

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

July 2022



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing



"The importance of START was highlighted this week when the L.A. County Board of Supervisors passed a [motion](#) to expand widespread knowledge of the START resource among youth. In the motion, LACDMH is directed to work with appropriate departments to develop a marketing campaign specifically targeted to youth to increase their awareness of START services, concerning behaviors, and how to report them to START."

Program Highlight: School Threat Assessment and Response Team (START)

Established in 2009 and expanded in 2018, LACDMH's School Threat Assessment and Response Team (START) was developed as a response to the Virginia Tech Shooting in 2007. It identified the need for mental health resources and supportive services to help prevent premeditated school violence. At the time of its formation, START was the first program of its kind in the nation, bringing together professionals from educational, law enforcement, and behavioral health settings in a partnership to specifically prevent and address school violence.

"What we are here to do is to enhance and coordinate the services offered by school staff, mental health clinicians, and first responders," said Maria Martinez, Ph.D., START's Mental Health Clinical Supervisor. "In doing so, we reduce the likelihood of school violence by identifying

early warning signs and connecting troubled individuals with appropriate resources before they resort to harming others or themselves.”

[Learn more about START.](#)



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Launched Nationwide

With the July 16 launch of 988, the easy-to-remember lifeline number will provide vital support to people experiencing or affected by mental health, substance use, and/or suicide-related crises. Americans can now [call](#) or [text](#) 988 – or [chat](#) on their website – to receive free, confidential, 24/7 emotional support as well as referrals to local resources and services for further help.

As the lifeline is built on a network of state- and locally-funded crisis centers, LACDMH has been instrumental in planning and implementing its launch for L.A. County area residents and communities in partnership with [Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services](#).

“We are excited for the nationwide rollout of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number, which will make it easier for people experiencing or affected by mental health crises to get immediate lifesaving help to support their safety and well-being. A key component of this new service is the availability of trained psychiatric mobile crisis response

teams who can be connected to through the 988 line when necessary,” said LACDMH Acting Director [Lisa Wong, Psy.D.](#)

Learn more about 988 on our [website](#).

[Continue reading article.](#)



Grand Openings for Supportive Housing, Restorative Care Village Projects

LACDMH recently participated in two grand opening ceremonies to provide services and support for individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

[La Paz Apartments](#) in the East Los Angeles community opened its doors on June 30. The grand opening brought out LACDMH leadership and staff along with Supervisor Hilda Solis, Meta Housing Corporation, Western Community Housing, and LifeSTEPS. This affordable housing development features 42 apartment units, on-site amenities, community spaces, and supportive programs designed to help individuals and families with mental health challenges who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the [LAC+USC](#)

[Restorative Care Village \(RCV\)](#) took place on July 6. LACDMH joined State Treasurer Fiona Ma, Supervisor Solis, Department of Health Services, Department of Public Works, and LAC+USC Medical Center for the special event, which celebrated an innovative space that provides a full continuum of clinical and supportive services in a central location to help clients heal, recover, and reintegrate into their communities.

[Find out more about these new projects.](#)



Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Month was established in 2008 to enhance public awareness of mental illnesses among underserved populations and to improve their access to mental health treatments and services to optimize their recovery and wellbeing. This month-long observance was named in honor of Campbell, a journalist, author, and co-founder of [NAMI Urban Los Angeles](#) who tirelessly advocated for diversity and inclusivity in mental health care, research, and education until her death in 2006.

In recognition of Campbell's vision of improving mental health services for diverse populations, the [U.S. Office of Minority Health](#) is highlighting its free "[Think Cultural Health](#)" e-learning courses to help clinicians develop the skills to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services and improve overall quality of care for clients of all

