

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
Office of the Deputy Director of Strategic Communications**

**American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) UsCC Subcommittee  
MEETING MINUTES**

July 3rd, 2019  
1:00PM – 4:00PM

**Present:** Melanie Cain, Hector Ramirez, Danielle Kayne-O’Gilvie, Valerie Cabral, Monique Castro, Farrah Ferris, Raul Garcia, Carrie Johnson, Keith Vielle, Sunnie Whipple, Bernice Mascher, Johnanthon Talamantes, Toni Craigs-Thomas, Charlotte Lujan, Marissa Abril, Mark Parra

**By Phone:** Belinda Smith, Monique Smith, Andrea Garcia, Avril Cordova, Angela Trenado  
**DMH Admin** Mirtala Parada Ward, Connie Acosta Castaneda

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
<b>Welcome, Prayer &amp; Introductions</b>	Attendee introductions
<b>Membership Code of Conduct - Review/Sign</b>	The Code of Conduct shared with the subcommittee, signing is voluntary. Code of Conduct agreement only needs to be signed once a year.
<b>Review of Minutes</b>	June 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2019 meeting minutes approved.
<p><b>Community Symposiums Project – Focus Group</b></p> <p><b>Monique Castro</b></p>	<p>Symposium Project “Mental Wellness Gathering”. The Symposiums are for the Native community. The first flyer will be sent out in a couple of weeks, before end of month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All events will be on Saturdays from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/28/19</li> <li>10/12/19</li> <li>11/9/19</li> <li>1/11/19</li> <li>2/8/19</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There will be five Symposiums throughout the geographical areas. Service Area’s that they would like to reach include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPA 1 – Antelope Valley</li> <li>SPA 2 – San Fernando Valley</li> <li>SPA 3 – San Gabriel Valley</li> <li>SPA 4 – Metro Los Angeles</li> <li>SPA 7 – East Los Angeles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Locations have not been finalized yet; will give updates as we get them.</li> <li>• Monique would like help with the topics. She would like for the members to keep these key words in mind when thinking about the five topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Empower</li> <li>3. Inform</li> <li>4. Access</li> <li>5. Enlist Mental Health needs</li> <li>6. Educate</li> <li>7. Promote</li> </ol> <p>The group was asked to rate and give feedback on their top 5 choices.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sweat Lodge / Ceremonies</li> <li>2. Art as a form of healing</li> <li>3. Music as medicine</li> <li>4. PSD / Historical Trauma</li> <li>5. Indigenizing education</li> <li>6. Suicide prevention and education, harm reduction</li> <li>7. Learning from our Elders</li> <li>8. Traditional foods / medicine</li> </ol> <p>Monique will also be using Indigenous Circle of Wellness social media platform as well as asking other organizations (including UAll and others) that have social media to help promote and share.</p>
<p><b>Discussion with Dr. Sherin - Updates regarding Mental Health Promoters Program</b></p>	<p><b><u>Update on the Mental Health Promoters Program:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sherin shared that one of the terms he uses, and many people use, is trenches. The idea of the trench is that decisions are made in our universe top down, there is really a lack of attention, respect and a tone deafening on what matters in our communities at the grassroots level. He has been pushing the Department to pay attention to and enrich and empower front line providers and our consumers and families. Bottom line is that it is not easy. The intention for the direction of the Department is to listen to, empower, and enrich what Dr. Sherin calls the sacred interface. Everything we do and all the information we collect ultimately helps us drive the deployment of resources to a place that matters, which is a place of healing. That is Dr. Sherin's goal.</li> <li>• Regarding the Mental Health Promoters, the Department is hiring people in leadership positions that care. This is a top down bureaucratic Department and sometimes it does not do well with people trying to change it. These are the big challenges. Dr. Sherin shared that he has been at the Department for two and a half years and expected that the stakeholder process would have been largely resolved, but it is still not resolved. The idea of what the Department is trying to do with the stakeholder arena is to expand and invest in stakeholder engagement.</li> <li>• The Department has an amazing Mental Health Promoters program but it really focuses on largely one cultural group. The Department needs to look into all of the groups here who have needs, which have to be recognized and addressed in the most organic and genuine way by the community itself.</li> <li>• Dr. Sherin shared that the community-based organizations have a capacity to do things in different parts of the County and we need to try to fuel that to empower. AICC does a lot of great work and there is no reason why we cannot invest in the Mental Health Promoters program in that clinic. In some ways, it would function as a</li> </ul>

