



**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)  
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
August 1, 2024 10am-12pm**

## **Welcome**

### **Introductions/Check-In**

**Co-Chairs:** Romalis Taylor and Queen Nina Womack

**Attendees:** Alica Forneret, Andria McFerson, Anna Yaralyan, Blanca E. Watson, Chell'e Jones, Dewayne Harvey, Donnise Vonner, Dr. Lisa Pion-Berlin, Erica Melbourne, Gregory Parker, Jamie Walker, Joyce Sales, Juanita Randle, Romalis Taylor, Senait Admassu, Sharae Jones, Sonita Moss, Tanisha Grant, Tatiana Turner, Virginia Mitchell, Wendy Cabil

**DMH Admin:** Dr. Anna Yaralyan, Dr. Chiyah Lawrence, Dr. Jennifer Alquijay

### **Approval of Minutes**

- Motion to approve 6/6/24 minutes: Senait Admassu
- Seconded: Queen Nina Womack
- BAH UsCC Subcommittee approved June 2024 meeting minutes

### **DMH Updates**

Dr. Jennifer Alquijay provided the following DMH Updates:

- Mirtala Parada Ward was able to negotiate full funding for UsCC subcommittees; we will have the full \$350,000 budget for the fiscal year.
- Three projects were put on hold due to budget challenges experience in April/May and are now ready to be submitted for solicitation.
- Dr. Jennifer Alquijay will be writing a proposal and Statement of Work for a BAH UsCC outreach and engagement project.
- BAH UsCC Liaison will let the group know when solicitations are out for bidding and deadline. The solicitation process is governed by the Internal Services Department.

### **Welcome New BAH UsCC Liaison**

- Dr. Chiyah Lawrence was introduced. She shared her background in community mental health and advocacy in LA County and her excitement to support the BAH UsCC.
- Romalis Taylor and Queen Nina welcomed Dr. Lawrence and Thanks Dr. Anna Yaralyan for her support and guidance in the interim.

### **MHSA Updates/New UsCC Bylaws and Q & A**

Jamie Walker gave a presentation the following changes happening in MHSA:

- Community Planning Teams (CPT) include SALTs and UsCCs. If anyone would like to know who their SALT liaison is, they can get that information directly from their UsCC liaison.
- Co-Chair role/expectations include: attend the monthly co-chair and leadership meetings; assist in establishing a meeting agenda; facilitate subcommittee meetings; attend monthly mental health commission meetings and bi-monthly in-person CPT meetings; attend bi-annual co-chair orientation meetings.
- Co-chairs are here to represent the interest of the larger group and they serve an advisory role for DMH providing feedback for member represented groups during the DMH planning process. It is important that DMH has feedback from the community and that feedback is what

is guiding the process and how we spend the MHSA and BAH UsCC dollars. Nothing about us, without us.

- Signing in and attendance is a challenge on Zoom. Suggestions: say good morning in the chat so that names are recorded for attendance purposes; link in chat to click and sign in; stipends
- Must be a CAF member to receive stipends. To become CAF member must attend the CAF train asking and fill out an application. Next CAF training is in December.
- Code of conduct was reviewed. Two-minute time limit per topic to be implemented in the near future. Code of conduct applies to every individual participating and attending stakeholder meetings. Please email [mhsaadmin@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:mhsaadmin@dmh.lacounty.gov) if concerned or uncomfortable with another participant's behavior, including co-chairs. There will be no retaliation. Code of conduct needs to be signed by subcommittee members and returned.

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## Break

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### FY 2024-2026 Co-Chair Election

- Dr. Jennifer Alquijay discussed the 2024 to 2026 BAH cochair election process. MHSA has adjusted some of the bylaws to allow for improved voting eligibility: attend 50 percent out of the last six meetings/over the course of six months. Three out of the last six means you are eligible to vote.
- This is not an official election and I want to state who wants to run for a cochair position are welcome (excluding LACDMH employees). Co-chair terms are two years.
- Romalis Taylor opened floor to others interested in running for cochair and shared his desire to continue advocating for the community as co-chair. BAH UsCC liaison will send email informing group about the cochair election and if they are interested, they can send an email response back so that voting can take place in the next two weeks.

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### Alzheimer's in the Black Community

Sonita Moss gave presentation on Alzheimer's in the black community, the ways Black folk are left out when talking about research and community engagement, the ways research can be less exploitive of black communities, and how The Deters Lab is hoping to be a part of the change.

- The Deters Lab is a neuroscience research group at UCLA and focus on understanding racial disparities and why is it that black folks are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's and dementia.
- Dementia is not one thing it is an umbrella term that describes symptom that is associated with having difficulty thinking and behavior. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia, but Alzheimer's and dementia are not the same.
- Research is so important it helps to define answers about dementia or how to mitigate it. Diversity is important in research and not just black folks but people of all racial groups and including people of multiracial heritage of which that is only growing in the United States.
- Health equity should be the long-term goal. It is the idea that focus on the overall health of the community. We must value what the community has rather than seeing a community as lacking.
- The Deters Lab is going to launch a health fair in 2025 where we are giving back to the community. The Deters Lab wants to partner with local organizations to give out this information so that we are ensuring that it is a collaboration and a partnership ask and not extractive and we want to create a community advisory board filled with stakeholders and all kinds of people from the black LA community who care about dementia and Alzheimer's and help them as they build out their research and our aging cohort.

- Dr. Deter will give a more in-depth presentation on Alzheimer's and dementia risk factors in the black community at a future meeting.

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### **Community Engagement/Event Announcements**

Queen Nina Womack shared community engagement information and event announcements

- BAH UsCC retreat – discussed the different projects that is we want to have BAH embark on including capacity building projects and outreach & engagement.
- August 2024 observances. The purpose of observances is to connect people to their culture, their history and society. It is important that we as black people have the observances and ancestors and honor ourselves for the resilience that we are.
  - August 9<sup>th</sup> - International Day of the World's Indigenous People; observed every year by the United Nations to protect the right of the globe's indigenous population.
  - August 23<sup>rd</sup> - International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Abolition
  - August 31<sup>st</sup> - International Day of People of African descent; this is a worldwide celebration to recognize the contributions and achievements of people of African descent
- As we do not have the budget in place to do one or more of these observance events in August, asked to remember ask and observe it in our own personal households.

**Upcoming Meeting: September 5, 2024 (10:00am – 12:00pm)**

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

323-776-6996 Conference ID: 720 694 564#

For more information about the BAH UsCC, please see its website:  
<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/black-african-heritage-uscc/>