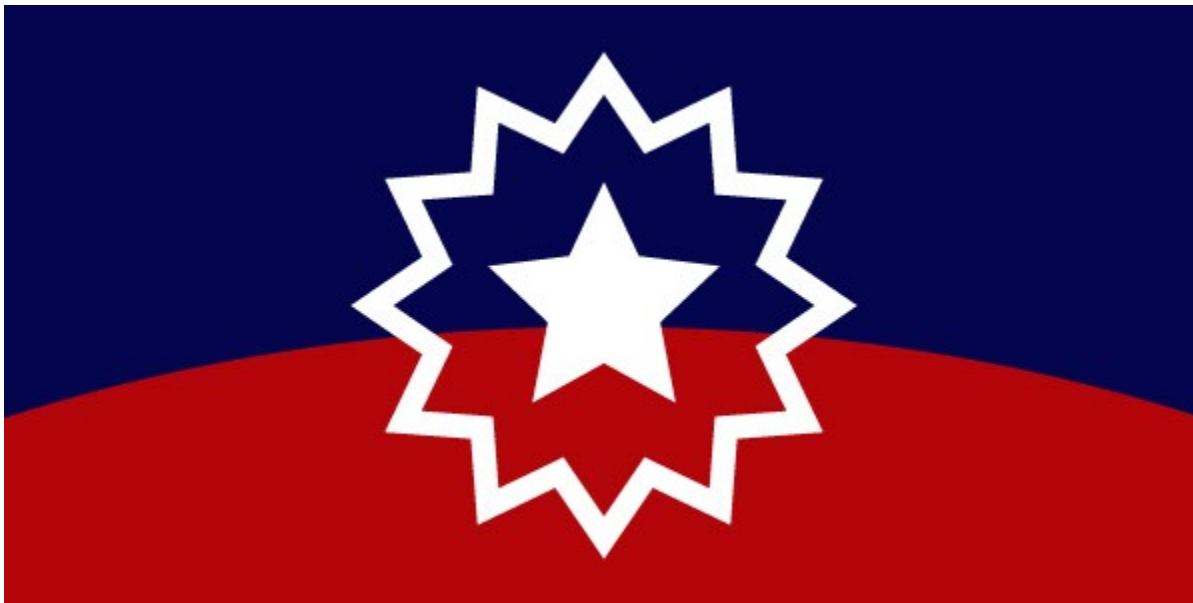
backgrounds. To learn more about the monthlong recognition, visit this [page](#) on NAMI's website.



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 subject matter experts:

- Numerous stories about 988's launches featured LACDMH experts, including [TIME Magazine](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [CBS Los Angeles/KCAL](#), [KPCC-FM/LAist](#), [Spectrum News](#), and [CalMatters](#).
- Acting LACDMH Director Dr. Lisa Wong is quoted in a [Los Angeles Times](#) story about the successes and shortcomings of Prop. 63, California's "millionaires' tax" legislation that generates funding for mental health services and programs.
- Former LACDMH Director Dr. Sherin is quoted in a [Los Angeles Times](#) story about the limited supply of adult residential facilities, also known as board and cares, in L.A. County and its impact on individuals experiencing serious mental illness who need assistance with daily living activities.
- The [Los Angeles Daily News](#) covered a L.A. County board motion requesting multiple County agencies, including LACDMH,

to collaborate on a comprehensive solution to combat the drug overdose epidemic.



Cultural Traditions and Connections

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

“The Evolution of Juneteenth”

By James Coomes, LCSW, Olive View Program Manager and ARDI Staff Advisory Council member

I wanted to share with you a little bit about [Juneteenth](#), which was recently celebrated on June 19th, 2022, the second year that it is officially recognized as a Federal holiday in our nation's history. Juneteenth was established on June 19th, 1865 in Galveston, Texas, when Union General Gordon Granger and his troops arrived at the end of the civil war. The civil war had ended two months prior and the emancipation proclamation had been signed two years prior. It took this amount of time for Union soldiers to reach Galveston Texas and inform those enslaved on plantations that they were now free. It is my understanding that three days of celebration erupted and included food, dance, music, culture, and family.

I've been celebrating Juneteenth for the last 15 years myself. I go to a church in Pasadena called Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church, and we have been working really hard within the denomination for the past 25 years to address issues of racial equity, justice, and inclusion. It is a liberally religious denomination, but it like a lot of the work we do, struggles with institutionalized structures that have not necessarily been welcoming to all comers. A small group that I'm involved in called Neighborhood People of Color decided we wanted to have a Juneteenth celebration every year. We spend a Saturday cooking ribs and chicken for the entire congregation and community members. On Sunday we reheat leftovers, cook hot links, and invite the community to bring potluck dishes. This has easily become one of my favorite events at my church and it's become a really important community event for our congregation.

[Read more.](#)

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.