

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
Strategic Communications Division

Eastern-European / Middle Eastern (EE/ME) UsCC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

August 31, 2022

2:00PM – 4:00PM via Teleconference

Present: Sarkis Simonian, Dr. Heather Laird, Rima Safaryan, Dr. Haydeh Fakhrabadi, Seta Haig, Mariam Nahapetyan, Mastaneh Moghadam, Hoover (Captioner), Dr. Armine Stepanyan, Yue Hua Xu.

DMH Admin: Anna Yaralyan, Destiny Walker, Rosario Ribleza, Dr. Sandra Chang, Alan Chung Chiu Wu, Angel Baker.

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
Introductions	Everyone introduced themselves.
Meeting Minutes Review and Approval	Reviewed and approved meeting minutes from 6/29/2022. Sarkis approved and Mastaneh second.
Co-Chair Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EE/ME Subcommittee members discussed identifying a second co-chair for the subcommittee. • EE/ME Subcommittee Chair Seta Haig reported that she received a promotion at work which constricted her schedule. Seta loves attending the EE/ME Subcommittee monthly meetings, however, due to time constrains, she will need assistance in attending monthly UsCC Subcommittee meetings, the CCC/UsCC Leadership meetings, and the and next month’s Mental Health Community Stakeholders Retreat. • Mariam Nahapetyan who works at LACDMH, volunteered to co-chair with Seta Haig, but according to the LACDMH Bylaws protocols, LACDMH staff cannot be elected as a co-chair. There was a discussion within the subcommittee that this aspect must be revisited. Given that the EE/ME Subcommittee is relatively small and consisting mainly of professionals vs. “community members,” it is important to utilize whichever human resources we have. • Sarkis Simonian reported that the reason LACDMH employees are not permitted to become co-chairs is because community members do not wish DMH to dictate what the subcommittee does, and this has been the fear of it. This is the historical background. • Sarkis Simonian reported that if there are no volunteers in this meeting and out of it, within the next few weeks, he will volunteer to become an EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee co-chair with Seta Haig.

- Subcommittee members agreed to Sarkis becoming a co-chair in case no one else volunteers.

Capacity Building Project Updates FY2020-2021

1. Russian Mental Health Media Virtual Outreach Campaign – Mastaneh Moghadam

- The Vendor, Mastaneh Moghadam, presented the final findings of the summary report of this project.
- The Russian mental health media outreach project started on May 1st of 2021 and expected to end on September 30th.
- The project was implemented in three phases. Phase one consisted of project Consultant, Mastaneh Moghadam, and a Russian cultural consultant researching various media outlets and radio and television stations that are local or at least national. The goal of it was to distribute the 14 PSAs that had been previously created to be aired on Russian TV stations and/or radio stations to reach to the Russian-speaking community. The Russian PSAs were also going to be posted on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.
- The PSAs were advertised on Facebook by the Vendor who made sure to post it with the demographic that included Russian and Russian-speaking communities within Southern California, specifically Los Angeles.
- The Russian PSAs were edited from 60 seconds to 30 seconds to be broadcasted in Russian TV and radio.
- The Russian PSAs were also going to be distributed on social media, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- One of the challenges of the PSAs was that there was not very many radio and television stations to cater to the Russian-speaking community in America. The most popular Russian TV stations, Russia-1 and NTV are in Moscow, as a result, these two TV stations could not be utilized.
- Locally, the Russian PSAs aired on Armenian-Russian TV Network, ARTN, 4 times a day and on Russian TV, RTN, 2 times a day. The PSAs have been airing during prime-time hours, seven days a week.
- Overall, the broadcasting of the Russian PSAs went very well. Each month there were more viewers, more positive comments and likes, and more overall feedback.
- The PSAs reached to a combined total of 27,811 views (views are the number of people who viewed it) with 89,140 people reached, (reached are the individuals who saw the PSAs, on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media networks,) and 10,099 people were engaged, who provided positive comments about the PSAs. Individuals who constituted as “engaged,” either pressed like, or made a comment, or shared the PSAs.

- The PSA that got the greatest number of hits was the “Mental Health Awareness and Decreasing Stigmas Around Mental Health.” One PSA which got significant number of views was the “LGBTQ+ Identity,” which is the one that the television stations reported as being the most controversial. This PSA received a lot of hits and views on YouTube and other social media sites.
- The results received indicate great success of the project, as the numbers were incredible. The Russian PSAs reached a major part of the Russian community members living in Southern California and LA County. Community members felt that the PSAs were educational and important, especially given the current War between Russia and Ukraine.

2. Virtual Poetry Night Mental Health Outreach Groups for the Farsi Speaking Community Project – Mastaneh Moghadam

- The Vendor, Mastaneh Moghadam presented the findings of the final summary report of the project.
- The project started July 1, 2021, and ended on August 31, 2022.
- The focus of the Farsi poetry night mental health virtual outreach project was to reach Farsi speaking older adults residing in Los Angeles County.
- The purpose of the project was to create a safe space for them to share their emotional and mental health issues in a culturally appropriate and acceptable manner. Additionally, to promote mental health services, increase mental health awareness and education, and reduce stigma, while reducing isolation for older adults, and create opportunities for engagement for them.
- Poetry is an important part of Iranian culture and is traditionally used as a tool to help individuals heal from mental and emotional challenges. In this project poetry was also used as part of creative arts to emphasize and highlight mental health struggles and emotional needs which the community had been going through.
- The title the of the workshops was "Exploring mental health through Persian poetry."
- Total of 20, 2-hour poetry events were complete. There were 2 poetry events a month.
- The workshops were presented on Zoom.
- A Persian poetry specialist was hired to conduct the Farsi Poetry events. She co-facilitated the groups with the Mastaneh Moghadam, licensed mental health Consultant/Program Director.
- The poetry specialist did a great deal of research and gained a variety of poems from different poets that related to mental health. Total of 10 topics related to mental health were selected. The topics included parenting and children, anxiety and depression, domestic violence, child abuse, and anger management, the role of women in Persian poetry, role of ego versus self in Persian culture and poetry; a look at the concept of Aberoo or secrecy in Persian culture, suicide and grief, references to LGBTQ culture in Persian poetry, love and transformation, forgiveness, and gratitude.

