

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
OFFICE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

February 24, 2022 – Minutes

Stacy Dagleish, Chair

APPROVED: March 24, 2022

Motion made by Commissioner Molina second^{by} Commissioner Acebo

DISCUSSION

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Commissioner Root (P), Commissioner Padilla-Frausto (AE), Commissioner Friedman (P), Commissioner Stevens (P), Commissioner Turner (AE), Commissioner Austria (P), Commissioner Dagleish (P), Commissioner Banko (A), Commissioner Okonji (P), Commissioner Molina (P), Commissioner Acebo (P), Commissioner Cooperberg (P), Commissioner Weissman (P), Commissioner Schallert (P), Lily Sofiani (P) – **QUORUM PRESENT**

2. Welcome and Introductions

3. **Acknowledgements:** Chair thanked ASL interpreters, Spanish interpreters, CART captioner, technology and multimedia team, and support staff.

4. **Black History Month Celebration** - Commissioner Martel Okonji sang the Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

Administrative Matters

5. Approval of the January 27, 2022, meeting minutes

On motion of Commissioner Okonji, seconded by Commissioner Weissman, and duly carried by the following vote, the MHC approved the minutes for January 27, 2022.

Ayes (10): Commissioner Friedman, Commissioner Stevens, Commissioner Austria
Commissioner Okonji, Commissioner Dagleish, Commissioner Acebo, Commissioner Molina,
Commissioner Cooperberg, Commissioner Schallert, Commissioner Weissman
Absent (3) Commissioner Padilla-Frausto, Commissioner Turner, Commissioner Banko

Public Comment

6. Public Comment: Agenda & Non-Agenda Items

Wendi Cabil – Good morning, Mental Health Commissioners, Happy February, and Black History Month. This is Wendy Cabil and I identify myself as an MHSA client stakeholder. I’m glad to be here with you all in this public forum. I am very concerned about a response that our DMH liaison shared with someone asking for a membership application and I am confused. I want to read this to you. It was -- I think I have the wrong one. Anyway, I will send you the actual email response in the report, but it seems like I have lost it now to quote verbatim. Basically, the response is saying that there is no membership application needed, it's not a requirement, and so I'm very concerned and disturbed by this response. Why are we having -- why is there this confusion? We need to get on the same page and that is going to affect outreach and engagement, so I am asking that we have clarity about this matter. Thank you.

Esiquio Reyes – The pathway off the streets is capable only if the individual is still capable of creativity. With the lack of positive experiences given homelessness, a person's enthusiasm to live slowly dissolves, disrupting one's will to move forward with purpose. Once purpose is lost, the individual is left to ponder their situation up to their present. The few positive experiences that they had in their life flash through their dreams, giving them

hope and keeping many from taking their lives. Finally coming to the realization that you are homeless hits like a ton of bricks, and you start to realize that there is no one or nothing, I am nothing. It is amongst the extreme situations that you can find an individual creating habits, patterns that will help them get through their situation, patterns that will one day shape the individual's perspective. The best way one can help an individual that is experiencing homelessness is to help them in a way in which they, themselves, choose to be helped. Hundreds of thousands are homeless, meaning that tens of thousands are homeless, not by choice. The wait time for housing is over a year. We should open creative doors that give options for the pathway forward. Thank you very much.

Osbee Sangster – In honoring Black History Month of 2022, I would like to quote the words of wisdom of Martin Luther King Jr. “This is our hope, this is the faith, with this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation/world -- I interposed the word world, I hope MLK does not mind today -- into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, pray together, and struggle together, stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.” God bless America and around the world. Thank you.

Hector Ramirez: - Thank you. I am an LA County DMH consumer -- Service Area 2. I really wanted to highlight a significant issue. I attended this month's LGBTQIA2-S subcommittee meeting where Dr. Sherin was speaking for the first time since he joined the Department, which I think was a little bit over five years, so I really want to highlight that to show just how connected and involved he has been with our communities. It took five years for him to show up, so it really highlights the lack of connection that we as a community have with him, especially as we talk about issues with funding and MHSA and what is working and what is not working in our communities. It was also a very good example of how service providers in the UsCCs take over them and are so abusive to our DMH consumers. In that meeting and in front of the director, this service provider just mocked DMH consumers for taking meds, saying that nobody should be allowed, especially us, to come to those meetings unless we took our meds. And this is somebody that has repeatedly also said in the same space that he is afraid for us to attend those places because he is worried that we will find out where he lived because we are violent. It really highlights the way in which we, as consumers, have been experiencing abuse for the past seven years at least, particularly those of us in communities of color. And trying to speak up means that we will get retribution, even if that means that the Director will allow other people to ridicule us and tear us down for being who we are and for taking medication and taking care of ourselves, and for speaking out for our communities. That's what we have, a problem with DMH. We really need to start thinking about how we can transform this Department that is broken.

