

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY
May 2022



Message from the Director

Dear DMH family,

As my sixth Mental Health Awareness month with LACDMH comes to a close, I had hoped to focus on our work together and share my deep support for Dr. Lisa Wong who has been appointed as Acting Director by the Board of Supervisors. And while there have been numerous accomplishments for us to celebrate and while Lisa is absolutely the right person to take the baton, I cannot communicate in my most authentic voice about anything other than recent events in this country that are tearing us apart as individuals and disconnecting us as a people.

The entirely horrific loss of life to gun violence in Uvalde, Buffalo, and Laguna Woods in the past few weeks as well as the string of tragedies before them literally shake our collective humanity and morality to the core. These ignorant, hate-driven events traumatize individuals, neighborhoods, regions, and our nation as a whole, leaving in their wake broken families, enraged communities, and feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in our society.

It is critical that we continue to message and act upon the need for each of us to connect with each other in both our personal and professional lives. We, the Department of Mental Health, must see and reinforce our role as a beacon of hope inside and outside the county. While I am retiring from my position as Director of LACDMH in the weeks to come, I will always commit myself to keep carrying the connectedness torch forever. With this in mind please take advantage of the [resources](#) we have made available and please share them widely with your colleagues, clients, families, friends, and communities.

I will send another communication about our work together over these past five-plus years at some point next month and look forward to delivering my send-off message that will be followed by a very informal reception coming up on June 10. Please tune in or reach out to me in whatever way you would like. I will make my post-county contact information available for anyone who'd like to stay in touch.

Heart forward,

Jon

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



LACDMH and L.A. Metro Sign Agreement to Provide Crisis Response and Outreach Services Within Metro Transit System

LACDMH and Metro this week entered into an agreement for LACDMH to provide crisis response services to individuals experiencing mental health crises while onboard Metro vehicles or at Metro stations, as well as outreach to the community.

As part of this innovative partnership, LACDMH will staff Metro-dedicated psychiatric mobile response, co-response, and community ambassador network teams. Once assigned, LACDMH and Metro will work together to deploy these teams where needed within the Metro system to de-escalate crises, provide linkage to appropriate mental health services and educate the public.

“This novel agreement heralds the creation of a powerful, collaborative partnership between LACDMH and Metro that will allow us to apply multiple approaches to improve community safety and increase access to services,” said Dr. Jonathan Sherin. “At the end of the day, this mutual commitment will help us realize a better transportation system and at the same time triage those in need to relevant resources including behavioral health treatment and housing.”

[Read more about this pilot here.](#)



New Research Highlights Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness Among Unsheltered L.A. Residents Enrolled in Street Outreach Services

A new report published this week by the nonpartisan California Policy Lab reveals that roughly 10% of the homeless population studied in L.A. County suffers from a psychotic spectrum disorder. This important research provides insight into the LACDMH target client population and informs our response to ensure that resources are in place to meet the needs of this group to help them access care and exit homelessness. The analysis links enrollment data from L.A.’s Street Outreach programs to data from LACDMH and L.A. County Department of Health Services to provide estimates of the prevalence of psychotic spectrum

disorders and other serious mental illnesses among people who receive Street Outreach services. See the full report [here](#).



VPAN Support Helps Army Vet Reset and Pursue His Dreams

Recently discharged Army veteran and LA native Hugo was facing some serious obstacles during his transition to civilian status.

That's when he was introduced to [Veteran Peer Access Network \(VPAN\)](#).

“I was trying to figure out mental health care through my Medi-Cal insurance. I was talking to them and I gave them a little about myself, that I was a veteran and recently separated, and I asked, ‘What could I use out here?’” he recounted. “They said since you’re a veteran and you’re in L.A. County there’s this thing called VPAN. I went online and filled out the submission form and they contacted me within just a day or two.

VPAN is a program within the LACDMH connecting veterans and their families to a wide range of services including housing and shelter, income support, benefits navigation, employment assistance, health care, and individual and family support. The program is staffed

exclusively by other veterans and military family members as peer support specialists.

