaf and hard of hearing community members.
 - Hosted outreach presentations to the following:
 - Service Area Leadership Team – SPA 3, San Gabriel Valley
 - Abilities Expo



- Requested consultation on best practices to outreach to the deaf and hard hearing from the following agencies:
 - California State University Northridge– Department on Disabilities
 - Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness
 - 5 Acres – Mental Health service provider
- Conducted outreach efforts via email to Community Based Organizations, Colleges/Universities, Independent Living Centers in each eight (8) service areas.

Focus Group Logistics Coordination

- Conducted nine (9) Focus Groups virtually to the deaf and hard of hearing community, one Focus Group in each of the eight (8) service areas in Los Angeles County and one (1) Focus Group to all eight (8) service areas
- Developed Focus Group registration form and pre/post surveys on Google Forms. Conducted accessibility testing on phone and computer platforms for the registration and pre/post surveys.
- Developed Focus Group questions
- Developed slides for the Focus Group presentation
- Developed Focus Group timeline
 - December 2021 – May 2022
- Managed registration list of participants
- Vet participants list
 - Ensured participants selected to join one of the scheduled Focus Groups met criteria.
- Email communications to selected participants
 - Confirmation to participate email
 - Introduction to Focus Group
 - Expectations to join
 - Follow-up email
 - Created and provided participants with the Zoom Link and phone numbers to join
 - Post Focus Group follow-up email
 - Distribution of Resource Guide PDF
 - Instructions to receive gift card
- When requested, arrange for the availability of ASL interpretation services at the Focus Group
 - Provide ASL interpreters with Focus Group presentation for review



- Enabled live transcription and closed captioning for all virtual Focus Groups
 - Review keyboard shortcuts for main feature buttons -mute, video etc. at each scheduled Focus Group
- Coordinate gift card distribution to Focus Group participants
- Provide monthly status reports to project liaison
 - Provide reports at Access For All monthly meetings
- Submit report/ invoice per project delivery phase
- Sort and access Focus Group data to determine results, lessons learned, recommendation, and outcomes.