

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
**Strategic Communications Division**

**Eastern-European / Middle Eastern (EE/ME) UsCC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**  
**8/30/2023**

2:00PM – 4:00PM via Teleconference

- 1. Present:** Seta Haig, Rima Safaryan, Dr. Heather Laird, Sarkis Simonian, Mariam Nahapetyan, Mastaneh Moghadam, Dr. Haydeh Fakhrabadi, Joann Jaimes (Captioner), Andria McFerson, Peyman Malaz, Avo Soltanian, Stacy Dalgleish, Keith Brendon Black-Adonis.

**DMH Admin:** Dr. Anna Yaralyan, Mirtala Parada Ward, PM III, Dr. Darlesh Horn.

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
<b>Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone introduced themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting Minutes Review and Approval</b>	<p>EE/ME Subcommittee meeting minutes on <b>6/28/2023</b>. Co-chair Sarkis Simonian informed subcommittee members to email EE/ME Subcommittee Liaison Anna Yaralyan in case anyone had any amendments, additions, and/or suggestions to this meeting minutes.</p>
Co-Chair Election & Voting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seta Haig will complete her 2-year term in September 2023. Thank You very much Seta for all your great work &amp; assistance in the EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee!</li> <li>• EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee members will select a new co-chair to replace Seta.</li> <li>• Sarkis Simonian highlighted some of the requirements for being a co-chair. One of the requirements is that if one bids on a project and gets it, they can no longer be a co-chair. Additionally, DMH employees cannot be a co-chair. This is difficult because that leaves limited options for a co-chair.</li> <li>• Seta Haig discussed some of the challenges that came up for her as a co-chair. She reported that in addition to monthly EE/ME Subcommittee UsCC meetings, she also was asked to attend monthly UsCC &amp; CCC Leadership meetings. This was difficult, given her already busy schedule as a mental health professional. Seta reported that it is important to be mindful of the responsibility of a co-chair before agreeing to become one.</li> <li>• Dr. Heather Laird reported that she served as a co-chair with Sarkis Simonian, and it was a great experience. Dr. Laird encouraged other qualified EE/ME Subcommittee members to run for a co-chair position.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee members agreed to vote for a co-chair via email.</li> <li>✚ Anna Yaralyan will announce the name of the elected co-chair via email and during next EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee Meeting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capacity Building Project Proposals FY 2023-2024</b></p>	<p><b>For the Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 the following five Capacity Building Project proposals were submitted by the EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support Group and Mental Health Educational Seminar for Afghan Refugees</li> <li>2. Arabic Coffee &amp; Tea Conversation Project</li> <li>3. Armenian Festival Project</li> <li>4. Armenian Poetry Circles for Mental Health</li> <li>5. Russian and Farsi Mental Health Film Project #2</li> </ol> <p><b>1. Support Group and Mental Health Educational Seminar for Afghan Refugees (Dari and Pashtu Speakers) – Peyman Malaz</b></p> <p>The purpose of the project is to respond to the mental health needs of refugee and Afghan populations by helping individuals newly arriving to the Los Angeles to overcome stigma associated with mental health care. This project aims to provide informative seminars in Pashtu and Dari languages. This project has to parts:</p> <p>1) A mental health professional will conduct informative seminars each month, targeting the Dari speaking community. These 2-hour seminars will cover a variety of mental health topics (i.e., anxiety, depression, PTSD, domestic violence, etc.) to inform eligible refugees about mental health issues in a supportive environment, helping to remove the stigma of mental illness and to endorse early mental health treatment. The seminars are expected to engage 100 clients per year.</p> <p>2) The project will also provide support groups for women in Pashtu and Dari. A professional mental health counselor will conduct a one-hour support group once a week. These sessions will cover topics such as women's health, family issues, parenting, substance abuse, etc. One of the most important benefits of participating in a support group, is a decreased sense of isolation. In a support group environment, refugees can express feelings of anger, depression, guilt, and anxiety, which can be validated by others and accepted as a normal response to the immigration experience. By offering a safe place to express and explore the feelings generated by the refugee experience, the support groups will help participants move toward a positive resolution to this difficult life crisis. These support groups will serve a minimum of 30 eligible clients per year.</p>

## **2. Arabic Coffee & Tea Conversation Project – Dr. Heather Laird**

The purpose of this project is to cultivate more participation from the Arabic speaking people in Los Angeles County to LACDMH EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee. Arabic speaking communities' feedback of their mental health needs will be taken in consideration. The project objective is to collaborate and combat the stigma of Mental Health and direct the audience/people to LACDMH contracted facilities for assistance, and or culturally congruent services.

