

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

December 2024



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



LACDMH Celebrates Grand Openings of 150 Units Across County

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) celebrated the grand opening of two supportive housing complexes in Venice and Torrance. The Journey Apartments in Venice has 40 apartments while the PATH West Carson Villas Apartment Complex in Torrance has 111 units, including one-, two- and three-bedroom options.

Dr. Curley L. Bonds, LACDMH's Chief Medical Officer, spoke alongside L.A. County Third District Supervisor Lindsey Horvath and others at the Dec. 4 event. The project was developed and managed by the Venice Community Housing Corporation and features a plaza and a courtyard for residents.

[Continue reading the coverage on recent grand openings.](#)



Hollywood 2.0 Updates Public & Stakeholders at Open House

LACDMH and Hollywood 4WRD hosted a Hollywood 2.0 open house at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood on Nov. 19 to update stakeholders and the public on the latest news from the five-year pilot project. The event featured remarks from LACDMH Chief Medical Officer Curley L. Bonds, M.D.; Hollywood 4WRD Executive Director Brittney Weissman; and more.

LACDMH and the program's stakeholders celebrated the accomplishments of the 2.0 program, including the 1,608 clients served by the Hollywood Mental Health Cooperative and the 34 clients moved from interim to permanent supportive housing. Karla Bennett, a LACDMH Mental Health Program Manager II at the Hollywood Wellness Center, discussed the status of the community-based program through 2024 and shared what to look out for in the first half of 2025. Next, DMH's Hollywood Mental Health Clinic shared how it is supporting the new vision for Hollywood. The clinic invited a client of theirs to speak, Gabriela, who shared her story as a transgender woman. Speaking clinic staff included Dr. Rebecca Gitlin, Supervising Psychologist; Nvard Simonyan, Psychiatric Social Worker II; Vianney Vazquez, Mental Health Clinical Supervisor; Laura Grello, Mental Health Clinical

Supervisor; and, Vanessa Linares, an Intermediate Typist Clerk.

The program wrapped up with Brian Pelsch from IDEO and Stephanie Holliday from RAND. Pelsch and IDEO are leading the public education campaign for Hollywood 2.0, and he shared the designs that will be posted around Hollywood, starting Jan. 6, 2025. Holliday shared how RAND is evaluating the implementation of the pilot program.



Spotlight on NAMI Urban L.A. and CARE Court Collaboration

CARE Court exemplifies the ongoing advancements in mental health services within Los Angeles County. Funded by the State of California, this program fosters systemic change through partnerships with government agencies and community organizations. Harold Turner, Executive Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Urban Los Angeles, shares insights into his organization's pivotal role in supporting CARE Court participants.

Founded over 40 years ago, NAMI has grown into a nationwide network of 600 chapters dedicated to education and support for families affected by mental illness. In collaboration with CARE Court, NAMI Urban L.A. helps families navigate the legal and mental health systems to create effective recovery plans. Drawing from his personal experience as the father of a child with mental illness and his decades of advocacy, Turner brings invaluable expertise to this initiative. His contributions include serving on the State of California CARE Act Workgroup, the LACDMH Commission, and leading NAMI Urban L.A.

Turner and his team accompany families to court, providing guidance and advocacy to ensure recovery and empowerment for CARE Court participants. LACDMH values the collaboration with Mr. Turner and his organization working together to foster recovery for those living with mental illness.

To contact NAMI Urban L.A., visit namiurbanla.org, call (323) 294-7814, or write: 4305 Degnan Blvd., Suite 104, Los Angeles, CA 90008.



Veteran and Military Family Services (VMFS): Expanding Mental Health Support for Those Who Serve

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) has launched the **Veteran and Military Family Services (VMFS)** program to enhance mental health care for veterans and their families in Los Angeles County. Led by Dr. Rhonda Higgins, alongside Program Managers Anh Tran and Nancy Pelayo, VMFS builds on DMH's veteran-focused legacy with a commitment to comprehensive, accessible support.

