

**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2025 10am-12pm**

WELCOME

Land Acknowledgement

Introductions/Check-In

Co-Chairs: Romalis Taylor and Queen Nina Womack

Attendees: Akili Warren, Blanca E. Watson, Brenda Ingram, Caitlin Bostwick, Candace Walker, Chell'e Jones, Chiyah Lawrence, Dewayne Hervey, Donald Grant, Donnise Vonner, Erica Melbourne, Farrah Mirzaee, Franklin Romero, Gay Cordova, Gregory Parker, Henna An, Irene Ratliff, Jasmine Harris, Jennifer Yates, Jonnie Muckelroy, Jordan Thomas, Joshua Charles, Joyce Sales, Juanita Randle, Kalila Houston, Kevin Collins, Kirsten Pannell, Latrica Cooper, Nakeya Fields, Nelly Arias, Queen Nina Womack, Renett Clough, Rhoda Addam, riKu Matsuda, Romalis Taylor, Sade Richardson, Tatiana Turner, Wendy Cabil

DMH Admin: Dr. Anna Yaralyan, Dr. Chiyah A. Lawrence, Dr. Darlesh K. Horn, Dr. Evelyn Espinoza, Jamie Walker, Mirtala Parada Ward, riKu Matsuda, Dr. Tsu Yen Chen, Yailin Noreaga

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Nakeya Fields to approve minutes and seconded by Dewayne Harvey
- BAH UsCC Subcommittee approved November 2024 meeting minutes

DMH Updates

Mirtala Parada Ward provided the following DMH Updates:

- DMH is partnering with the City of Inglewood for the Black History Celebration on Saturday, February 22. BAH UsCC will have a table at the event to recruit subcommittee members. Dr. Lawrence will be sending a flyer with details.
- DMH continues to prepare for BHSA, the new behavioral health plan implementation. All BAH UsCC subcommittee members are encouraged to attend the Community Planning Team (CPT) meeting at St. Anne's Conference Center on February 11 from 9:30am – 12:30pm. Part of the meeting will include how BHSA will impact our service delivery. Participation in CPT meetings can inform advocacy, especially during this time of uncertainty with many of our underserved groups feeling under attack.
- Queen Nina Womack and Romalis Taylor's co-chair terms are coming to an end this summer. Anyone who is interested in being BAH UsCC Co-Chair is encouraged to start think about nominations. Elections will be held in May.
 - The co-chair commitment includes facilitating the monthly subcommittee meeting, attending a leadership meeting every other month (1 ½ - 2hrs) via Teams, attending the in-person DMH CPT meeting monthly at St. Anne's Conference Center (breakfast is laserved, parking is free), and attending a virtual CPT meeting monthly.
 - There is a stipend attached that is intended to cover things like parking and travel expenses.
- All UsCC Capacity Building Projects must be completed by June 30, 2025. Any vendors who are behind on their deliverable schedule will be receiving an email from Elaine Waldman, the

budget lead. Statements of Work for 2025-2026 Capacity Building Projects will be ready for bid on July 1, 2025. We want everyone to be prepared if they want to bid on projects when they are out for solicitation.

- Dr. Lawrence provided updates on current projects: The BAH SA1 Homeless project will not be moving forward due to it being out or solicitation multiple times and the vendor that was recently awarded the project being unable to continue with it. The Student Leadership Training project has been awarded however, there were some concerns that Procurement is addressing so that the project can begin. The Disability Awareness and Sensitivity Workshops project was awarded last week and an initial vendor meeting has been scheduled. The Wellness Outreach project was awarded to Athletic Mentoring Partnership (AMP) and the initial vendor meeting has taken place. Akili Warren of AMP is present in today's meeting.
- Rhoda Adam provided feedback re: the vendor application process: very hard, time consuming, and required purchasing insurance the organization did not need. The process was very discouraging. Mirtala Parada Ward acknowledged the difficulties vendors have with the application process. There is a training session that was facilitated by Elaine Waldma that Dr. Lawrence can share with the committee.
- Dr. Brenda Ingram provided feedback re: the training session: although it was a fabulous presentation, something like the incubator program the department used to have is needed as vendors need more than a 3 hour training but mentorship along the way and periodic follow-up. Mirtala Parada Ward shared that the department still has the incubator program through MHSA (at least until June 30, 2025) and that may UsCC vendors apply but not all are accepted.
 - Dr. Ingram noted that it might behoove us to consider that there is a systemic issue if the department is missing a whole group of people who don't know how to jump through the hoops of government funding.

Life Links

Jamie Walker provided an update on the MHSA Life Links project:

- We have selected a vendor. We've started talking with them about the expectations (i.e., deliverables, timelines, etc.) We are still working out the details but the selection of vendor is a tremendous one. We think they're going to bring something meaningful about with this project.
- The vendor will come to the March BAH UsCC meeting to share what they are going to do with the project and give us an update on everything they have planned for Life Links.

Break – Moment of Remembrance

- Queen Nina Womack shared a picture of the original dungeon door from the Cape Coast castle from the 1700s. Our ancestors walked through this door and other similar doors throughout the West Coast of Africa where enslaved Africans were sent on the ships before they were exported to the Americas.
- BAH UsCC was encouraged to take a moment to recognize it, to look at it, to face it because this is our past. Queen Nina said a brief prayer:
That we just honor the struggles and the strength and the resilience of those who came before us, those who fought for our freedom. No matter what we're going through, no matter we see in the government and hear that may shake it up if we're going backwards we aren't. We are moving forward. It's from acknowledging our past that we are able to move forward in liberation and freedom. I send positive energy and prayers

to everyone on this call and every person of African descent that our generational trauma is healed that we are whole. That we are well and we are positive and we can progress socially economically. That our health is in order. We are whole beings. Let us remember. Let us remember our past. The 2 million Africans that died on those voyages trying to being taken to this country. Let's include them as well. Yes. Amen.

Elder Suicide Prevention

Franklin Romero and Karon Austin from the LACDMH Prevention and Outcomes Division shared a training presentation on Elder Suicide Prevention. The presentation and resources will be provided via email.

Community Engagement

Community Events and Announcements

Black History Month Celebration – Saturday, February 22, 2025. Downtown Inglewood

Labor Acknowledgment

Upcoming Meeting: April 3, 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/>