

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

**American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES**

April 3rd, 2019  
2:00PM – 4:00PM

**Present:** Mark Parra, Carrie Johnson, Patricia Perez, Farrah Ferris, Johnathan Talamantes, Andrea Garcia, Adriana Carrillo, Walter Ahhaitty, Sunnie Whipple, Bernice Mascher, Monique Smith, Raul Garcia, Susan Jackson, Avril Cordova, Pat Lopez, Alicia Vargas, Charlotte Lujan, Keith Vielle

**By Phone:** Monique Castro, Belinda Smith, Sylvia Youngblood, Marissa Abril, Melanie Cain

**DMH Admin:** Ana Suarez, Mirtala Parada Ward, Kelly Wilkerson, Connie A. Castaneda

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
<b>Welcome, Prayer &amp; Introductions</b>	Attendee introductions
<b>Review of minutes</b>	March 6th, 2019 meeting minutes approved
<b>Announcements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We'll be changing the name of our Unit (UsCC) as a result of the re-org that is coming up.</li> </ul>
<b>UsCC Business</b>  <b>Kelly Wilkerson / Mirtala Parada Ward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Co-Chair Election Results</b> Sunnie Whipple was elected to be the third co-chair for the American Indian/Alaska Native subcommittee group.</li> <li>• <b>Capacity building Projects – update</b> The Community Symposium project went out for bid. Information was emailed to the subcommittee. If you have any questions you can email the buyer that is listed.</li> </ul>
<b>Promoters Program</b>	<p><b>Ana Suarez:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMH executive management made the decision to host Promoters Program at AICC, the directly operated program as Native Americans are found throughout the County.</li> <li>• The Program can co-locate people from the community at our different clinics.</li> <li>• AICC will be the lead because they are the directly operated DMH clinic,</li> <li>• Promoters will be chosen from community members in the area that are of American Indian heritage or really know the American Indian community and could be good Promoters.</li> <li>• Andrea Garcia and Melanie Cain are our consultants on this and they will train and then the Promoters will go out there to educate the community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Andrea Garcia:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involved in curriculum adaptation,</li> </ul>

- Reached out to Dr. Johnson to request curriculums already developed by UAI
- Conducted 10 to 12 meetings to discuss each module and how the curriculum could be adapted
- May provide support with regards to training Promoters if time allows.

**Charlotte Lujan:** Suggest we find a name for the Promoters.

**Ana Suarez:** The Generic name is Mental Health Promoters for all groups. There is a specific curriculum under Promoters, and it will be adapted. Different modules:

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Domestic Violence
4. Childhood Abuse

- We want to study it across cultures. Las Promotoras was originally a Latino program. We want to see if that training and program adaptation works helping people address mental health issues. Mental health illness happens in every culture. Dr. Garcia did a beginning adaptation of one of the modules. It has data on Mental Health statistics with American Indians. It also talks about historical trauma.

**Sunnie Whipple:** Are those stats taken from research that's done from urban areas, or are they from Google or other research places that probably won't really apply to this kind of area?

**Andrea Garcia:** All of our sources, if they're not from the literature, we usually go to the Urban Indian Health Institute.

**Melanie Cain:**

- Interested in going to non-DMH agencies and community agencies where there might be a concentration of Native people,
- Another goal is to conduct triages with people who might be interested in services and provide linkage.

**Farrah Ferris:**

- As co-chair I have heard from a lot of people regarding the manner of this process and the lack of transparency.
- Other agencies have expressed interest in this project.
- Community has felt that the way this project was presented two years ago and four months ago is not what occurred. Have also expressed concerns about whether the project will be led by a Native person/supervisor.

**Charlotte Lujan:** I remember coming to the meetings where they had Spiritual Healers, how come that didn't continue like the Promotoras? What happened, why did it just end?

**Mirtala Parada Ward:**

- Provided overview of capacity building projects and the use of one-time funding for these projects (i.e.

Community Spirit Healers was a one-time capacity building project).

- Discussion has taken place regarding some of the more successful capacity building projects and whether or not they could be funded via PEI or an RFP process.
- Mirtala would like to reopen the discussion with Mimi McKay and Dr. Sherin regarding this.

