

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

**Eastern-European / Middle Eastern (EE/ME) UsCC Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
3/27/2024**

2:00PM – 4:00PM via Teleconference

- 1. Present: Vicke Che, Armine Stepanyan, Rubou Sous, Mitra Shabani, Jamie Walker, Seta Haig, Mastaneh Moghadam, Rima Safaryan, Sarkis Simonian, Mariam Nahapetyan, Avo Soltanian, Riku Matsuda, 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"> <li>Everyone introduced themselves.</li> </ul>
Meeting Minutes Review and Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed &amp; approved <b>2/28/24</b> EE/ME Subcommittee meeting minutes. Minutes were accepted by subcommittee members. There were no subcommittee member objections.</li> </ul>
EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee Retreat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussed logistics for the EE/ME Subcommittee Retreat:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retreat Date &amp; Time: June 12, 2024, 11am – 2pm.</li> <li>There were various suggestions of the Venue and food selections for the retreat and decided on <u>Tarme Mediterranean Grill</u>, 744 S. Glendale Ave. Ste 4, Glendale, CA, 91205-2366.</li> <li>Retreat facilitation will be conducted by Rigoberto Rodriguez.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
New Capacity Building Project ideas	<p><b>EE/ME UsCC Subcommittee members had the following new Capacity Building Project ideas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health Video media &amp; social outreach projects.</li> <li>Trainings for self-care for mental health caregivers.</li> </ul>

**EE/ME  
Subcommittee  
Capacity  
Building  
Updates FY  
2022 - 2023**

**Capacity Building Projects selected for the EE/ME Subcommittee, UsCC FY 2023-2024**

**✚ 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 is the Project Vendor.
- Vendor completed and submitted the first phase of this project.
- Vendor is in the process of participant recruitment and identifying venues, times & dates for the Poetry Night Events.
- Vendor has 7 upcoming events scheduled in April.
- Vendor has had three events so far. The first two event were relatively well attended. However, for the third Poetry Night Event, 10 people confirmed and only one person showed up. This was unsatisfactory as the Vendor prepared food and resources for 10 people.
- The upcoming events will be held at different locations, such as a University, a school, online, at two different restaurants, and a mosque.
- The MH Poetry Night Events need more participation. Fliers can be shared.
- Project estimated end date is August 31<sup>st</sup>, 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.
- Vendor has been contacting various LAUSD Schools & Armenian Private schools. There has been a response from an LAUSD School, and they are interested in conducting the Armenian MH Parenting seminars, however, Armenian Private schools have not been responding to the Vendors emails.
- There has been challenges with community participation to the seminars and there may be several explanations for it. First, there is a significant stigma (amot) within the Armenian community against seeking parenting advice, as it may be perceived as an admission of inadequacy. Second, discussing parenting can be a sensitive topic for any ethnicity, often evoking emotional distress. This is particularly true for Armenians, who may have a history of trauma.
- Certain school representatives propose renaming the seminar from "Parenting from an Armenian Perspective" to "Raising Healthy Children in Armenian Families" or another suitable title. Vendor is open to subcommittee members suggestions for other, more effective titles for the Parenting Seminars.
- Vendor also suggested offering the seminar virtually, which can be more suitable and easier for parents to attend, given their busy schedules. Virtual seminars can also provide a level of privacy and anonymity that may be more comfortable for Armenian parents.
- Vendor has three parenting seminars scheduled for the upcoming month. There is one coming up on 4/11/24, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, at 117 S. Louise St., Glendale, CA 91205.
- 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.
  - 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories have been translated from Russian &amp; Farsi to English.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Vendor has been working with contributing writers and editors to fine tune the stories.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Project estimated end date is 10/1/2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Announcements</b>	<p> <b>LACDMH Service Area 2 Presents the Sixth Annual Armenian Genocide: Transgenerational Effects &amp; Healing Event on Saturday, April 13, 2024, 10AM – 2:30PM, at ACF Beshir Mardirossian Burbank Youth Center, 75 E. Santa Anita Ave., Burbank, CA 91502.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join us for an in-person meeting to learn about the intergenerational retraumatization of Artsakh and Diaspora youth, coping and healing.</li> <li>• If anyone has any questions about this event, please contact Mariam Nahapetyan at <a href="mailto:mnahapetyan@dmh.lacounty.gov">mnahapetyan@dmh.lacounty.gov</a> or Rima Safaryan at <a href="mailto:rsafaryan@dmh.lacounty.gov">rsafaryan@dmh.lacounty.gov</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>EE/ME Subcommittee Capacity Building Updates FY 2023 - 2024</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Support Group and Mental Health Educational Seminar for Afghan Refugees</b></li> <li>2. <b>Arabic Coffee &amp; Tea Conversation Project</b></li> <li>3. <b>Armenian Festival Project</b></li> <li>4. <b>Armenian Poetry Circles for Mental Health</b></li> <li>5. <b>Russian and Farsi Mental Health Film Project #2</b></li> </ol> <p>Anna Yaralyan reported that all five SOWs are currently completed &amp; pending for supervisor review and approval.</p>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<p>❖ <b>Next meeting will be rescheduled from 4/24/24 to Wednesday 5/1/24, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm due to the Armenian Genocide Day Commemoration.</b></p>
	<p><b><u>Join Microsoft Teams Meeting</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (323) 446-6996 United States, Los Angeles (Toll)</li> </ul> <p>Conference ID: 985 297 792#</p>

