

Message from the Director

Dear DMH family,

In order to more effectively achieve our mission, we have worked for years to reframe and consolidate our Department of Mental Health organizational structure in a manner that reflects [our strategic plan](#). At a department town hall meeting last week, I shared with employees the new organizational chart that was just recently approved by the L.A. County CEO. This structure will take effect on October 1 and help us deliver on our goal of supporting hope, recovery, and wellbeing for the most vulnerable among us.

One of our strategies in providing adequate resources is ensuring that the voices of underserved communities are heard and that they are part of the dialogue. When I met with our department's [Latino Underserved Cultural Community committee](#) last week, I had an opportunity to thank its members for the work they do to advocate for the needs of the Hispanic and Latino populations in L.A. County. As we join them during [National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month](#) in celebrating the Hispanic-Latino cultures, traditions, and contributions, there is also an opportunity to focus on the mental health and wellbeing needs of these groups, and to identify and close the barriers they encounter in [accessing mental health care](#). Whether it's the expansion of our [24-hour Help Line](#), [Promotores](#), [Community Ambassador Network](#), or [Speakers Bureau](#), we are invested in a larger and more genuine process to move in a direction that is informed by the community.

We still have a way to go, but we are making progress. Whether it is increasing supports and services in underserved communities or strengthening our internal organizational infrastructure, we steadfastly continue on our mission to improve the mental health and wellbeing of L.A. County people, families, and neighborhoods.

Heart forward,

Jon

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



LACDMH and Partners Open New Affordable Housing Developments

With a combined \$10 million investment through the L.A. County Development Authority Mental Health Housing Program, our department was proud to join County, City, and community partners earlier this month at ribbon-cutting ceremonies for two affordable apartment complexes in the second supervisorial district. The complexes house and support senior citizens, low-income individuals, and those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The two developments – [Gramercy Place](#) and [Stanford Avenue](#) apartments – provide a total of 149 housing units that are equipped with energy-efficient appliances, a variety of safety and comfort amenities, and access to supportive resources including mental health services provided through Exodus Recovery. Additionally, both apartment complexes are certified for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (Gold level for Gramercy Place, Platinum level for Stanford Avenue) by the U.S. Green Building Council.

We thank our partners for their contributions and collaborations to fund, design, construct, furnish, and staff these developments, and we look forward to welcoming and supporting the new residents' journeys to wellbeing, resilience, and community.



Symposium Series to Support Wellbeing of Students and School Communities – Join Us!

To support the mental health of L.A. County students, parents, families, and school staff, LACDMH is partnering with UCLA and Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) for the 4th Annual School & Community Symposium, a monthly webinar series that focuses on promoting resilience and wellbeing for school communities throughout the County. This year's symposium theme is **"It Takes A Village: Hope, Connecting, and Healing,"** and provides wholistic ways everyone can support one another as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, return to in-person classes, and adapt to new learning environments and practices. The next webinar in this series will take place on Wednesday, October 13, and you can [RSVP here](#).

For additional ways to support students and school communities, check out our collection of [educational resources](#), DMH+UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing's [School Wellbeing Toolkit](#), and LACOE's ["All In" website](#).



Virtual Conference on "The State of Black Los Angeles County"

The [Los Angeles County African American Employees Association](#) will host a virtual conference, "The State of Black Los Angeles County," on October 16, to focus on supporting L.A. County's African-American communities, elevate African-American culture, and highlight our ongoing efforts to reduce bias and promote diversity. Our County's African-American leaders – including **Holly J. Mitchell**, Supervisor of L.A. County's Second District; **Dr. Muntu Davis**, L.A. County Health Officer; **D'Artagnan Scorza**, Executive Director of L.A. County's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative; and **Selwyn Hollins**, Director of our County's Internal Services Department will be joined by Department of Mental Health Director **Dr. Jonathan Sherin** for the event. The early bird registration period ends tomorrow, so visit this [page](#) for more info and to RSVP.



Heidi Hamilton chats with Dr. Sherin about iPrevail on 95.5 KLOS.

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:

- Multiple LACDMH clinicians, including **Dr. Curley Bonds**, Chief Medical Officer, **Dr. Jorge Partida**, Chief of Psychology; **Dr. O.C. White**, psychiatrist; **James Coomes**, clinical program manager; and **Anthony Ruffin**, community center director, are invited to KJLH-FM's 5th Annual Men's Empowerment Summit to discuss and highlight mental health issues experienced by African-American men. The summit will be streamed on [KJLH-FM's website](#) on October 2.
- **Dr. Sherin** was interviewed on [KLOS-FM](#) about National Suicide Prevention Month and provided advice and resources to promote wellbeing and support those who are struggling with a crisis, including our partnership with [iPrevail](#) to provide free online services to L.A. County residents.
- **Dr. Bonds** was featured in a [Los Angeles Times](#) story about free and low-cost alternatives to traditional in-person therapy sessions – such as digital apps, warmlines, and online support groups – to optimize mental health.



Cultural Traditions and Connections

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

“National Hispanic Heritage Month”

Each year, Americans observe [National Hispanic Heritage Month](#), from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period from September 15 to October 15. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988, on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively. Also, L.A. County's Indigenous Peoples' Day (October 11) falls within this 30-day period.

Learn more about these countries' Independence Day histories and facts [here](#).

(Read additional articles from [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 and you may adjust your subscriptions settings at this [link](#).

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