The project aims to create 10-20 interactive workshops. Either 20 unique workshops or 10 unique workshops that repeat 2x based on the topics asked for by the Arabic speaking community. Project Vendor will create measurements to measure outcomes, e.g., pre/posttests and other collected data e.g., ideas from participants for future projects. The vendor will create the curriculum for the workshops, the measurements, sign-in sheets, and any advertisements needed.

## **3. Armenian Festival Project – Sarkis Simonian**

Project Description includes a whole day wellness festival in a prime location within the Armenian community to promote wellness and mental health in a fun and relaxed setting. The festival will consist of mental health seminars, cooking classes for cultural foods, live music, entertainment, dance, poetry, yoga classes, and art therapy classes. All these activities will be available in the morning, afternoon, and late afternoon to give attendees the chance to participate in more than one activity and experience different methods. Stress management resources will also be available throughout the day. Food & refreshments will be provided for the entirety of the event. There will also be tables for resources from LACDMH and LACDMH contracted/ legal entities that provide services for the Armenian Community.

The purpose of this project is to engage the Armenian Community, and familiarize them with wellness & mental health techniques, and at the same time reduce stigma and encourage the community to seek mental health.

The objective of this project is to increase awareness about mental health, reduce stigma, and familiarize consumers with different aspects and modalities of mental health, overall encouraging community members to seek mental health services.

## **4. Armenian Poetry Circles for Mental Health – Avo Soltanian**

This project will engage elderly immigrant Armenians to participate in monthly 90-minute poetry sessions over the period of 12 months. Throughout Armenian history, poetry has played a vital role in assisting Armenians to communicate their emotional struggles and heroism. Poetry has helped the Armenian population to get connected

to each other and inspired them to be resilient. Today, many Armenian immigrant elderly are struggling with depression and anxiety. Through poetry circle sessions the participants will be assisted in discussing mental health issues, and concerns about their current life challenges and how they can face their emotional struggles. These poetry sessions will help them to open-up and discuss mental health issues and de-stigmatize mental illness. In addition, participants will be encouraged to discuss their connection to each other and how to stay connected with their community.

### 5. Russian and Farsi Mental Health Film Project #2 – Mastaneh Moghadam

Project Description is the following. Due to the success of the Russian and Farsi Mental Health Film Project, a second mental health film project is proposed for these communities, with a different mental health topic that will be addressed. The second film project will focus on mental health themes that address parent and adult child relationships. For this project, a feature length script will be written and adapted to include the cultural nuances of each community. The film will be translated and subtitled into Russian and Farsi. A 30-minute discussion with the writer, director, and culturally competent mental health professional will also be recorded, which will include information about mental health issues that the film has addressed and resources. The film will be distributed via YouTube and advertised via local and social media.

The purpose of this project is to provide knowledge and understanding of mental health issues that Russian and Farsi speaking community members often suffer from. This will help facilitate open discussions about different mental health issues, therefore reducing stigma related to mental health and the receiving of mental health services. This will be conducted through an entertaining manner that will keep community members interested and engaged.

The objective of this project is to decrease stigmata associated with mental health, provide psychoeducation around mental and emotional challenges that Russian and Farsi speaking immigrants often face, and to provide awareness around mental health resources that LACDMH offers to these communities.

🚩 EE/ME Liaison, Anna Yaralyan will send the project proposals to EE/ME Subcommittee voting members via email to vote for these projects. All EE/ME Subcommittee members will be notified of the selected projects.

### Future Meetings Times and Dates

❖ Next meeting will be on Wednesday 9/27/2023, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm

**Join Microsoft Teams Meeting**

- (323) 446-6996 United States, Los Angeles (Toll)  
Conference ID: 985 297 792#