



PAINTED BRAIN

FY 22-23 CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT: DISABILITY WELLNESS ROUNDTABLES

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Access for All Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) subcommittee was established under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to reduce disparities and increase mental health access for the disabled community in Los Angeles County. They work closely with community partners and consumers to increase the capacity of the public mental health system to develop culturally relevant recovery-oriented services specific to the disabled community and also to develop capacity-building projects.

Painted Brain (PB) was contracted to develop and implement the UsCC Capacity Building Project: Disability Wellness Roundtables virtually. The project period dated September 2022 to June 2023. The purpose of the Disability Wellness Roundtable for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, and Physically Disabled was to reduce mental health access barriers for the disabled community by engaging this population in conversations about mental health and freely sharing their experiences with peers. It aimed to enable this often underserved and marginalized population to access mental health services for themselves and empower other peers and community members to access mental health services as well.

Deliverable Process

Deliverable 1 -September 1, 2022, to November 14, 2022 - Development of flier and other promotional materials, resource guides, roundtable agendas (12), pre and post-surveys, conduct at least one focus group, and identify and hire co-facilitators.

Deliverable 2 - November 15, 2022, to January 16, 2023 - Coordination of virtual platforms to host Disability Wellness Roundtable sessions. Recruitment of 105 attendees for Disability Wellness Roundtable sessions (Deaf and Hard of Hearing-30; Blind-30; and Physically Disabled-45)

Deliverable 3 - January 16, 2023, to May 31, 2023 - Conduct Disability Wellness Roundtable discussions (total of 12) and compensation for co-facilitators (\$200/person per session).

Deliverable 4 - June 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023 - Final summary report

PROJECT RESULTS

The following summary charts and information have been generated to reflect project results.

Deliverable One

During the project's first phase, marketing and project materials were developed to ensure 508 compliance. This process consisted of creating content that offered visual and auditory features across all PB platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In addition, PB developed a County resource guide utilizing the online platform Padlet to encourage usage through its highly accessible formatting and information updates.

Co-facilitators

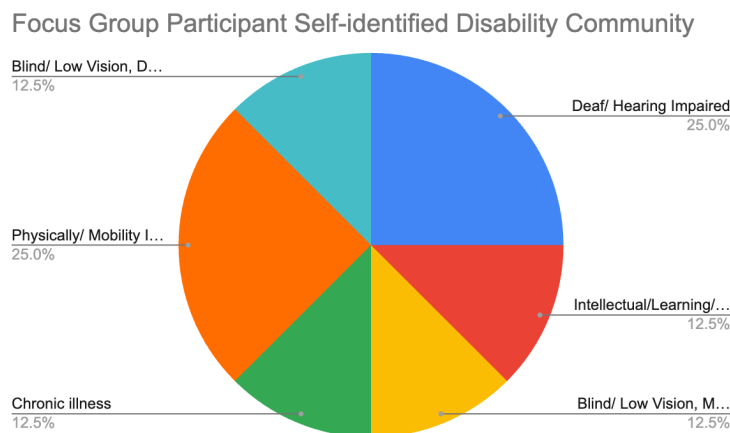
PB contracted five individuals with lived experience from the three disability sectors targeted in the project (Blind/ Low-Vision, Deaf/ Hard of Hearing, and Physical/ Mobility Impaired). All individuals were vetted and approved as co-facilitators for the Disability Wellness roundtable discussions. PB staff worked closely with co-facilitators to finalize roundtable discussion agendas, content, and resource guide. Before hosting roundtable discussions, all co-facilitators participated in a two-part (3-hour) training session that covered the logistical, technical, and content aspects of the disability roundtable sessions. Co-facilitators had ongoing support from the clinical facilitator throughout the project.

Focus Groups

PB facilitated a total number of two focus groups with a total of 9 attendees, the goal was to explore possible topics to be discussed in the roundtable discussions. The information gathered from focus groups was utilized to develop the themes and agendas for the roundtable discussions. Topics included stigma, social injustice, ableism, audism, mental health as a spectrum, cost, and quality of care, advocacy, the power of language, discrimination, and fostering supportive peer-to-peer spaces.

