

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Access for All UsCC Minutes

August 14, 2024

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees: Jennifer Yates, Maria Elena Arauco, Racquel Decipeda, Maria N. Tan, Lourdes Rabello, Commissioner Carlos Benavides, Junko Nagamatsu, Dr. Erik Escareño, Aaron Icedo, Irma Velasquez, Margaret Mendenhall, Commission Fran Sereseres, Ruth Wen, Daneta Calderon-Vital, Natalia Magana, Blanca Gonzalez, Karla Garcia-Stewart, Cody Hanable, Bethzabet Estrada, Andria McFerson

DMH staff: Jo Ann Freeman, riKu Matsuda, Suyapa Umanzor, Alex Elliott, Kelly Wilkerson, Dr. Jennifer Alquijay, Keianna Crenshaw, Tracy Tisino, Rubou Sous, Martha Ortiz

Microsoft Team: Keith Wells

Interpreters and captioners: Alex (Spanish), Loshia (Spanish), Mara (ASL), Sharon (ASL), Stephanie (CARTS)

Agenda Items	Discussion and Recommendations
Welcome and Disability Etiquette	Co-chair Racquel Decipeda welcomed everyone and reviewed the disability etiquette with support from liaison riKu Matsuda.
Land Acknowledgment	Dr. Alquijay gave the land acknowledgment and shared the link to the LA City/County Native American Indian Commission- https://lanaic.lacounty.gov/
Introductions	Racquel facilitated introductions. Folks introduced themselves with name, pronouns, a physical description and more about what they do or what their organization does.
Approve June Meeting Minutes	Racquel called for motion to approve. Irma Velasquez motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Carlos Benavides. Motion passed with no objection.
Co-Chair Update: Nominations and Elections Discussion	riKu clarified that our next co-chair election will take place after June 30, 2026, when Racquel and Hector end their term as co-chairs. At that time, Racquel will be eligible to run for a second term, and Hector will regain eligibility on 6/30/2028. Andria McFerson asked where the Bylaws apply and Keianna Crenshaw clarified they apply to the DMH stakeholder meetings, including UsCCs. riKu emailed Andria the Bylaws.

Racquel shared her initial apprehension when encouraged to apply for the co-chair position due to her organization's newness and her own uncertainties about her role. However, Racquel's passion to advocate for the visually-impaired community motivated her to take on the position. She expressed her desire to ensure that the visually-impaired community receives equal access to programs and services. Racquel also highlighted her ongoing learning process and support received from her fellow co-chair and DMH staff.

Jennifer Yates shared her experience as a working disabled person and the various services and support they have received over the years. She expressed a desire to contribute and help others within the UsCC Group and sought ideas on how to do so effectively. Racquel suggested that Jennifer could share the resources and information with riKu or co-chairs, which could then be shared with the entire committee.

Dr. Alquijay praised Racquel for being amazing and doing a wonderful job increasing awareness to the blind and low-vision community and Hearts for Sight. She thanked Racquel for her willingness to step in and take a risk because she is an excellent addition to Access for All. Keianna shared similar praise for Racquel's leadership.

Racquel shared that it took about a month to consider and discuss with her co-founder, Joseph, before deciding to advocate for the blind and visually impaired community. She wants to help other persons with disabilities and share the collective needs with DMH. Her goal is to raise awareness about the accessibility of documents and the need for electronic formats to ensure equitable participation.

Andria expressed appreciation for the meaningful comments made by Racquel concerning the importance of making communication and information accessible to everyone, especially for people with disabilities. She highlighted the significance of adhering to disability rights and the ADA. Andria spoke on the potential impact of overlooking these rights, which can lead to disparities. Andria emphasized the importance of Racquel's presence and efforts in creating accessibility and expressed gratitude.

riKu closed the discussion inviting folks to share one word to describe their leadership style. Words shared: fun, transparent, catalyst, motivational, collaborative

DMH Update	<p>Alex Elliott from the ADA unit provided several updates and resources. He discussed his involvement in Disability Pride Month events, including presentations and meetings with county partners. Alex also highlighted the U.S. Access Board's listening sessions on AI accessibility and encouraged providing feedback by the August 31st deadline. Additionally, he shared information about creating accessible documents and trainings offered by the Office of Access and Functional Needs. Finally, Alex mentioned his participation in a session with LA Metro's accessibility advisory committee regarding the Transit Watch app's accessibility for people with disabilities.</p> <p>riKu shared the 211 LA presentation will be moved to the September 11th meeting.</p> <p>Dr. Alquijay provided updates on the budget and upcoming capacity building project solicitations. She mentioned the remaining projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DISABILITY CULTURE COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECT• LEADERSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES• EXPANDING MENTAL WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH BLINDNESS OR LOW VISION• MENTAL WELLNESS ART SERIES FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES <p>Dr. Alquijay said, "The good news is, Mirtala Parada Ward, who is our boss was able to really advocate for us strongly to be able to get the full budget amount for this fiscal year. Every UsCC does have \$350,000 for projects."</p> <p>Dr. Alquijay concluded with changes to the meeting procedures, including the implementation of a timer to ensure equal participation. Dr. Alquijay emphasized the importance of attendance for voting eligibility, requiring at least 50% attendance over the last 6 months to be eligible to vote.</p>
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	<p>Moving forward, the goal is to initiate brainstorming for new projects early in the year, with project proposals finalized by May to ensure readiness for implementation in July. There was consideration of using previous proposals to save time, creating new ones, or a combination of both for this year. riKu expressed his willingness to work on project ideas and proposals throughout the year. Margaret Mendenhall asked a question that prompted Dr. Alquijay to share the bidding process for the projects is handled by the Internal Services Department to ensure fairness and lack of bias. Typically, bidders are given 3-4 weeks to submit their bids, but potentially more time is available. The department aims to have the bidding process completed within a month, which includes the time for solicitation and evaluating whether bidders meet minimum requirements.</p>
Announcements	<p>Racquel shared about CalABLE webinar and will forward info to riKu to email to everyone. Commission Sereseres said, "My word for everyone is say hello to your neighbor and a smile. You'd be surprised how much joy you give a person that's just walking by you and down in the dumps that doesn't feel that nobody understands them or even knows that they're existing. But by smiling, you're saying good morning or hello. It makes a lot of difference." Jennifer Y. shared about the Medicare HMO Advantage plan. Health Promoter Program in LA provides a categorized list of resources such as food, housing, healthcare, and legal assistance based on your zip code. Once you input your zip code, it offers resources from organizations in your area along with their contact details. This program is aimed at giving back to the community and is accessible through the LA Care Health Promoter link. Other resources shared: Miracle Project.org and We Link Highspeed Internet.</p>
Labor Acknowledgment	<p>Racquel Decipeda gave the labor acknowledgement.</p>
Closing	<p>Racquel closed the meeting and thanked all for attending and supporting the meeting.</p>