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Improving and Expanding the Mental Health Delivery Service for Underserved Latino Communities throughout Los Angeles County

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health disparities throughout Los Angeles County (County). It is expected that the need for mental health services will be greater than ever before. In a recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll, nearly 45% of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the virus. In addition, recent evidence suggests that a large proportion of COVID-19 survivors will experience related neurocognitive and neuropsychiatric sequelae. Since the pandemic began, data show that the Latino community is one of the hardest-hit groups economically. A survey by the Pew Research Center conducted in March found that the Latino community was more likely to say that they or someone in their household had experienced a pay cut or job loss due to COVID-19. Economic burdens along with stress, isolation, and high infection rates, highlight the structural inequities that affect the Latino/a immigrant and nonimmigrant populations.

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In order to address growing needs for real-time assessments to guide targeted treatment in these communities, the UCLA Hispanic Neuropsychiatric Center of Excellence (HNCE) has partnered with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) to develop a two-pronged implementation strategy: 1) a Pipeline Program to train bilingual/bicultural neuropsychologists, which are currently non-existent within the DMH system; and 2) a Continuing Education Program that addresses the capacity of current DMH psychologists to provide culturally competent psychological and neuropsychological assessments that more efficiently guide effective client-centered interventions to decrease the mental health burden in LA County. In an effort to meet the unique and expanding mental health needs of the County within the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the UCLA HNCE is providing a socioculturally and linguistically responsive organizing framework through the Bilingual and Spanish Interdisciplinary Clinical Training Program (BASIC-T) to intentionally address both the imminent and long-term mental health needs of the bilingual Latino population. Specifically, increasing the pipeline of bilingual/bicultural neuropsychologists to assess the Latino population will be particularly important given the recent reports of potential COVID-19 related neurocognitive and neuropsychiatric sequelae.

BASIC-T is actively assisting with training community clinics, federally qualified health centers and agencies, as well as faith-based organizations and churches that have historically served marginalized communities of color. Churches, in particular, tend to represent safe havens for community members by providing support in times of crisis. Churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, and other places of worship are community assets that serve as a direct conduit for connecting vulnerable members to supportive

services. Over 26 churches throughout the County have completed trainings that address cultural competency and COVID-19 mental health interventions. Upwards of 60 faith-based organizations, as well as the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, are scheduled to participate in upcoming trainings.

In addition, BASIC-T works directly with the DMH Speakers Bureau, which consists of certified linguistically and culturally competent DMH clinicians, who are representative of the communities they serve. As such, they serve as community partners, trauma and crisis treatment providers, program developers, speakers, and educators. They champion the needs of the community by assuring appropriate linkage to care. Moreover, BASIC-T and DMH provide specialized trainings to the *Promotoras de Salud*. These trainings consist of evidence-based strategies for coping with psychological distress in Spanish-speaking communities. The Promotoras have been trained to bridge the digital divide that disproportionately impacts Latino communities by learning to use digital platforms that enable the delivery of telehealth services and trainings on various important mental health topics. Over 140 Promotoras have participated in these virtual trainings, thus far, and are supporting DMH's efforts in disseminating accurate public health and mental health information to the Latino community.

In concert with ongoing efforts through the DMH GENESIS program, BASIC-T continues to augment services for psychiatrically and cognitively compromised older adults by providing education and consultation for virtual bilingual support groups for families and caregivers. This is a particularly high-risk and isolated population that needs consistent support to reduce negative mental health impacts, which have been

exacerbated by the pandemic.

The UCLA Hispanic Neuropsychiatric Center of Excellence (BASIC-T) and DMH are working to meet the emergent mental health needs of the Latino community. Most importantly, this partnership in concert with the Speakers Bureau is currently bridging the gap found between the real needs of our communities and their challenges in accessing care in our complex healthcare system. This unique engagement strategy demonstrates how empowering connections to community are made by using culturally appropriate practices that support healing and recovery. The County must continue to support and safeguard these efforts by expanding these programs, in order to serve more individuals and families who are experiencing crises due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting mental health complications.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Mental Health (DMH) in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to report back to the Board in 30 days on the following:

1. An analysis on the feasibility of expanding the BASIC-T Pipeline Training Program and the Continuing Education Program for DMH Clinicians to meet the long-term goals of building bilingual assessment capacity for DMH, and focusing on emerging mental health needs related to COVID-19.
2. Identify ongoing funding sources to continue and expand the program Countywide; such sources should include, but not be limited to, the Mental Health Services Act.
3. Explore a model for strengthening the collaboration between BASIC-T,

Speakers Bureau, and Promotores de Salud Mental to provide a more integrated, multidisciplinary, and culturally competent model of care.

4. A framework for training of DMH clinicians, organizations, and others to increase capacity for the above program.
5. Potential outcomes and metrics that can be used to evaluate the impact of program.

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