

## Message from the Director

Dear DMH family,

World Mental Health Day on October 10 served to remind us of the importance of raising awareness and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health issues. The reality is that even as we make strides in our collective recovery from the global pandemic, the important topic of mental health is ubiquitous year-round: in the news, in popular culture, and in our personal lives. Particularly hardest hit are children and youth, who are proving more vulnerable to mental health crises and in need of increased attention.

Just as students began learning to navigate the pressures of a new, in-person school year, heated debate among parents regarding the CA COVID-19 vaccine mandate created new stressors, with students caught in the middle. In an [ABC7 interview](#) this month, I shared Department of Mental Health resources as well as methods that caring adults could use to protect the mental health of our precious youth.

Last week, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association declared a [national emergency](#) in children's mental health while releasing statistics that revealed a sharp increase in emergency department visits last year for children with mental health crises. Just a week before this troubling news, a whistleblower report by a former Facebook employee re-catalyzed the concern about [social media's impact on mental health](#), which faults such platforms for increased anxiety and depression among young people.

LACDMH has consistently maintained dedicated programs and efforts tailored to children and youth, but now more than ever, we are augmenting our programs as well as exploring creative and varied methods of reaching the younger generation. For children birth to five in families who have experienced trauma or are at risk for trauma, our [Community Ambassador Network](#) builds trauma resilient families. In their schools, we reach children through LACDMH's well established partnership with school districts across L.A. County to provide school-based mental health services to students and families. Our [School Wellbeing Toolkit](#), developed by the DMH + UCLA Partnership for

Wellbeing, provides resources for teachers and staff. Youth who touch the juvenile justice system are provided services and supports which link them back to community and family so that they don't become further entangled in the justice system.

Mindful that most young people are online, LACDMH has been fighting fire with fire to reach Gen Z and younger Millennials. Earlier this month, our [LGBTQIA2S+ UsCC](#) youth launched [#KnowYourPower](#), a social media ([Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#)) campaign aimed at educating this community about their history and informing them of available LACDMH resources. Harnessing the power of social media with [#KnowYourPower](#) is a smart and creative way our teens and young adults are shifting the momentum of social media influence towards a greater good.

Communicating with today's younger generations is not an easy task, and to do so successfully we must strive to speak their language and understand their culture. Recently, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors established a [youth commission](#) that LACDMH will regularly connect with to help ensure that our outreach is not only relevant but engaging to this generation.

Ultimately, programs and efforts informed by diverse histories and unique cultures that bring us together while helping us heal will be most effective—no matter what our age or background. The more we know and learn about one another, the more equipped we are to empathize and care for one another on this journey of recovery and wellbeing.

Heart forward,



Jonathan E. Sherin, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director



## Appreciating Our Community Health Workers

This month, we join the L.A. County Board of Supervisors in celebrating our community health workers and the role they play in promoting wellbeing and resilience across L.A. County's diverse neighborhoods and communities. In their unanimously-passed motion declaring [Community Health Worker Appreciation Day](#), the Board highlights that "community health workers and health promoters provide linkages and access to mental health and health resources and are committed to assisting people in a compassionate and culturally competent manner. By educating and communicating with neighbors and communities about resources that are available to them, Community Health Workers and health promoters play a crucial role in achieving the ultimate goal of providing adequate health care for all Los Angeles County community members."

In honor of Community Health Worker Appreciation Day, LACDMH held an [inaugural conference](#) that highlighted their accomplishments, showcased key milestones such as the recent passage of Senate Bill 803 for peer certification, and discussed future plans for growth – including the goal to have additional Peer Resource Centers throughout L.A. County.

To learn more about their roles and contributions to promote wellbeing, check out these videos featuring our Mental Health Advocate [Joseph Cuevas](#) and Community Health Worker [Catherine Clay](#), and please join us in thanking our community health worker staff for their hard work and creativity to promote wellbeing throughout L.A. County.



## Implementing Family First Prevention Services Act in L.A. County

Over the past several months, LACDMH and the Los Angeles County Departments of Children and Family Services and Probation, in partnership with other County agencies and community partners, have been working together to lay the foundation for the implementation of the [Family First Prevention Services Act \(FFPSA\)](#), which aims to enhance child welfare services – including mental health programs – to support children and families. To clarify what FFPSA means for community-based organizations who are providing these services, L.A. County’s FFPSA Communications Workgroup has just finalized a [Frequently-Asked Questions](#) document for community providers about this law and its impact on service delivery in L.A. County.

An additional FAQ is also being developed for parents and caregivers, and it is scheduled for release later this year.



## LACDMH in the News

Our ongoing efforts to promote mental health awareness and assist the most vulnerable among us continue to receive positive attention in the media. In case you missed it, check out some highlights of the excellent stories and representation by our experts:

- Dr. Sherin was interviewed on ABC7 about the [mental health impact of returning to school](#), along with COVID-19 vaccine mandates and changing safety guidelines, and advised parents and caregivers to create a safe space for children.
- The Los Angeles Daily News highlighted [L.A. County's recent motion](#) to explore a partnership with Metro to dispatch LACDMH's field-based teams to respond to mental health crises in public buses and trains.
- The Los Angeles Times' "HS Insider" published an article about the benefits of mindfulness and highlighted [LACDMH's partnership with iPrevail](#) as a platform to promote mental health.



## Cultural Traditions and Connections

The following article is from [Cultural Traditions and Connections](#), a space featuring voices from LACDMH's diverse communities.

**“What is Culture?”** by Lorraine Viade

There are many definitions of the word culture. The free dictionary online offers a myriad of choices. The first refers to the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and other products of human work and thought considered as a unit. There are others, but today, I want to focus on the term as it impacts our interactions with other people. Cultural awareness, sensitivity, or humility is to be open and curious about how any definition of culture directly impacts us. We strive to respect the people we work with.

It is essential to know not only if their ancestry, ethnicity, or affiliation falls into one or more cultural groups, but how another person experiences that culture. We also need to know that for ourselves.

There are stereotypes for many cultural groups there is no stereotype that defines any single person. Each person represents a unique constellation of experiences in a specific human being with a unique personality. So, how do we get to know someone's culture in a respectful and meaningful way?

(Read the rest of this article on [Cultural Traditions and Connections](#).)

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](#).

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