

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

January 2022



Message from the Director

Dear DMH family,

The end of January marks the second year of our collective recovery from this global pandemic, a journey that is proving to be akin to a marathon with numerous hills along the way. We may not know how close we are to the finish line, but my hope is that we are able to develop a steady stride with some proven strategies for resilience and adaptiveness. To that end, I encourage everyone to stay connected, engage in healthy, purposeful activities, be supportive of each other, and if needed, reach out for support from loved ones and from our department. In addition to our [24/7 Help Line](#), we continue to offer all L.A. County residents free access to the [Headspace](#) and [iPrevail](#) online wellbeing platforms, as well as training through our [DMH+UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing](#).

In our mission to help the most vulnerable in our communities, our Department is excited for the fruition of Restorative Care Villages (RCV) this year at multiple sites throughout L.A. County. Recently, I conducted a [virtual tour](#) of the Rancho Los Amigos RCV in Downey, which is expected to begin operations this spring. I hope you view the video for a closer look at the site's services, amenities, and offerings and a behind-the-scenes understanding of how DMH supports our

clients' paths to healing, recovery, and purpose.

With Lunar New Year celebrations next week and African American History Month in February, I want to reiterate our commitment to L.A. County's underserved cultural communities, many of whom face barriers to mental health care. I remain optimistic that our outreach to [diverse communities](#) through mental health and wellbeing partners, schools, community groups, and faith-based organizations will help make progress towards mental health equity for all. I look forward to another year of moving closer to this reality.

Heart forward,

Jon

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



Program Highlight: Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement Team

Estimates show that approximately 26% of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County have a diagnosed mental illness. With the largest population of unsheltered homeless people in the country located in our communities, the L.A. County Department of Mental Health plays a pivotal role in assisting the most vulnerable unhoused individuals and is making strides with our Homeless

Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) program. LACDMH HOME program was established to help people experiencing homelessness and persistent mental illness and support their journey to wellbeing, recovery, and connection with their communities.

The multidisciplinary group includes community health workers, registered nurses, psychiatrists, medical case workers, psychiatric technicians, and other clinical and administrative professionals who do “relentless outreach” to engage and help clients.

In 2021, HOME has helped over 2,100 clients and provided over 19,000 client-days of community outreach, mental health and medication support, crisis intervention, and targeted case management services.

“Our teams are out there day after day to help our hardest to reach individuals, including many who don’t think they need help,” said Aubree Lovelace, MFT, HOME program manager.

Learn more about our HOME team [here](#).



Adalberto “Bobby” Higareda, Jr., is a community health worker with LACDMH’s Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) Program. In this Q&A, you will learn more about his work, why he joined the HOME team, and insights from his experience working with individuals experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness.

How long have you been with LACDMH and the HOME Program?

I have been with this Department and the HOME Team for about three years, and this was my first job with L.A. County.

What led you to pursue this role with the HOME team?

Prior to joining HOME, I have worked in a similar capacity providing services to people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Most recently, this was at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, where I worked at the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine. There I was helping youths, including those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, get connected to services and educating them about resources and benefits they are eligible for. And that’s the type of work I do now but just with a different and broader group of people who also need help and support.

What is your day-to-day work like?

Continue getting to know Bobby [here](#).



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 on a [KABC-TV](#) interview about how to optimize our wellbeing as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by practicing self-care, supporting one another, and reaching out for help when needed.
- LACDMH's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Curley Bonds was featured in the [Los Angeles Times](#) about practical ways to look out for and help people experiencing mental distress.
- Dr. Bonds was featured on [KPCC-FM's "AirTalk"](#) about COVID-19 surge's impact on mental health and suggested healthy practices to maintain wellbeing.
- [LAist](#) quoted Dr. Jorge Partida del Toro, LACDMH's Chief of Psychology, in an article about anosognosia – a lack of insight – and how that impacts mental health care planning and implementation.



Join Us for L.A. County Youth Commission's Meeting "Centering Voices in Mental Health"

LACDMH, in partnership with the [L.A. County Board of Supervisors](#) and [Youth Commission](#), will be holding a virtual meeting on Feb. 10, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., to discuss and highlight the mental health needs of L.A. County youth and gather community input and feedback, with a special focus on youth lived experiences and voices and how they can be used to build or improve wellbeing programs throughout the County.

Speakers at this event include L.A. County Youth Commissioners, experts from the [DMH+UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing](#), and

community mental health advocates.

"Young people in LA County are resilient and strong. By seeking their feedback for improving mental health and wellbeing services across the County, we can help youth-serving organizations meet their needs and prevent future mental health crises," said Youth Commissioner La'Toya Cooper, who represents the Second District.

More details about this meeting [here](#).



[Get Involved! Join the 2022 Homeless Count](#)

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), which coordinates housing and supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness, will be conducting its 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count from February 22 to 24, 2022. LAHSA is currently seeking volunteers to help with this year's count throughout Los Angeles County.

"The Homeless Count is an essential tool in giving us a point-in-time snapshot of homelessness. Data from the Count is used to inform the delivery of services and programs for people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles," said LAHSA Executive Director Heidi Marston.

Take action [here](#).



Cultural Traditions and Connections

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

“Join LACDMH’s Cultural Competency Committee”

By Sandra T. Chang, Ph.D., ARDI Division-Cultural Competency Unit

- Is joining a dynamic and productive Committee one of your new year’s resolutions?
- Are you interested in learning about and hearing the voices of different cultures?
- Would you like to be a part of a group that advocates for the mental health needs of different cultural groups?

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, seek no more, you have found the [Cultural Competency Committee \(CCC\)](#).

Welcome and best wishes of a healthy and prosperous New Year 2022! The CCC serves as an advisory group for the infusion of cultural competence in all of LACDMH operations. Our members represent abounding cultural and linguistic perspectives of consumers, family members, advocates, peers, directly operated and contracted providers, and community-based organizations. Everyone is welcome to the CCC. We meet virtually on the second Wednesday of the month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., and the full meeting schedule for 2022 is available [here](#).

CCC’s Mission: “Increase cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness in the LACDMH’s response to the needs of diverse cultural populations to foster hope, wellness, resilience, and recovery in our communities.” In recognition of the richness of cultural diversity,

the committee's motto is "Many Cultures, One World."

Continue reading the article, including messages from CCC's new co-chairs, 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.

dmh.lacounty.gov

Let's get social @LACDMH!