Demographics of Focus Group Attendees:

- Statistic of the demographics represented in focus groups



Deliverable Two

The second phase of the project consisted of developing and implementing a timeline to facilitate the twelve virtual roundtable discussions as follows:

- 3-Blind/Low-Vision Sessions
- 3- Physical/ Mobility Impairment Sessions
- 6- Deaf/ Hard of Hearing Sessions

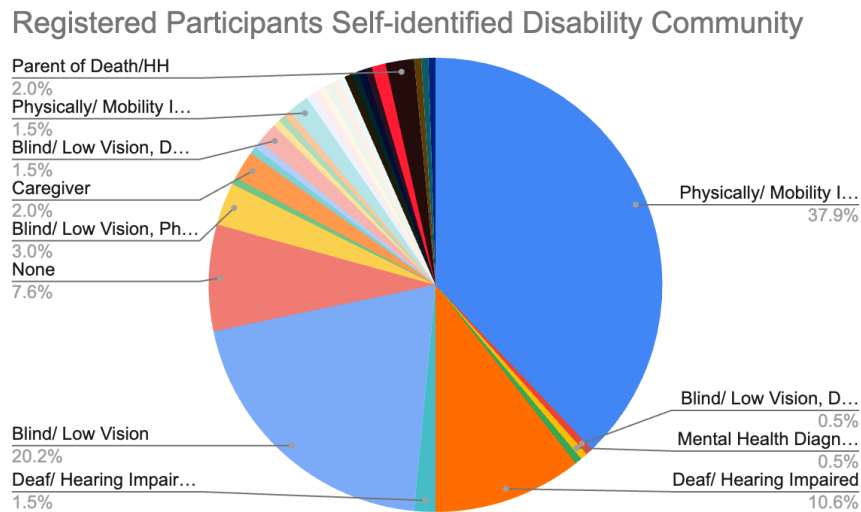
Motivational outreach and marketing were going on during this phase of the project. PB promoted the project with over seventy-five (75) agencies and led an active social media campaign to engage participants. These efforts resulted in over two hundred (200) individuals registering to participate.

As demonstrated in the chart below, the vast diversity of individuals registered to participate in the project did not fall within the singular disability subcommunities the project was designed to serve. Much of the data not labeled on the chart is indicative of the unique identities within the disability community.

The chart below demonstrates the diversity and intersectionality of individuals registered to participate in the project. These findings present an opportunity to design programming that addresses the needs and is inclusive of a diverse disability community. The chart indicates the unique identities within the disability community, including neurodiverse, intellectual, learning, and psychiatric disabilities.

Total Number of Registrants:

- Two hundred individuals registered to participate in the scheduled roundtable discussions.



Deliverable Three

Roundtable Discussions

PB was contracted to facilitate twelve (12) roundtable discussions open to all eight (8) LA County service planning areas. PB facilitated sixteen (16) roundtable discussions during the contract period, exceeding the initial twelve sessions (3 hours per session) to increase attendance of the three targeted disability subcommunities.

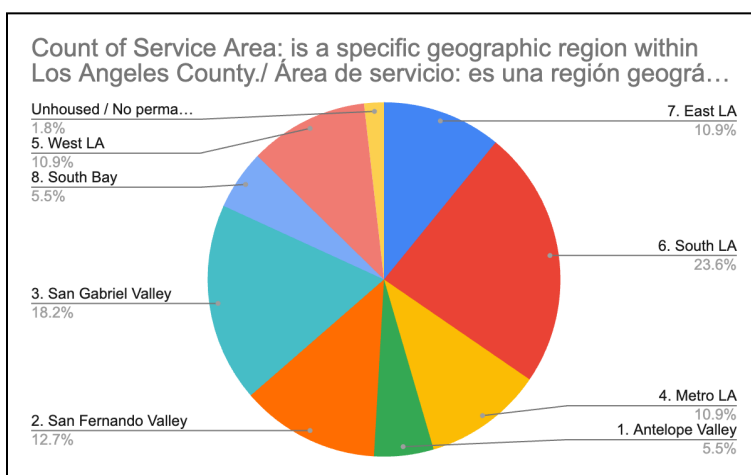
While coordinating the roundtable discussions, we experienced many participants confirming their attendance via email but would not attend the scheduled roundtable discussions they had confirmed. This “no-show” circumstance necessitated our need for additional sessions. Our team had predicted this challenge because of the time commitment of the discussions. Three hours may be a significant amount of time for someone to attend to their many responsibilities.