Esiquio Reyes - Without the feeling of self-gratification gained from daily opportunities, many of the homeless through years of self-preservation have endured a constant torment that now blankets their outlook negatively when pondering present situations. This negative outlook most often hinders their opportunity for bettering their situation. Homelessness is not easy to deal with, it tears and drags a person through the mud while heading to rock bottom. Because of constant bothers such as hunger, worries about hygiene, or just being stereotyped as a homeless person, developing patterns based off the few positive events in their life take root fast so that a person is more easily accepting to what follows homelessness. It is within these patterns that a homeless person can become more accepting to the confines of homelessness or they can see the problem, hone their minds, and get out. Many can develop patterns that can keep them on the streets for years or back unhoused in days. Shifting the outlook of one experiencing homelessness so that they can want a more positive change in their life means finding the way to numb down whatever extreme situations may be faced. Steps provided will slow psychological problems developing by altering the experience of homelessness. Thank you very much.

William Legere: Hello, Commission. This is regarding homelessness. [indistinct] in the encampment. I think it's time for the commission to advocate for the homeless, [indistinct] housing and employment along the way, and advocating for them too. And the community being heard -- thank you.

Wendy Cabil: This is Wendy Cabil, and as a former Co-Chair of the Black and African Heritage Underserved Cultural Community, I wanted to share some reflections about celebrating Black History Month, and I'm glad that DMH is doing so. However, there are some blind spots that I need to bring to your attention, and it is not intended to offend, it is keeping it real. We have the right as Black people to present ourselves in a way that we feel that we need to be presented and to speak our truth and tell our narrative that has been overlooked and hidden. With that being said, please be mindful moving forward when you ask for someone to sing our Negro National Anthem, you make sure that it is somebody who reflects the Black community. That being said, I would have been excited to see or hear our Commissioner Stevens, who is from the Black community.

Second, I would like to see more publications in advance notice about our Black History Month events countywide. I did get a chance to attend our SALT 5, but I missed the event because I didn't get the flyer or see it in time, so I would like to see more of an effort to make sure that everyone, you know, has advance notice and is able to attend. I would like to give credit to Ms. Cleo for having initiated that event and I hear that it went well, considering there were some technical glitches earlier. And let's not make the mistake that America has been doing for years and let's move forward with new lenses and be open-minded to hear and to receive constructive correction so that we can achieve that equity that we are all working towards. And one last thing, I fought so hard to add the community engagement feature on the agenda, and it still needs to be put back on. Thank you.

Presentations

7. Hollywood 2.0 – Curley Bonds, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

Dr. Bonds presented the 5-year MHSA Innovations Project, Hollywood 2.0. (see documentation)

- Hollywood 2.0 is a new comprehensive approach to serve people with serious and persistent mental illness and experiencing homelessness and substance use.
- The project is designed to foster full recovery of individuals in the Hollywood area.
- A coalition of neighborhood businesses, faith leaders, government officials, healthcare providers, law enforcement are linked through Hollywood 4WRD agency.
- The key characteristics focus on, holistic, human centered, hospitality-oriented, and care in the community not to be an institutional setting.
- Components to serve the project: FSP, HOME Team, Intensive Outpatient Services Team Based, PRC Center/Clubhouse, Alternative Crisis Response, and housing with treatment beds.

Outcomes – Anticipated improvements

- Homelessness
- Rates of Incarceration
- Hospitalizations
- Supportive Employment
- Better Relationships

- Overall Client Satisfaction

Commission Comments

- Commissioner Austria inquired how does the Hollywood 2.0 program differ from the ABLE Project.
- Commissioner Molina inquired about the matrix to deem the program successful. Commissioner Molina would like regular updates on the progress of Hollywood 2.0.
- Commissioner Schallert inquired about board and care rate increases. Commissioner also inquired about a crisis or urgent center in the area.
- Commissioner Stevens inquired about Hollywood 1.0, Hollywood 2.0, and a Hollywood 3.0 being reviewed from an equity lens. Commissioner asked that the process and system be shared with other communities and jurisdictions.
- Commissioner Weissman commented on anticipating a how-to manual to learn the lessons and advance it across the county.