[Read more about how VPAN supports Veterans.](#)



Youth Voices Wanted for Our Wellbeing Survey

LACDMH, in partnership with the L.A. County Youth Commission, is currently conducting a survey in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) to learn about L.A. County youth's mental health and how we can better support their wellbeing needs. Survey responses will be kept anonymous and used to help plan, implement, and evaluate our services for the youth community. L.A. County residents between 12 and 26 years old are encouraged to complete this quick survey by **Tuesday, May 31**.

For additional opportunities to get involved, visit the L.A. County Youth Commission [website](#) and connect with them on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



[Asian American Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) Month](#), nationally recognized throughout May, has traditionally celebrated AAPI cultures and their numerous contributions to American society, but this year's observance takes on heightened significance as AAPI Hate incidents continue to remain prevalent [throughout the United States](#) and in [L.A. County](#). Combined with unique mental health challenges facing the AAPI community and barriers to accessing care, overall wellbeing is more precarious when compounded with acts of harassment, discrimination, and violence along with the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of particular significance are the unique historical traumas faced by individual AAPI populations and how they contribute to mental health challenges. Dr. Derek Hsieh, Program Head of our Long Beach Asian Pacific Islander Family Mental Health Clinic, recently presented on this topic and highlighted some strategies to help overcome those barriers. A recording of that presentation is available [here](#).

Our department is also engaged in addressing these barriers and challenges through our outreach and services with input from our [Asian Pacific Islander UsCC subcommittee](#), and we encourage interested stakeholders to learn more about this group's efforts and participate in an upcoming meeting.

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:

- WE RISE 2022 events and activities were covered extensively by L.A. area media outlets, including [ABC 7](#), [CBS 2](#), [KTLA 5](#), [Spectrum News](#), and [LAist](#).
- Dr. Sherin was featured on [ABC 7](#) to discuss Mental Health Awareness Month and his retirement in June.
- [Kaiser Health News](#) quoted Dr. Sherin in a story about the upcoming L.A. City mayoral election, where he highlighted the need to prioritize mental health services as part of the bigger strategy to address the city's homelessness crisis.
- [KFI-AM](#) and [Spectrum News](#) highlighted the LACDMH-Dodger partnership for a Mental Health Awareness Day during their May 15 game with the Phillies.
- Multiple LACDMH experts were interviewed this week about mental health in relation to this week's school shooting at Uvalde, Tex., including chief of psychology Dr. Jorge Partida del Toro for [Univision](#).
- This week, Dr. Sherin joined County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and other experts for a media seminar on L.A. County's efforts to support individuals experiencing severe mental illness. A recording of that briefing is posted on Supervisor Barger's [Facebook page](#).



Cultural Traditions and Connections

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

“What Works for Me and My Mental Health”

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

With a strong acknowledgment of “May is Mental Health Month”, the LACDMH [Cultural Competency Committee \(CCC\)](#) took the initiative of sharing their members’ favorite practices to promote personal mental health. All these coping strategies have been bundled as a gift from the committee to all Los Angeles County communities with a very special message:

- Each life matters, our lives and wellbeing matter
- Our physical and mental wellbeing require active acts of kindness coming from ourselves for ourselves
- It is when we take good care of and love ourselves that we can best love and take care of our families, friends, and others around us

[Continue to “What Works for Me and My Mental Health”.](#)



There's Still Time to Experience WE RISE 2022

Don't miss the final WE RISE 2022 experiences and activities that are taking place throughout L.A. County until the end of the month, including:

- **Friday, May 27 @ 3:30 p.m.** – The “[Power of Community Healing](#)” Art Festival in Antelope Valley
- **Saturday, May 28 @ noon** – Downtown L.A.’s “[Walk the Talk](#)” Parade and Performance Series
- **Monday, May 30 @ 1 p.m.** – “[Rock for Vets](#)” Memorial Day Concert presented by Arts Council Long Beach
- The monthlong [WE RISE 2022 Art Installation and Interactive Exhibit](#) at Grand Park.

For more WE RISE 2022 information and updates, visit werise.la and connect with them @WhyWeRise on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).



This Memorial Day, LACDMH honors our nation's heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Let's get social @LACDMH!



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. Visit dmh.lacounty.gov for more resources.

We welcome your comments, story ideas, and recommendations at pio@dmh.lacounty.gov.