

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
**Strategic Communications Division**  
**American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) UsCC Subcommittee Minutes**

January 8, 2020  
2:00PM – 4:00PM

**Present:** Monique Castro, Hector Ramirez, Sunnie Whipple, Monique Smith, Carrie Johnson, Johana Lozano, Farrah Ferris, Tina Charley

**By**  
**Phone:** Walter Ahhaitty, Raul Garcia, Bernice Mascher, Andrea Garcia, Gabriel Pimentel, Keith Vielle  
**DMH**  
**Admin** Mirtala Parada, Connie Acosta Castaneda, Kelly Wilkerson

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
<b>Welcome, Prayer &amp; Introductions</b>	Attendee introductions, Monique Smith lead the meeting with prayer.
<b>Announcements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>ECHO Pilot Project (Education Community Health Outreach– Monique Smith)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cal State LA teamed up with USC School of Dentistry to provide free dental screenings for youth ages 0 – 20.</li> <li>• ECHO got the Local General Pilot project out. They were awarded the money in 2017. It was not fully done till 2018 and finally in our groove in 2019. It is a four-year demonstration project, and our numbers were going to be 32,000 screenings. The first week of December, we have already done 33,000 screenings, so we have definitely met our goal.</li> <li>• The community needs it. We (California) are ranked 44 out of 51. We have screened a lot of American Indian youth. There is a great need for oral health. Two factors for this: 1. Getting access and 2. Poor job in our state on educating people of the importance of oral health. Working now on a Community Needs Assessment. The families that participate will be given an oral health kit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>FY 19-20 Capacity Building Projects - Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Monique Castro gave an update on the Mental Wellness Gathering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three out of Five gatherings already have been completed. There was no gathering in December.</li> <li>• The next Wellness Gathering will be Saturday, January 11, 2020 at Ortega Park, and the following one will be at the Tribal office in Palmdale on February 8, 2020.</li> </ul> </li> <li>❖ <b><u>Highlights:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The goal was for 200 attendees. Excited to announce that we have met that mark with 209 attendees.</li> <li>• Out of the three Wellness Gatherings, the one that was the best attended was the Art &amp; Music Gathering. There were close to 100 participants at that event.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

❖ **For the Suicide Prevention and Harm Reduction gathering, at this time there are 140 registrations.**

- There will be no panel. There will be Guest Speakers Fred and Charlene Avila. The guest speakers lost their child to suicide.
- There will be a Ribbon Ceremony lead by Carlos Madrid, a Therapist at the Indigenous Circle of Wellness.
- All the events have been very interactive and the community is very responsive to that.
- One of the things that has really helped with this success is Social Media. Flyers were shared several times with different organizations and different communities, and that is how we are able to reach people. Also through word of mouth.

**Monique Castro:** The community members have asked, what is next? And they are happy that it is a series. It shows the interest is there. They are hoping to see it continue. I do hope that there is a way either by funding by this program if not other organizations that are coming together to offer this maybe on a quarterly basis. There is an ongoing support.

❖ **Video Showcase Project – Kelly Wilkerson**

- The Video Showcase Project has a 10-minute video focusing on AICC and a 5-minute video focusing on other Native specific organizations.
- The first 5-minute video draft is finished, and just about completed with the 10-minute video draft. The project is in post-production, things are on target. Final version should be done by next week.

❖ **Educational PSAs – Kelly Wilkerson**

- Educational PSA are also in post-production. Kelly will follow up with Jim and Gabe from SCIC. Post-production should be completed by next week on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**11/6/19 Meeting Minutes - Review**

Minutes were approved by Johanna Lozano and second by Monique Smith.

**UsCC Stakeholder Reorganization – Open Discussion**

- ❖ Mirtala shared with the subcommittee what was presented at the UsCC Leadership meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2019.
  - There was a presentation by Angel Baker. It was reported that DMH is in the process of restructuring its stakeholder process. Traditionally the stakeholder process included the Service Area Advisory Councils (SAACs). We have 8 SAAC's all over Los Angeles County and they are geographically based and they provide recommendations and feedback to the Department.
  - The second half of the DMH stakeholder process is the UsCCs and the UsCCs look more at the gaps in services, disparities in treatment and look at the needs of underserved communities. Native American being one of those communities.