8. Budget Update – Kimberly Nall, DMH Finance Officer

Ms. Nall presented the final adopted budget for FY 2021-22; budget details are available in the link. [Adopted budget](#)

DMH has a \$3 billion budget allocated into the various categories listed:

- Outpatient Services – 80%
- Treatment Beds – 9.7%
- Public Guardian - 1%
- Administration - 8.6%

Commission Comments

- Commissioner Dalglish inquired about DMH not spending money on CPP (Community Planning Process) or it is not allocated correctly, and if any unspent funds that are at risk of being reverted to the state. **Action: Ms. Nall stated she will come back next month to update and identify CPP expenditures.** Commissioner Dalglish inquired about increases and decreases from last year and why. **Action: Ms. Nall will prepare a schedule that shows what happened from last year to this year and explain what changed.** Commissioner Dalglish inquired about savings related to COVID19, no in-person meetings and utilization of facilities.
- Commissioner Austria asked Ms. Nall to clarify “final adopted budget.” Ms. Nall explained the budget phases. Commissioner inquired about MHC input. Ms. Nall responded DMH submitted the recommended budget for FY 2022-23 to CEO.
- Commissioner Molina inquired about surplus money coming for the new budget. Ms. Nall response no major changes were made. **Action: Commissioner recommended Ms. Nall come back in May or June to give a review of the upcoming budget.** Commissioner also stated money received from MHSA is not a use it or lose it situation we can still use it in future years.
- Deputy Sofiani inquired about Ms. Nall to provide a breakdown of the percentage of outpatient bed funds going to homelessness.
- Commissioner Acebo inquired about the number of FY 2020-21 fund balance for DMH reported to CEO. **Action: Ms. Nall responded that she would provide the number.** Commissioner recommended MHC make monthly budget recommendations to other offices and the BOS.

- Commissioner Stevens inquired about AB 109 funded by realignment funds; is it because it is a state bill. Commissioner inquired about the effects Cal AIM will have on the budget. Ms. Nall responded the fund balance from MHSA will be in detail and provide the information. Commissioner stated that Greg Polk and Dr. Sherin should be attending MHC budget meetings.
- Commissioner Root inquired about the breakdown of the \$2.4 billion dollar outpatient services bucket and what the proposed amount is for next year's budget.

9. Community Reports, SALT, UsCC, CCC Co-Chairs

SALT 4 Esiquio Reyes, Co-Chair

I am with Service Area 4, Co-Chair. We are having a transition right now and our liaison, Juanita, is transitioning to Service Area 3 United Mental Health Promotion program as the supervising Community Health Worker, and we are getting a new person named Charmaine. So we are dealing with all of that and unfortunately, I was not really able to attend our last meeting because there was a mix-up on two different locations or for two different groups that were started somehow, so I stayed with a few of the community members that tried to join in for our meeting and the other group so that they knew somebody was there to help and to talk to them and to let them know that we still valued their input and stuff like that. Unfortunately, I can't really give a good update about what happened at the meeting because, like I said, I mainly stayed with the other group, so they felt like nobody left them there and then nothing happened. Thank you very much for your time.

SALT 5 Penny Mehra, Co-Chair

Summarize the issues your Service Area/Cultural Community is currently addressing: Again, homeless encampments and communities. Plus, issues regarding very low staff at many clinics and agencies and concerns over loss of services.

Key struggles this month: SALT 5 continues to struggle with using the funds that have been allocated to increase SALT membership and community engagement. This fiscal year we had \$150,000 to spend to date we have spent less than \$10,000. I know many other SALTs have had difficulty using these funds. I wonder what will happen to unspent funds and how best to go forward.

Key successes this month: SALT 5 organized and presented 2 more SALT events. On January 27 SALT members organized a community Forum for residents living in the Marina and Del Rey neighborhoods regarding issues of homelessness. Homeless service providers including PATH, St Joseph Ctr, LACDMH SA 5 HOME Team, LAPD MH Evaluation Unit, and Pacific Asian Counseling Ctr presented. Providers educated residents on who they serve and the engagement process and difficulty getting individuals into housing. Residents were dismayed at the challenges and at the fact that these workers did not have the authority to move people off the street.

On February 22 SALT 5 celebrated Black History Month. Ronnie Jones and Naomi Nightingale –community members and longtime residents who have researched the history of Black communities in Venice & Santa Monica presented that history to SALT & guests. There was a Black History month quiz, and a MH Commissioner sang the Black National Anthem. A truly great event.

What priority community issue(s) from your SALT or UsCC should the MHC be aware of: Residents have run out of patience with homelessness. I think that DMH gets blamed, and this is unfortunate. Only 30% of homeless have serious mental health issues. DMH does develop housing. MHSA \$\$\$ cannot be spent on hospitals, IMD beds.