Hub. Dr. Sherin shared that he has been trying to do that with not much success despite a tremendous amount of effort. He first wants a dedicated space. He was told two years ago that this was happening and did not hear anything for six months and when he asked, again they said that it was not going to happen and he was not happy about that. Dr. Sherin shared that he is trying to take action to make sure that those kind of things do not happen anymore. He shared that some of the issues are related to the Department's processes and some of them are related to our personnel.

- Dr. Sherin shared that the Mental Health Promoters Request for Proposals (RFP) is being amended to split funding but the content of the curriculum is not yet done. The RFP will allow for an agency that applies to modify the curriculum according to the needs and volume of the community. There is a certain amount of funding that is available and Dr. Sherin said he will push the funding out as originally told to the group. He shared that there is a lot going on in LA County and this Department has six thousand employees. Since he cannot know everything that is going on a lot of the time, he relies on staff to be comfortable sharing with him what is going on and not always worrying about the chain of command. He stated that he wanted the AI/AN UsCC subcommittee to use him to get stuff done and not to care so much about your relationship with him, but rather care about your relationship to the community. Lobby and advocate to and for the community. He thanked the people that work for him and can advocate for the community. He encouraged members to advocate for what is needed.
- He stated that if the AI/AN subcommittee felt that their capacity building projects are working to reach the AI/AN community and they do not want the Promoters Program/Contracts to come in and help, that is up to them as a group. Dr. Sherin said that all he cares about is getting people help. He shared that he is trying to build a culture that is transparent, that is accountable, and that there is trust and we are all focused on a mission. He wants to empower the community to thrive.

#### **Feedback from the subcommittee**

**Melanie Cain:** I have questions about the logistics.

- ✓ Dr. Sherin recommends that she talk to Dr. Bonds regarding the logistics, and to get access to the administrative side of the house from Contracting and they should tell you exactly what is happening. It is very important that you advocate what is needed for the best package of resources possible.

**Keith Vielle:** Is concerned about conflict of interest.

- ✓ Dr. Sherin suggested you may want someone from Contracts with the technical expertise to tell you what is going to cause a problem and what is not.

**Sunnie Whipple:** Through the UsCC group we have Capacity Building funds, funds that we use to reach the Native American community and see if we can get them in the door. Now we have the Promoters coming in, in my part from me myself it implies that we are not capable of reaching our own people. That is the message I am getting clearly and if so, that means our Capacity Building Projects are for nothing.

- ✓ Dr. Sherin: If Capacity Building Projects are working for you and that is what you want as a subcommittee and you do not want the Promoters program or Contracts, that is fine. My main concern is helping the community and getting people services. You guys tell me what you want.

**Toni Craigs-Thomas:** How do we move forward? Dr. Sherin is here and he is saying that we have carte blanche. I understand what the history has been, but moving forward, how can we be proactive with those kind of movements?

**Hector Ramirez:** Having observed some of the other cultural subcommittees, you recognize that this community has been neglected. One of the things that has been missing for this body is really having the opportunity to utilize our DMH staff, to truly act like subject matter experts in the design of some of our PNI programs that are represented up to Sacramento. I realize the restraints working with the largest Public Health System in the world. We have the great benefit of having such a diverse community of stakeholders compared to some of the other subcommittees, this is perhaps a legacy project moving forward. I really appreciate your honesty and your willingness to be brave. I would like for you to think about how we can access you. As consumers and staff, it is scary because we do get retaliation on all different levels for participating. I am very inspired by the work that you do but sometimes I still walk away not feeling like anything has been accomplished. That is something I would like for you to figure out how that can change.

**Bernice Mascher:** We come in as community not always knowing how it works. You kind of find out as you go along. I really appreciate some of the explanation; I know Mirtala has her hands full trying to explain the whole process. I would really value even having an ad-hoc group, because the more we understand the more we can pass it on. Maybe bringing someone in from Contracts so we can understand the process. If it takes a legal person to come in and explain things to us, then let us get that person in here so we can better understand some of the dynamics and walls we might hit. So we can move better through the system and help change where it needs to happen, but also to better explain it to others that come because if new community comes in, they'll end up being in the same place somewhere down the line, not knowing the system.