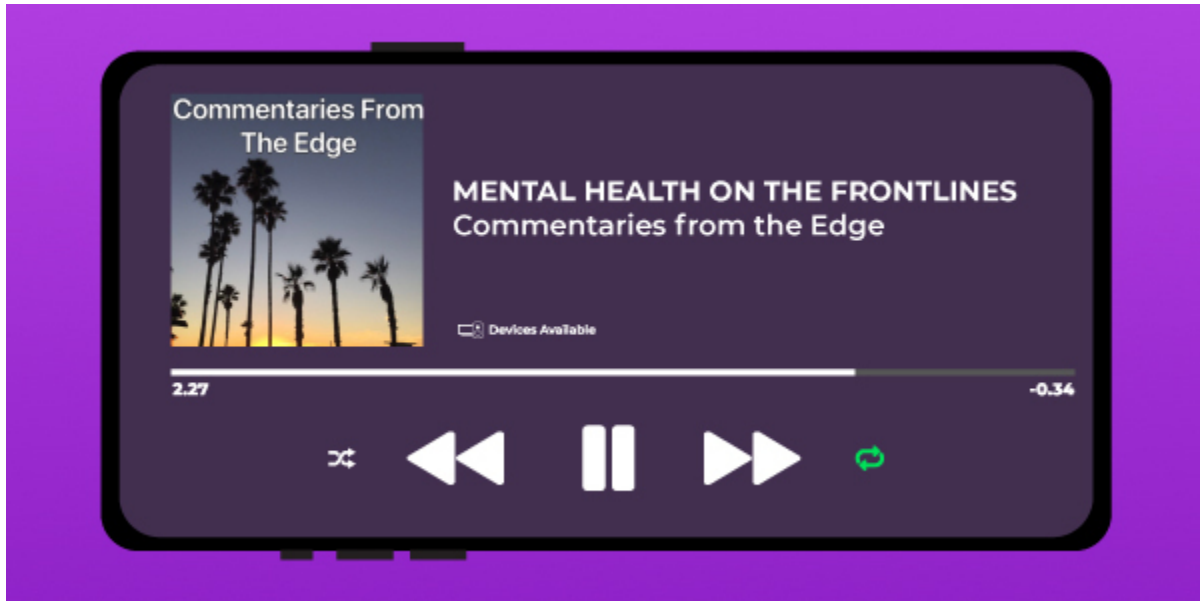
Why VMFS? Veterans often face barriers when seeking mental health care due to cultural stigmas and systemic gaps. "Veterans engage better with peers who understand their unique experiences," explains Dr. Higgins. VMFS's peer-driven approach fosters trust, encouraging veterans to seek support for housing, employment, education, and trauma-related needs.

[Learn more about VMFS.](#)



Our ongoing efforts to promote mental health awareness and assist the most vulnerable among us continue to receive positive attention in the media. In case you missed it, check out some highlights of the excellent stories and representation by our subject matter experts:

- The [New York Times](#) ran a feature about LACDMH's Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) program. In their reporting, the writer and photographer shadowed HOME staff for a week and interviewed several clients across multiple points of their recovery journeys.
- Dr. Wong was quoted in a [Los Angeles Times](#) article about Fountain House Hollywood, a [Hollywood 2.0](#) program that promotes well-being and recovery by engaging clients in community- and purpose-building activities, and is one of few "clubhouse" programs in California.
- Martin Jones, LACDMH's Program Manager overseeing CARE Court programs, was quoted in a [LAist](#) story about the program's progress one year after its launch in L.A. County.
- LACDMH's Service Area 2 Chief Antonio Banuelos was interviewed in a [ABC 7 Los Angeles](#) segment for the opening of My Angel supportive housing development, which will provide 54 units of supportive housing to veterans and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- [LA Downtown News](#) covered the grand opening of Main Street Apartments, a LACDMH-supported supportive housing development that will provide housing and services to families and veterans experiencing homelessness.



Mental Health on the Frontlines Wraps Up **Episode #8: Celebrating Success and Collaboration**

In the concluding episode of our series on CARE Court, we are joined by Dr. Sarah Church, Supervising Psychologist at LACDMH. Dr. Church shares compelling stories of individuals who have begun to rebuild their lives through CARE Court's support. She explains how the program's success hinges on partnerships with various government agencies and community organizations, including Public Health and the Public Defenders' offices.

Dr. Church plays a vital role as a liaison between these collaborators and her team on the frontlines, ensuring individuals receive the care they need to enter a continuum of recovery and hope. She also outlines the process for filing a petition for someone with mental illness, emphasizing the importance of the Presiding Judge's review as the first step in accessing CARE Court services.

[Continue reading about the podcast series.](#)



Farsi & Russian/Ukrainian Book Signing

The Eastern European/Middle Eastern (EE/ME) Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) subcommittee was established under the Mental Health Services Act to improve mental health access and reduce disparities for the EE/ME community in Los Angeles County. The subcommittee collaborates with community partners and consumers to enhance the public mental health system's capacity to provide culturally competent, recovery-oriented services and projects.

For Fiscal Year 2022–2023, the EE/ME Subcommittee voted to implement the Sharing Our Stories Book Project: Immigrant Journeys Towards Mental and Emotional Well-being for Russian and Farsi-speaking communities. LACDMH contracted Mastaneh Moghadam from Cross Cultural Expressions (CCE) to develop and produce two coffee table books—one for the Russian/Ukrainian community and one for the Farsi-speaking community. Each story was translated into English to reach a broader audience.

The books feature short stories from 15–20 Russian and Farsi-speaking immigrants, highlighting their mental health, emotional, and social challenges as immigrants in the U.S. Each book also includes editorials with educational information about mental health issues and available resources. Contributing writers participated in art therapy sessions to

explore their feelings and create artwork for inclusion in the books.

[Continue reading about the book signing.](#)



[Click on image above for *Who to Call* Resources](#)

Let's get social @LACDMH!



Thank you for taking the time to read and engage with this issue of **“Connecting Our Community,”** a bi-monthly online publication focused on the latest information and news from the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. Visit dmh.lacounty.gov for more resources.

We welcome your comments, story ideas, and recommendations at
pio@dmh.lacounty.gov.