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SALT 8 – Paul Stansbery, Co-Chair

Commission Priorities - During FY 2020-2021, the MHC has focused their meetings on several strategic priorities. If possible, please provide information in your report-back on one or more of the following topics: (1) Criminal Justice; (2) Homeless/Housing; (3) Integrated Care Services/Cultural Competency; (4) COVID Disparities; (5) Budget Accountability; and (6) Data Oversight

Summarize the issues your Service Area/Cultural Community is currently addressing: The SALT 8 meeting was held on February 4, 2022. As part of the recognition of Black History month, there was a review of the contributions to the field of mental health by contributors such as Bebe Moore Campbell and Herman Canady. Also, there was acknowledgement of the importance of Historically Black College and Universities to developing leaders in mental health. The Peer Mentoring Group continues to address the development of peers and reported on the number of workshops and opportunities for peer development and learning. The Peer Resource Center workshops on work readiness were especially noted. Most of the meeting was devoted to planning the agenda for the year with what areas the members wanted to have presentations on. The areas of interest were the school's initiative of the Dept. of Mental health, the peer certification and employment efforts, the coming implementation of the 988 system, diversion from criminal justice to treatment, and the availability of housing and treatment services. The members also expressed concern on the continuing challenges of staffing and the COVID environment. SALT 8 has good participation at meetings but is still trying to recruit members to commit to representing their community.

Key struggles this month: Continuing challenge of dealing with COVID and meeting in a virtual environment. Virtual meetings are convenient but the lack of meeting in person has made getting members more actively involved problematic.

Key successes this month: The continuing efforts by the Peer Mentoring Work Group to develop peers and work on getting ready for peer certification.

What priority community issue(s) from your SALT or UsCC should the MHC be aware of: With the decline in Omicron infections, hospitalizations, and deaths, developing a hybrid approach to meetings was even more of an expressed need. Also, addressing the different perspectives on the state of the pandemic where some believe it is over, the concerns about variants, the large number who haven't been vaccinated and that it will be with us for a long time to come was an issue. Recruiting members willing to represent stakeholder groups as opposed to just attending meetings is an ongoing priority.

ACCESS for ALL UsCC – Hector Ramirez, Co-Chair

Good morning. I am the Co-Chair for the Access for All UsCC and I am an LA County DMH consumer. We had our meeting this week and it was a very interesting conversation, particularly regarding the presentation that you all got today. We had a presentation from Disability Rights California to help introduce some of our members to the broad array of services that community members can access for free; anything from information, peer advocacy, even legal services provided, so everybody was really interested. And then we had a conversation around some of our capacity projects that we have been funding, particularly one that is going around right now. And one of the things we observed was that this particular contract went to the lowest bidder, and that meant for our community that our money was not necessarily used for the best services for our community but for the cheapest one. So, it was brought to our attention that we need to really make sure that when we are putting out contracts, that they are really going to be done by people who are competent, community connected, and to ensure that we can try to get the best we can for our mere \$200,000 from the DMH budget. We all have concerns, particularly around this conversation about the lack of transparency and the fact that the Department

is back billing for CPP instead of actually allocating it. The 5% is a floor for the whole state, for all the other counties in the state, and LA County receiving the largest amount of MHSA money should really have gone higher than the 5% and to do it upfront instead of back billing for what is done instead of what could be done. So, we would like to have the material that was presented today, which we have heard was available on Friday, so that we can review it.

Updates

10. Board of Supervisors Update – Deputy Lily Sofiani

Thanked the MHC for the welcome received at the meeting today.

11. Commission Updates –

- Commissioner Acebo thanked Chair Dagleish for participating in meetings tied to the appointing powers, it is very important.
- Commissioner Shallert commented on how important is it that an urgent care center is established in Santa Clarita Valley like the one in Lancaster. Commissioner stated DMH to increase support on this project badly needed for adolescents and adults, and it is a high priority for Santa Clarita. Commissioner Schallert also stated the suicide rate in Santa Clarita doubled last year. In the month of January 5 suicides were counted and 22 veterans per day kill themselves. We need to double our efforts to respond to this because it's an epidemic.
- Commissioners Dagleish and Root met to review contracts and will provide a report and suggestions.
- Commissioner Cooperberg announced Barbara Wilson is planning an anti-stigma event in Santa Clarita for May is Mental Health Month. Commissioners Schallert and Cooperberg joined the planning committee.
- Commissioner Weissman stated she continues to draft the motion from the subcommittee on homelessness for MHC to support the top floor resiliency community.
- Chair Dagleish reported a new item added to the agenda is Items for Inclusion and Possible Action for Thursday, March 24.
- **Action: Commissioner Stevens asked to invite substance use presentation on the agenda.**

Adjournment

12. Adjournment in celebration of Black History Month