Another challenge experienced was technology navigation. Roundtable discussions were offered virtually, and while much of the world learned to transition to a virtual platform during the Coronavirus pandemic, many of our participants continued experiencing challenges in accessing and navigating technology. Additionally, many of our participants experienced exhaustion from navigating online spaces, known to some as “Zoom fatigue.” These challenges impacted the number of participants who attended our roundtable discussions.

PB hosted two additional roundtable discussions in person to minimize attendance barriers, specifically for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Total Number of Participants Served In All Eight (8) Service Planning Areas:

- Forty-seven (47) participants were served during the project period.



LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Organization's Market Presence

To increase its market presence in the disability communities as a mental health services provider for people with disabilities.

Recommendation:

- Leveraging the DMH network and events for outreach and project collaboration
- Promotion of active projects on USCC media platforms and web pages to increase outreach and program participation.

Public use of technology

Many people will access virtual meetings and digital resources from their mobile devices; project materials must be mobile-device-accessible and user-friendly.

Recommendation:

- Utilize and maintain technological tools that increase the accessibility of digital content and that meet rapid technological advances.
- Continue to offer programming in alternative formats, in-person and virtual.

Representation Matters

Contracting co-facilitators with lived experience positively impacted the overall programming experience, fostering an inclusive and inviting space.

- The development of Disability Respite Community Centers run by individuals with lived experience, including individuals with a disability, and that are fully accessible and accommodating.
- Encourage the inclusion of paraprofessionals, such as peers and interns, in project implementation and delivery of services.

Navigating Social Media Outreach

PB leveraged its expansive social media presence of 100k+ followers to promote programming. PB's large online following resulted in a quick influx of registrations nationwide, having to determine the eligibility of registered participants more carefully. Many registered participants were ineligible to participate since they needed to meet all eligibility criteria:

- Identify as a person who lives with a disability (Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Blind/ Vision Impaired, Physically Impaired)
- Caretaker/ family member of a person who lives with a disability (Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Blind/ Vision Impaired, Physically Impaired)
- Be 18 years old or older
- Reside in Los Angeles County
- Have access to a device with a camera and microphone

Promoting programming on our social media platforms created the opportunity to expand and implement new vetting protocols.

Recommendation:

- To foster digital collaborations between the LACDMH and contracted agencies to promote programming and resources and to ensure pre-established eligible consumers are shared information about current programming.

Fostering Inclusivity

Interest in participating from individuals who identify with multiple or other disabilities in the program was extensive, as demonstrated by the total number of registrations. The focus on serving the three specific populations within the disability community: Blind/ Low Vision, Deaf/ Hard of Hearing, and Physical/ Mobility Impaired, limited the opportunities for intersectional dialogue for individuals who identify with multiple or other disabilities.

Recommendation:

- Change contract language for future Access For All UsCC programming to include all individuals that identify as living with a disability to promote cross-disability dialogues and mitigate the perpetuation of silos among the disability community. By fostering inclusivity, programming will facilitate and encourage cross-disability discussion, aligning

with the goals of the Access for All UsCC subcommittee and has the potential to increase engagement in disability advocacy.

OUTCOMES

Project Outcomes:

Workforce Development

As a peer-run organization, we continuously strive to expand career and employment opportunities for peers. Through this capacity-building project, PB contracted five co-facilitators with lived experience and dedicated time to invest in their skill development as group facilitators and mental health advocates. All co-facilitators were coached and supported in developing and refining their use of self to enhance the authenticity of the roundtable discussion experience for participants. In alignment with our company culture, PB invested in the personal development of these individuals to encourage vocational exploration filled with meaning and purpose. With this mentorship, one of the five co-facilitators pursued our organization's Medical Peer Specialist Certification training. Below is a quote from that co-facilitator.

"I took your advice on applying to the peer support certification, and I ended up getting the scholarship and have two weeks of training left before my exam! I love the class and everything I've been learning...Thank you for all of your advice and letting me be a part of Painted Brain."