**Farrah Ferris:**

- There is a feeling in the community of being left out of decision making processes.
- Want to focus on the lack of transparency and how we can ensure that this does not happen again.

**Mirtala Parada Ward:** Recommended subcommittee members reach out to Dr. Sherin and Dr. Bonds to share concerns.

**Bernice Mascher:** Emphasized importance of open communication (during meetings, with Survey Monkey, etc.).

**Raul Garcia:**

Reiterated importance of this not happening again. If there are changes with the DMH administration, how can we ensure that this subcommittee is actually making change – how can we ensure accountability.

**Bernice Mascher:** Inquired whether the subcommittee can look at the curriculum.

**Ana Suarez:**

Will be putting out the RFP for the other cultural groups – unsure if she can share the content of the modules given the RFP. Will check in with Contracts to see if there is a conflict with RFP and follow up.

**Mirtala Parada Ward:**

- Need to consult with Contracts and County Council.
- This subcommittee can express concerns regarding process.
- Concerns can be shared with Debbie Innes-Gomberg, Curley Bonds, and Dr. Sherin.

**Andrea Garcia:**

- Will follow up with Dr. Bonds. Will find out if the curriculum can be shared during meetings.
- If so, and folks cannot attend the meeting, we can explore possibly doing it via video chat.

**Mirtala Parada Ward:**

One concern is that if the project is sent out via RFP, and certain agencies have seen the curriculum already, they may be disqualified from bidding.

**Farrah Ferris:** If the community is asking for the RFP process to be reengaged, I want that on the table.

**Andrea Garcia:** I feel at the end of the day I don't want this to divide us as a community and I feel like unfortunately that is what is happening. I just hope that we can all agree however it's done, whether informally or not, to work

together for the purpose of reaching out to our community to engage them in mental health services.

**Sunnie Whipple:**

- This is the reason for bringing up the bylaws to begin with is because all different entities should have been a part of the conversation from the beginning talking about this before they made a decision for the Native Americans.
- Concerns that Dr. Bonds may not have experience with the Native Americans community.
- My final question I have is will you be reaching all the demographics with Native Americans, all the different cultural groups and do you have cultural competency within all the tribes? We all do things different, we all pray different.

**Andrea Garcia:**

- To the best of our ability we are trying to diversify the people that are giving input into the curriculum.
- The more eyes the better, if folks have stuff to add then it is welcomed.

**Sylvia Youngblood:**

- There are many Native Americans that are not recognized, who's tribes were disbanded and people not knowing who they are, that have been so far removed that they are completely assimilated into society.
- On the curriculum, were there any guidelines behind that? Was there any funding that came down from the State or County that said in order to develop a curriculum you need to have community involvement? If not we are basically asking to be in the process, and they can say no. I think it would be good to have community engagement and educate them through the process.

**Charlotte Lujan:** A lot of Native Americans are from different tribes, if you ever research the values of who we are as a people they are not different. The dances and the way we do things are different but if we value the Elders as respect, we take care of our Elders and our children as a community. There is always a beginning and ending prayer, there is always a lot of humility and we're always giving back. These things can happen for all of the tribes, it's just going to look different, but we have all our values and our world views in those values.

**Farrah Ferris:**

- The overall question would be whether we are going to demand that the RFP be sent out via proper procedure.
- We can also do a Survey Monkey for input.
- I'm suggesting as a co-chair that it goes through the process.

**Kelly Wilkerson:** The next step could be sending out a formal recommendation letter to Dr. Sherin and Dr. Bonds regarding the RFP process. We will assist the co-chairs with that letter and make sure it's delivered.

**Melanie Cain:**

- Made request that members of the subcommittee work together and not be divided on this topic.
- Shared concerns about community members oppressing one another and how this can create silos in the

	<p>community which hurts the community.</p> <p><b>Farrah Ferris:</b> Shared that the overall feeling of the group is not that AICC could not do it, or that they are not Native enough; it is more in the way the process was handled including the curriculum.</p> <p><b>Ana Suarez:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarified that the County has the authority to determine how funds are utilized.</li> <li>• Community involvement is critical, but DMH administration is also involved in decision making.</li> </ul> <p>Meeting adjourned and ended with prayer at 4:00pm</p>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	5/1/19, 2:00pm-4:00pm, Location: AICC