

**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
November 7, 2024 10am-12pm**

WELCOME

Land Acknowledgement

Introductions/Check-In

Co-Chairs: Romalis Taylor and Queen Nina Womack

Attendees: Blanca E. Watson, Brenda Ingram, Brian McCullen, Bruce Wheatley, Candace Walker, Candice Wion, Carlton Roberts, Cedric White, Chell'e Jones, Cheryl Branch, Erica Melbourne, David Piller, Gregory Parker, Irene Ratliff, Jasmond Nelson, Jennifer Yates, Jordan Thomas, Joseph, Joy Ellington, Joyce Sales, Keith Coleman, Kristen Pannell, Lanelle Laws, Lauren Hllum, Milkah White, Mona Okojie, Pharoah Mitchell, Sade Richardson, S.corra Thimas, Senait Admassu, Stephanie, Tamar Smith, Virginia Mitchell, Wendy Cabil

DMH Admin: Dr. Chiyah A. Lawrence, Dr. Darlesh K. Horn, Dr. Evelyn Espinoza, Jamie Walker, Dr. Jennifer Alquijay, Mirtala Parada Ward, riKu Matsuda, Yailin Noreaga

Approval of Minutes

- The October 2024 meeting minutes were approved.
 - Motion by Andrea McPherson to approve minutes and seconded by Wendy Cabil
 - BAH UsCC Subcommittee approved October 2024 meeting minutes
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DMH Updates

Dr Jennifer Alquijay provided the following DMH Updates:

- Voting eligibility has changed. The majority of co-chairs voted for attending 5 out of the last 9 meetings to be eligible to vote.
- DMH is developing and sponsoring community based cultural events in the Spring. UsCC liaisons will send surveys to get feedback and input into the kinds of themes and things Uscc subcommittee members would like to see. There will also be workshops that DMH would like input on regarding workshops that would be important to have.
- The ARDI division has changed its name to ARISE (AntiRacism, Inclusion, Solidarity, and Equity). The main reason for this change is the confusion in the county due to there being a DMH ARDI division and the CEO ARDI division.
- Question: has a vendor been awarded the Wellness Outreach Project that will involve working with the BAH UsCC subcommittee around community outreach? The project has not been awarded; Dr. Alquijay will talk with the budget lead to get an update on the status. Dr. Alquijay suggested the subcommittee have a tentative plan, ideas and direction so that the subcommittee is ready to go as soon as the project is awarded. Dr. Chiyah will inform the subcommittee when projects are awarded.

CCC Stakeholder Newsletter

- Christina Myers from Idea Hall provided an update on the CCC Stakeholder Newsletter. This is a relaunch of the newsletter that people are familiar with. The newsletter will be developed in collaboration with stakeholder groups, CalMESA administration and the Public Information Office.

- There will be regular calls for submissions. They are hoping to receive contributions from everyone throughout the DMH community.
- Any contributions that are selected will receive a \$50 stipend. Content can be submitted in English and will be translated to any other languages upon request/on a case-by-case basis.
- Question: Is the newsletter funded by DMH for UsCC capacity building/are we able to send information about DMH funded projects? The newsletters will have different sections; if there's a project that you want to alert the community, this is an opportunity for them and we would welcome submissions -- announcements about those.
 - Per DMH: announcements about capacity building projects will have to be limited. The newsletter can be a place to advertise things the community might be interested in, creative and innovative things the community may be interested in.
- Question: will the newsletter be accessible? The intention is to make this a creative space and to make it extremely assessable. It will be available in multiple formats and keeping in mind, people who may have impaired vision or varying levels of ability to read in English or any other language.
- Quarterly newsletter. A clear call for submissions will be made. The first call for submissions will be January 10, and then three weeks for people to submit their content.
- Suggestion: move forward in a way of healing to acknowledge those who were the initial newsletter contributors.

Life Links

- The bid has come back for those who have submitted bids in response to the solicitation process for the Life Link books. Three out of nine bidders that meet the minimum requirements.
- Looking for a cultural broker consultant that will work to make sure the resources that are in the book are friendly and welcoming and equipped to serve the Black and African heritage community. Two out of five bidders are able to be considered.
- There will be hard copies and an electronic version of the Life Links books.

Voting Requirements

- Voting eligibility is determined by monthly subcommittee meeting attendance: must attend 5 out of 9 meetings to be eligible to vote.
 - Currently, five BAH UsCC Subcommittee members are eligible to vote.
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Capacity Building Project Proposals 25-26

Prevention Works for Communities (PW4C) - African Coalition for Public Health

- Senait Admassu shared an update on this CBP
- The Prevention Works 4 Communities (PW-4-C) project has two principle tasks. The first task is to complete a culturally sensitive community survey pertaining to the mental health needs of the Pan-African communities, such as the Caribbean, Haitian, and other Black immigrant communities in Los Angeles County. The second task is to promote the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's services to Pan-African immigrants using culturally relevant outreach strategies. The goal is for this capacity-building project to inform the Department of Mental Health on culturally appropriate mental health prevention strategies that need to be implemented for future programming that will ensure short-term and long-term results when servicing Pan-African community members and immigrants.

reFRESH! (My Brother's Keeper) – The AMAAD Institute

- Lanelle Laws provided an update on this CBP
My Brothers' Keeper Training and Mentoring Academy aims to provide training and mentoring to formerly incarcerated Black and African adults, with the ultimate goal of preparing them to become Community Facilitators (CFs). Through the program, they will learn to share their experiences and history of trauma, explore employment and vocational opportunities, and focus on their health to improve personal and family relationships. By building their abilities and life skills, the program aims to reduce recidivism and empower them to become CFs. In their role as CFs, they will mentor, engage, educate, and support other formerly incarcerated Black adults and their families.

Queen's Update on the Motherland

BAH UsCC Co-Chair, Queen Nina Womack, shared about her recent travels to Nigeria.

- Pan African is when you are standing in solidarity with people of African descent because we share the same heritage, which is Africa.
- Queen Nina is an event organizer, filmmaker and has used her skills to promote African culture, African-American culture, Haitian culture, again Pan Africa, people of African descent. She is concerned about the whole well-being of people of African descent. She received a certificate as a mental health specialist, started attending meetings and became a cochair of the subcommittee because of her passion for wellness. She feels as though she represents African-Americans as well as Africans.
- Provided education around Nigeria and the community and data re: transatlantic slave trade and shared her personal experience in Nigeria including being made a chief as a gesture by the king to let African Americans know that we are welcome to return home.

Community Engagement

- Concerns re: budgetary impact of Prop 1
 - Stakeholders are invited to participate in the community planning team meetings for the mental health commission and the community planning team meetings
 - Questions re: budget impact of Prop 1 and transition from MHSA to BHSA will likely be answered at the public information sessions. Dr. Lawrence will send information re: BHSA webinars to subcommittee
 - It is Dr. Alquijay's understanding that the county does see the UsCCs as important and they want to prioritize making sure that budget stays in place as much possible

Community Events and Announcements

Labor Acknowledgment

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

For more information about the BAH UsCC, please see its website:

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/black-african-heritage-uscc/>