- What the department is proposing is to merge those two entities together, they are going to put the UsCCs under the SAAC umbrella and the UsCCs will no longer exist as subcommittees, they will be dissolved, but the efforts will continue under the management under the SAACs. It will be up to the SAACs to determine how they want that engagement to look and how the UsCCs will function.
- The UsCC will no longer exist on that platform but they will not go away. The two hundred thousand dollar funding will go to the SAACs and they will decide how they want to do their Capacity Building Projects. It will be at the discretion of the SAACs to decide how the Capacity Building Projects will look and how they will be formulated.
- The UsCC team has been given a new assignment. This effort is going to be led by another team. Pinki Mehta will be in charge of that merger and the restructuring of the stakeholder process, she will be the lead. The 22 projects that were proposed for this fiscal year should still be implemented.

❖ **Johana Lozano from Cal Voices which is an organization funded by Prop 63:** I and a couple of Cal Voices representatives want to keep the voice of the stakeholders and consumers alive. We presented a letter to the Board of Supervisors on January 7, 2020. We received a good response and they were not aware of these changes. They gave us a plan on how to follow through, because they know how things work through DMH.

- I am here today to ask if there is anyone else that feels the same as we do and would like to keep the UsCCs here and feel that we are very important. As a consumer, I can't really attend a SAAC meeting. I don't feel comfortable, I don't feel heard and I don't feel safe. It's very important to me that the UsCCs stay together.
- I would like to share some material and literature from the Cal Voices. The law states that the MHSA need to be followed because it is funded by MHSA. I can also collect any information if you would like to join us in our efforts. **(Stakeholder Bill of Rights, MHSA General Standards, Brown Act pamphlet).**
- We are not speaking on behalf of the UsCCs. We have participants that are mobilizing with us who are part of the UsCCs, but we ourselves are not speaking on behalf of UsCCs, that's for each UsCC to talk and organize within themselves. Each UsCC has so much to say and so much to stand for, we want to respect that.

❖ Hector Ramirez would like to ask for a consultation with Dr. Sherin to ask why this is happening and definitely pose our concerns directly.

❖ Sunnie Whipple feels that the actions of DMH is re-traumatizing the American Indian community. Sunnie asked Mirtala who requested the extra \$100,000 and who approved it?

❖ Mirtala Parada Ward responded: Mimi McKay and Dr. Sherin authorized it because they were impressed with the work that was being done.

❖ Sunnie feels that they use that as a tool to pin the SAACs against the UsCCs. By the UsCCs receiving more money, he feels that the SAACs will not listen to them, that they won't respect them, they won't honor them, and they're going to punish us as Native Americans. Sunnie asked Mirtala if it is a done deal. Mirtala responded that

	<p>she does not know, she knows just as much as the subcommittee knows. Sunnie also stated that there has to be a Code of Conduct. There is a Code of Conduct in place in the UsCC subcommittees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Hector Ramirez shared that Cal Voices is willing to assist the subcommittees in addressing Dr. Sherin and the Board of Supervisors with our concerns. Los Angeles County is mandated to follow a particular process. By putting us under the SAACs it removes that process by bypassing their State Mandated process. It could be because they do not understand the importance of the UsCCs.</li> <li>❖ Farrah Ferris feels it is better to be responsive rather than reactive. She would like to start a petition or sample letter to present to the board. The merging of the UsCCs with the SAACs is like a death in a lot of ways to the Native people, not only in an emotional way but in a physical way of getting services. She is requesting another meeting with Dr. Sherin. Farrah would like another conference and is requesting for DMH to reserve the Cal Endow for their upcoming American Indian conference the second Tuesday of November 2020. Also she is not comfortable attending a SAAC meeting because of past experiences. Attending a SAAC meeting she felt invisible and was told to shut up. She enjoyed working with our unit. She feels that now the American Indian subcommittee would have to reeducate new staff on how to treat Natives.</li> <li>❖ There were several members expressing their concerns regarding the reorg of the UsCC.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Adjourn</b>	Meeting ended in Prayer.
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>February 5, 2020 1:00pm – 3:00pm – UAll</b>