

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

hope. recovery. wellbeing.

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Dear LA County,

Since its passage, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) has provided the County Mental Health Departments of California and the communities they serve with an unprecedented opportunity to partner in developing and tailoring local delivery systems. Building on a decade plus of stakeholder engagement successes, Los Angeles County has made great strides over the past year in standing up a more robust and heavily resourced stakeholder engagement process, known as YourDMH.

Though it has not been easy getting this far, and we still have a long way to go, YourDMH is taking shape in a manner that makes me very proud because it demonstrates a clear commitment to, and investment in, partnership between the department and the community. With that in mind, I extend my deepest appreciation to all who have been involved directly and indirectly in navigating this journey together. The energy and leadership of key guiding bodies in the community, including the Board-appointed Mental Health Commission, the Service Area Leadership Teams, and the Underserved Cultural Communities, alongside the relentless efforts of department staff, have made it possible for us to make major strides in engineering a genuine, deep and wide stakeholder engagement process.

In the Three-Year Plan, you will read about many service expansions and program innovations that are under way in LA County, some of which depend almost exclusively on funding from MHSA. In addition, the plan includes descriptions of efforts to sustain those parts of our system that have proven effective and upon which so many depend each day. In pushing to improve our mental health system, it is my hope that MHSA resources will continue to focus on helping those in most need live freely in dignified environments of choice, develop, grow and maintain quality relationships, and flourish with purpose in pursuit of life's activities.

As always, our Three-Year Plan is the product of a tremendous amount of work, conversation, and collaboration between community groups, advocates, leaders and the department. In the midst of finalizing this document, we have had to confront a truly unprecedented health crisis that has disrupted our process, to put it mildly. That said, at the same time we've had to pivot dramatically in response to the COVID-19 crisis, we have also continued to engage many stakeholders to understand, and best adapt to continue serving, our communities.

In terms of our immediate response to COVID-19, which would not have been possible without MHSA funding, we have worked to ensure access to our core services while also incorporating physical distancing guidelines. Our staff and provider networks have had to rethink where and how to deliver care. Each of the clinics has reached out to our clients to explain how to continue receiving services and, I must say, I am proud of the agility with which we have modified our operations. As one striking example, we moved from a prior baseline of 5%, to roughly 85%, tele-health services in less than a month (while actually increasing our encounter data!).

We have also been devising ways to improve access to resources through support to schools, parks and libraries, aka the “Community Access Platforms”, so we can be prepared when they open up. These efforts, central to Prevention strategies described in this plan, will surely be at the heart of our transition from COVID-19 reaction and response, to community reopening and recovery. To that end, we will rely heavily on the relationships we have brokered in setting up access platforms to ensure that referral and navigation are coordinated across LA County.

Of note, we have also broadened our partnership with Headspace by giving all county residents access to free, evidence-based mindfulness resources proven to help reduce stress. In addition, we have expanded and reengineered our department’s Help Line to provide emotional support to county residents in need as well as the providers that serve them. We will continue to deploy MHSA funds during this disaster to offer hope, promote recovery and optimize wellbeing.

Heart Forward,

Jon