

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

**Eastern-European / Middle Eastern (EE/ME) UsCC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
5/1/2024**

2:00PM – 4:00PM via Teleconference

1. **Present: Armine Stepanyan, Rubou Sous, Mitra Shabani, Seta Haig, Mastaneh Moghadam, Sarkis Simonian, Mariam Nahapetyan, Dr. Haydeh Fakhrbadi, Rima Safaryan, Dr. Heather Laird, Avo Soltanian, Stacy Ann Smith, Peyman Malaz, Sara Hill, Yue Hua Xu.**

DMH Admin: Dr. Anna Yaralyan, Dr. Jennifer Alquijay, Mirtala Parada Ward, PM III.

Agenda Items	Comments/Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions
Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone introduced themselves.
Meeting Minutes Review and Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed & approved 3/27/24 EE/ME Subcommittee meeting minutes. Minutes were accepted by subcommittee members. There were no subcommittee member objections.
EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee Retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed logistics for the EE/ME Subcommittee Retreat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retreat Date & Time: June 12, 2024, 11am – 2pm. - There were various suggestions of the Venue and food selections for the retreat and decided on <u>Tarme Mediterranean Grill, 744 S. Glendale Ave. Ste 4, Glendale, CA, 91205-2366.</u> - Mirtala Parada Ward provided information about retreats conducted by other Subcommittees, such Black & African Heritage, and stated that a lot of great Capacity Building Ideas begin from Subcommittee & Community members during these retreats. - Retreat facilitation will be conducted by Rigoberto Rodriguez. He will construct the retreat Agenda and meet with EE/ME Co-Chair Sarkis Simonian & Liaison Anna Yaralyan to finalize & approve it.
EE/ME Subcommittee Capacity	Capacity Building Projects selected for the EE/ME Subcommittee, UsCC FY 2023-2024

**Building
Updates FY
2022 - 2023**

✚ The Arabic Speaking Poetry Night Mental Health Outreach Project – Anna Yaralyan provided updates as Dr. Laird couldn't attend this meeting.

❖ This project involves, a consultant developing and implementing 20 community Poetry Night events. There will be two (2) events a month, for 10 consecutive months. Each event must be at least two (2) hours in duration. Poetry is an important part of the Arabic culture and is traditionally used as a tool to help individuals heal from their mental and emotional problems. The Poetry Night Mental Health Outreach Project will provide a place for Arabic speaking adults and older adults to get together and interact with one another and share their stories.

- Dr. Heather Laird provided updates about this project.
- Vendor is in the process of participant recruitment and identifying venues, times & dates for the Poetry Night Events.
- Vendor attempted around 10 Poetry Night Events but were successful with 5.
- Events have not been that well attended. The community feedback was that due to everything going on now overseas in Middle East, (i.e. Israeli – Palestine War), people don't find time and in general do not want to attend events. Currently Arab Muslim Community is suffering a great deal, they are experiencing a great deal of loss & grief, sadness, anxiety, trauma, etc. People in this community have been affected by the recent events and are concerned of the death toll that keeps rising.
- The Arabic MH Poetry Night Events need more participation. EE/ME Subcommittee members stated that more advertisement can be done of the Arabic Poetry Events for community members to be aware of what is going on.
- Vendor will continue to hold events at different locations, such as universities, schools, different restaurants, and mosques.
- Project estimated end date is August 31st, 2024.

✚ Mental Health Parenting Seminars for the Armenian Community

❖ This project involves a Trainer implementing a parenting seminar targeting Armenian parents and community members. There will be total of 14 parenting seminars. One parenting seminar will be repeated 12 times in person in a period of a year, in different locations and venues throughout Los Angeles County, and 2 times virtually, (via Zoom, Teams, etc.). Seminars will be conducted at public and private schools, dance, sports, and art schools, academic institutions, after school child and parenting programs, churches and other community organizations in the larger Los Angeles County areas that fit the target population.

- Avo Soltanian, MFT, from Anchor Counseling Group a Professional Corporation for Individual, Marriage, And Child Therapy, is the project Vendor.
- Events have not been as well attended as expected.
- The first Armenian Parenting Seminar was given at the Center of Armenian Society of Los Angeles where around 47 people signed up and 20 people attended.
- Advertisements & Flyers were distributed by school staff to parents at 3 different elementary schools but parents did not attend. School officials feel that most parents are busy or new immigrants to USA and have many other life priorities to fulfill, as a result are unable to attend.
- One issue may also be the title of “Parenting,” where many parents feel that attending “Parenting Seminars” might make them seem inadequate or not good enough parents. The suggested title, “Raising Resilient Children” will be more effective.
- Another issue maybe that since Armenian Culture is a collective culture and family good name & honor is important, they are afraid of the stigma and do not want to discuss family issues.
- Vendor completed phase 2 & 3 of this project, this identifying venues for the seminars, speaker/presenter, supporting staff, food & beverage, advertisement on Facebook and completing 2 and more Parenting Seminars.
- Vendor is in the process of submitting supporting documentation and invoice to LACDMH for Phases 2 & 3.
- Vendor continues to contact various LAUSD Schools & Armenian Private schools.
- Overall, there has been positive feedback from community members who attended the seminars. They reported that the material has been educational, helpful, and culturally sensitive. One topic that has been of interest was “Parentification in Armenian families.”
- Vendor reported that in the month of May, they are also planning to have 3 virtual sessions.
- Project estimated end date is 10/16/24.

✚ Sharing Our Stories: Immigrant Journey’s Towards Mental and Emotional Well-being

- ❖ This project targets the Russian and Farsi speaking communities of Los Angeles County at large. It aims to create two coffee table books, one for Russian and another for Farsi speaking communities. The books will consist of short stories gathered from Russian and Farsi speaking immigrants where each person in the community gets the opportunity to share their story of a mental health, emotional, social challenges, and/or crisis that they experienced as an immigrant in United States.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastaneh Moghadam, LCSW from Cross Cultural Expressions Community Counseling Center is the project Vendor. • The stories have been collected from Russian & Farsi speaking Community members. There are 17 stories from the Russian community, and 15 stories from the Farsi Speaking community that are completed. • Stories have been translated from Russian & Farsi to English. • Within the process of gathering the personal stories, mental health professionals assisted with the emotional aspects that came up for individuals when sharing their stories. • Vendor has been working with contributing writers and editors to fine tune the stories. • Vendor has also included an Art Consultant who held art therapy groups. As a result, there are some amazing artworks that the contributing writers have done which will be published alongside their stories in the books. • Project estimated end date is 10/1/2024.
EE/ME Subcommittee Capacity Building Updates FY 2023 - 2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support Group and Mental Health Educational Seminar for Afghan Refugees 2. Arabic Coffee & Tea Conversation Project 3. Armenian Festival Project 4. Armenian Poetry Circles for Mental Health 5. Russian and Farsi Mental Health Film Project #2 <p>Anna Yaralyan reported that all five SOWs are currently completed & pending for supervisor review and approval.</p>
Next Meeting	<p>❖ Next meeting will be on Wednesday 5/29/24, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm.</p>
	<p><u>Join Microsoft Teams Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (323) 446-6996 United States, Los Angeles (Toll) <p>Conference ID: 985 297 792#</p>