- The poems were dissected and then helped people connect the poems with their own emotional and mental health struggles. Many full and meaningful discussions with people occurred.
- Due to the poetry night events, participants gained information and understanding as to how engage in creative arts. Particularly in a social way, poetry events can really be a positive step towards overcoming mental and emotional challenges.
- Total of 163 unique individuals registered for the 20 workshops, over the 10-month period.
- Overall, the poetry night events were very rich and great. The survey outcome, qualitative outcome and interviews, and the feedback received, all reflected the hypothesis that the Farsi-speaking adults and particularly older adults were able to really benefit from these workshops. The community members hope that in one way or another the poetry events could continue.
- Subcommittee members provided positive feedback. Seta Haig expressed that this is a project that will work well with other communities as well, such as the Armenian Community, who is also rich with poetry, theater, music, dance, and other forms of art. Seta expressed that it must be very powerful for adults, and older adults to realize that the mental health topics addressed literature they love. It is also humbling to know that all the poems are from our own heritage and literature; this makes it much more real in many ways.

3. Mental Health Needs Assessment for the Arabic Speaking Community Through Virtual Focus Groups – Dr. Heather Laird.

- The Vendor, Dr. Heather Laird presented the findings of the final summary report of the project.
- This project was implemented in five phases, starting from June 2021 to June 2022.
- The purpose of the project was to increase mental health access and reduce disparities for the Arabic-speaking community and for the project to be implemented across LA County. It was to conduct a needs assessment of mental healthcare needs of the Arabic-speaking community through virtual listening sessions.
- As the Consultant began to recruit people, she learned that the Arabic-speaking community was hesitant to do group sessions. Community members had privacy concerns. As a result, instead of eight virtual listening sessions, total of 147 individual private interviews were conducted. Afterwards there was a community public session to share the results with community members.
- The interviews consisted of several types of questions, including 35 yes/no, open-ended questions; certain questions from the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale, not the whole scale; risk assessment version and the Trauma Screening Questionnaire, TSQ, and the Trauma History Screening.
- A recruitment manager was hired to reach out to individuals.

- Individuals answered a total of 130 questions and had the opportunity to expand on answers extemporaneously. Each participant was incentivized with a \$50 gift card of their choice, either a visa or Amazon gift card.
- Participants came from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. These groups included Algerian Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Lebanese, Libyan, Moroccan, Palestinian, Saudi Arabian, Sudanese, Syrian, Tunisian, Emirati, American, Yemenis, Sudanese, and French, and Armenian. The highest group of participants were Egyptian.
- Questions included variety of culturally relevant mental health issues.
- After assessing and compiling information from the interviews, there were various outcomes and recommendations to Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health for future projects. These were the followings:
 - ✚ Researchers/mental health professionals must take a deeper look at the community's needs which is even beyond the original open-ended questions. This is because Arabic community members may be closed off regarding sharing personal/family information due to cultural expectations, and shame and stigma attached to mental health issues.
 - ✚ For this population, questions surrounding traumas, self-injuries, suicide, sexual abuse, and substance use scored higher than the national average.
 - ✚ Geopolitical and social-political realities have had a physiological, psychological, social, and even at times spiritual effect on this population. This project elevates the need for wellness services for the Arabic speaking population.
 - ✚ It will be effective and beneficial for Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to proactively move in such a manner that the services are being offered more frequently, and with cultural sensitivity to have a positive impact on the mental wellbeing for this population.
 - ✚ One of the lessons learned from this project is that we should continue to have MHSA-funded capacity building and stigma-reducing projects, including internal trainings in the DMH on how to provide culturally sensitive services to Arabic-speaking populations.
 - ✚ There have been incorrect perceptions about where Arabs and Arabic-speaking people live in LA County. Arabic speaking population resides in every service area, as a result, there are clear opportunities to address marketing and promotion, access to services, volunteer participation, and community engagement, and have a clearly visible representation of this population.
 - ✚ More Arabic-speaking therapists are needed in all service areas, especially in Service Areas 2, 3, 4, and 5, with cultural, religious, and linguistic knowledge to provide mental health services to this community.
 - ✚ It will be helpful for Arabic speaking community members to have more knowledge and information on how to access mental health services and resources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittee members thanked Dr. Laird for providing a comprehensive summary report and reported that the finding/results were informative and important for all to hear.
Presentation for Capacity Building Projects FY2021-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Updates on Capacity Building Project FY 2021 – 2022: Anna Yaralyan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing Through Arts Project for the Arabic speaking Community – Dr. Heather Laird received this project. The project has four phases. The project began on August 8, 2022 and is expected to end on May 31, 2023. • Russian and Farsi Mental Health Feature Film Project – Mastaneh Moghadam, LCSW, from Cross Cultural Expressions Community Counseling Center received this project. The project has five phases and phase one of the project began on 8/15/2022. The project is expected to end on August 14, 2023. • Armenian Mental Health PSAs – There was a delay on processing this project in the LACDMH Procurement Division. This project will go out to solicitation soon.
Future Meetings Times and Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Next meeting is on Wednesday 9/28/2022, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm
	<p><u>Join Microsoft Teams Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (323) 446-6996 United States, Los Angeles (Toll) Conference ID: 985 297 792#