Promoting Peer-Led Spaces

Our roundtable discussions provided LA County disability communities with an additional and available peer-led space for them to engage in. The contracted co-facilitators offered shared lived experience, knowledge of disability resources and services, advocacy practices, and implications of laws and policies for the disability community. Their presence supported the representation of the disability community in peer spaces, supported participants in seeking peer support services, and encouraged them to seek peer employment and careers.

Expanding Partnerships

PB expanded its outreach efforts and connections to 75 agencies throughout LA County in this capacity-building project. PB established relationships with the [Department of Rehabilitation](#) (DOR), [Heart for Sights Foundation](#) (HSF), and the [Marlton School](#), a public special school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in LA. PB promoted services, including workforce development training opportunities, to DOR case managers, creating opportunities for peers to be referred to PB services and training.

HSF supported our organization in providing training and education that expanded our knowledge in serving individuals who are blind or living with visual impairments. HSF trained PB

staff as sight guides to support the increased accessibility at our Lived Experience Advocacy and Diversity LA County regional summit for the blind and visually impaired communities. Additionally, with our support and encouragement, HSF became involved in the Access for All UsCC subcommittee, positively expanding the engagement of stakeholders and service providers.

PB collaborated with Marlton School offering in-person roundtable discussions to parents and caretakers of children that are deaf or hard of hearing and students. The roundtable discussions were received well by parents and students, both eager to learn more about PB services and our return to their school. PB plans to explore additional ways to provide supportive peer programming to Marlton School's families.

Community Building

Our roundtable discussions promoted collective action and wellness. They fostered a space for socialization and community where individuals could share and listen to experiences regarding mental health and the intersections of their disability.

Education shared in our sessions served to inform and empower participants to advocate for themselves and others. It emphasized the power of their voice and its potential to impact the wellbeing of the disability community.

Topics that reinforced community building:

- The power-with versus power-over
- The importance of recognizing intersectionality
- Identifying a personal call to action
- Know your rights
- The power of language
- Fostering supportive peer-to-peer spaces

Participants felt motivated to continue these conversations with others and eager to connect and build community.

Promoting Digital Health Literacy

In alignment with PB programming, [Digital Health Literacy](#) education was available to participants to address any digital divide barriers and their impact on the wellbeing of marginalized communities. As mentioned, one challenge for participants was accessing and navigating technology. Before each roundtable discussion, our staff called participants to offer technical support in downloading Zoom on a desktop computer or phone, and they provided assistive technology tutorials when needed, easing the emotional worries of navigating technology during the session. This service-oriented approach offered participants a positive

experience that reinforced the benefits of technology, encouraging them to continue learning and using technology for their wellness.

Pre and Post Surveys

Participants completed a pre and post-survey that prompted them to answer the six (6) questions below using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with one being "disagree" and five being "agree."

Quantitative data collected demonstrated little change in participants' self-perceptions. Although qualitative data collected (verbal participant feedback) indicated participants felt safe to share their personal experiences, grateful for the sense of community, felt emotionally supported, appreciated for hosting an inclusive and accessible space, and were satisfied by the level of engagement of co-facilitators and discussion topics.

I am interested in accessing mental health services.

1. I feel comfortable talking about my feelings and experiences with others.
2. I feel confident advocating for myself.
3. I feel confident advocating for others.
4. I am connected to a community that supports and encourages me.
5. I understand how my identity impacts how others perceive me.

Testimonials

Sector	Testimonial
Blind/ Low Vision	<p>“Getting our feelings out that is the best way of being more assertive... I applaud and thank you because what you guys shared, you pass it on to others, so that we get the word out for what the blind community needs. Both mentally, emotionally.”</p>
Deaf/ Hard of Hearing	<p>“You know in the beginning, you asked us what was important in life. I couldn't answer at that time and now I have an answer. I appreciate the opportunity today to be able to discuss this. I really enjoyed it. And I think that there is value in the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. And we really value you. And your support. Because I feel like it's very important not only for myself but for my community. Thank you for the opportunity.”</p>

<p>Physical/ Mobility Impairment</p>	<p>“I feel you can learn from each other and with that, you can express yourself better. Being able to communicate today, I learned a couple of things that would actually help and I'm getting to hear each person's story, you would be able to do better and understand things, maybe you're not the only one facing something like this and other people have challenges, too. So it helps.”</p>
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