**Keith Vielle:** When the Promoters were developed, there was no input from the consumers. If our consumers were able to be in our group for up to say 60 days, they would be able to tell their stories, I cannot say, "Hey this is what works" but they could tell their stories. We are learning from what we are used to of our clinical knowledge. I think the answer to some of our problems with our clients is through the clients themselves. They tell me what works and does not work for them and I document it. If they could speak out that way, we got something there.

✓ Dr. Sherin agreed. You should collect information whichever way you think makes sense and works. I encourage that.

**Farrah Ferris:** I would like to thank you, this is probably the first time we've had someone of your ranking come meet with us. I hate to say it that way but that's how we see it in Indian Country. I know you are busy, it means a lot to us in Indian Country. I speak on behalf of the community and they are saying that the RFP process was not honored, and that the process was not transparent. Given that there are a lot of entities that were invested in it and I speak not on behalf of UAI, but that there were other communities and entities that were interested in it. If it stays or if it splits, however the process looks like, my anxious ambition is to see that the process is open to our subcommittee here.

1. So we know the stakeholders that are at the table;
2. We can be part of the process, on how and whom that curriculum is going to be developed and how it looks like; and
3. To make sure that people are not competing with different curriculums. So that the process and diversity within Indian Country is going to be attempted.

	<p>For us in the community here, the intention and that process has to be clear, otherwise we will not trust it and we will not be on board. One of the concerns from entities was that only the entities that made the million-dollar mark such as UAll could participate in that. We said we would back out of that process to allow other entities to push forward. If that RFP is put out, is it going to be available to entities who are not at that million-dollar mark? There are many other entities that are amazing and can do the work and have time and space to do that work.</p>
<p><b>Announcements – Co-Chairs, Subcommittee Members</b></p>	<p><b><u>Farrah Ferris:</u></b> Printed and shared flyers about the Community Symposium that will be held. They flyers will also will be distributed.</p> <p><b><u>Bernice Mascher:</u></b> Would like to invite everyone to come to a Cultural Competency (CCC) and/or Institute for Cultural and Linguistic Inclusion and Responsiveness (ICLIR) meeting. CCC is every second Wednesday of the month from 1:30 – 3:30PM @ Headquarters 550 and ICLIR is every third Thursday from 2 – 4PM @ 695 building.</p> <p><b><u>Hector Ramirez:</u></b> July is National Minority Mental Health Month. It is another year to have the opportunity to help with the issues that affect the AI/AN community. The Disabilities Rights Federal Agency is mandated to protect all people with disabilities. The agency provides protection and advocacy resources, education, and legal services free of charge. It is made up of Community Stakeholders. We are helping to support some of the legislators and budget, participating at the State level. They also do policy work at the National level. It is open to the community. This is a great opportunity to bring more services to the community.</p> <p><b><u>Keith Vielle:</u></b> UAll will be having their 29<sup>th</sup> annual Summer Camp, Camp Oliver. This will be the third year in San Diego. UAll will be working with the tribes there. Keith will be teaching traditional archery and hiking in the Cleveland National Forest. This program is free for the kids and is a great opportunity to volunteer.</p> <p><b><u>Monique Castro:</u></b> There will be an Open House for Indigenous Circle of Wellness. It will be at the same location but now in a larger space. The Open House will be July 27, 2019 from 9AM – 12PM, light refreshments will be served, and people will be able to meet the other therapists, The practice has eight therapists. A flyer and an Eventbrite link will be sent out.</p> <p><b><u>Avril Cordova:</u></b> UAll Seven Generations Prevention and After Care program is having a Community Creek Nation Tribal gathering every second Saturday of the month. The next gathering will be August 10<sup>th</sup> from 12PM – 3PM at the Community Center. Lunch will be provided. In addition, Indian Day is September 7<sup>th</sup> and flyers regarding Information Tables will be coming out soon.</p>
<p><b>Next Meeting</b></p>	<p>August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 2 – 4PM CSULA</p>