

# CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

April 2021



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



## Join Us! WE RISE 2021 Launches on May 1

LACDMH is pleased to announce the 4th Annual **WE RISE**, a month-long initiative that encourages wellbeing and healing through art, connection, community engagement, and creative expression. Held in celebration of Mental Health Awareness Month during May, **WE RISE 2021** is needed now more than ever as our region emerges from the isolation of the global pandemic and continues to grapple with related stressors and racial injustice.

This year's theme, "None of Us Are Well Until All of Us Are Well" combined with the community forward anthem "Nothing About Us, Without Us" are the tent poles of all WE RISE 2021 installations and activities.

WE RISE 2021 will feature both virtual and in-person experiences that can be experienced virtually or safely at a distance. Programming includes **Art Rise**, a series of 21 art experiences across five Los Angeles neighborhoods created in collaboration with museums, cultural institutions, and artists; **Community Pop-Ups**, hyperlocal activities across Los Angeles County neighborhoods that highlight the vital community-centered and civic work across our diverse neighborhoods; and a robust **Digital Experience**, offering original

programs that can be enjoyed from anywhere.

All installations and activities are meant to be viewed virtually or from a distance, individually or in small groups, in order to remain COVID-safe while still fostering community connection and collective healing.

For more information, please visit [werise.la](https://www.werise.la). Follow **We Rise** on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) for the latest event updates and ways to participate.



### **L.A. County Supports House Bill to Increase Behavioral Health Treatment**

The L.A. County Board of Supervisors recently [voted unanimously](#) to support H.R. 2611, a Congressional bill introduced by CA Rep. Grace Napolitano to remove the Medicaid exclusion for funding services provided in an Institution for Mental Disease (IMD). IMD is defined as a hospital, nursing facility, or institution of 16+ beds focused on treating mental illnesses. The current Medicaid exclusion prohibits states from receiving Medicaid payments for adults treated in IMD settings, contributing to a serious shortage in mental health care treatment beds by limiting state and local governments' ability to develop inpatient and residential care facilities for mental health care. The treatment bed shortage would increase the likelihood that individuals with serious mental illness, who would otherwise benefit from IMD care, will experience repeat hospitalizations, homelessness, and episodes of incarceration.

“Repealing the IMD exclusion is not only necessary to address the

mental health care needs of individuals requiring and deserving adequate residential services to heal, it is also an important step in resolving both the critical parity gap between physical and mental health care that continues to plague this field from a fiscal perspective, as well as the societal stigma that interferes with access to treatment at the expense of those most impacted by brain illness,” said Dr. Jonathan Sherin, Director of the Department of Mental Health, in Napolitano’s [press release](#) about H.R. 2611.

The passage of H.R. 2611 would remove the IMD exclusion while holding state and local governments accountable for developing and implementing a comprehensive mental health care plan that includes increasing access to outpatient and community-based care, elevating availability of crisis stabilization services, and improve data sharing among physical health, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment providers and first responders.

For more information and the latest updates about H.R. 2611, visit the bill’s [page](#) on Congress’ website.



### **Advancing Anti-Racism and Racial Equity at LACDMH**

In an effort to promote racial equity in the Department, LACDMH this month established an Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Unit. Led by Unit Manager Dr. Jorge Partida, Chief of Psychology, the Unit is comprised of an ARDI Staff Council dedicated to uplifting voices, advocating for staff, and supporting and sustaining long-term efforts to create an environment of racial equity and anti-racism. The ARDI Staff Council members are: Tora Miller, Gabriel Garcia, James

Coomes, Yadira Flores, Treva Blackwell, Maria Alicia Garcia, Rebecca Gitlin, Marilynn Huff, Phyllis Griddine-Tate, and Yvette Willock.

Prior to their appointment as the ARDI Staff Council, members led a planning process during the fall of 2020 that resulted in the *Action Framework to Achieve Racial Equity in LACDMH (Action Framework)*. The planning process included an ethnically-diverse cross-section of staff members who shared the goals and values of advancing racial equity in LACDMH.

The *Action Framework* lays out an initial racial equity roadmap for LACDMH, focusing on anti-Black racism, education, and leadership accountability as core strategies. It proposes six areas of action: (1) Anti-Black racial awareness, acknowledgment, and education to promote intra-personal growth; (2) Staff wellbeing and empowerment; (3) Hiring, supervision, and professional advancement; (4) Anti-racist, culturally congruent, and culturally responsive services; (5) Partnerships and collaborations across Los Angeles County, City Departments, and Community Stakeholders; and (6) Commitment, accountability, and responsiveness of Executive Management and everyone in leadership roles.

In spring and summer 2021, the ARDI Unit will continue engaging diverse staff members in developing and implementing strategies to promote long-term, sustainable racial equity work. Visit this [page](#) to learn more about ARDI efforts taking place throughout the County. We encourage you to explore and share the [racial equity resources](#) on our website.



## One Year Anniversary of the Speakers Bureau

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the [LACDMH Speakers Bureau](#)—a joint effort between the Chief of Psychology team and the [Cultural Competency Unit](#) designed to promote the wellbeing of L.A. County's diverse communities with an emphasis on supporting unserved and underserved populations. This resource is comprised of approximately 75 LACDMH licensed clinicians with media and public-speaking experience who can provide mental health information, specialized services, and resources in a culturally- and linguistically-appropriate manner. This includes supporting a broad range of languages spoken in L.A. County as well as proven competency in working with racial/ethnic and cultural groups, inclusive of communities of color, people with physical disabilities, and members of the veteran, LGBTQIA2-S, and faith-based communities.

Over the past year, the Speakers Bureau has conducted over 650 outreach, education, and support activities for L.A. County's residents and communities. These activities include engaging in media interviews, facilitating presentations and trainings, developing and translating mental health content, providing mental health consultation/support for community- and faith-based organizations, and offering cultural-linguistic support for LACDMH events and activities.

We thank the Speakers Bureau members for their invaluable work in building bridges across L.A. County's diverse communities; for example, a recent media interview with a Mandarin-speaking expert resulted in a [three-part series](#) on mental health for the Chinese community.

We invite you to visit the [Speakers Bureau's page](#) to learn more about their services. To request services from the Speakers Bureau, please [fill out this form](#) or contact them at [DMHSpeakersBureau@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:DMHSpeakersBureau@dmh.lacounty.gov) or (213) 351-6444.

*Thank you for taking the time to read and engage with this issue of "Connecting Our Community," a monthly newsletter focused on the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's updates and priorities.*

We welcome your comments, story ideas, and recommendations at [pio@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:pio@dmh.lacounty.gov) and you may adjust your subscriptions settings at this [link](#).

[dmh.lacounty.gov](http://dmh.lacounty.gov)

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