

**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
April 3, 2025 10am-12pm**

WELCOME

Land Acknowledgement

Introductions/Check-In

Co-Chairs: Romalis Taylor and Queen Nina Womack

Attendees: Afimaye Galarraga, Akili Warren, Blanca E. Watson, Catherine Clay, Charline Nunez, Crystal Adams, Danielle Dzioba (captioner), David Piller, Dewayne Hervey, Erica Melbourne, Erica Robinson, Geraldine White, Gregory Parker, Irene Ratliff, Joy Ellington, Joyce Sales, Juanita Randle, Kalila Houston, Kevin Collins, Kinyah Robbins-Harrod, Kirsten Pannell, Lelani Johnson, M.C. Harris, Monalisa Okojie, Nina M. Spain, Olin Bishop, Pauline Giscomber, Sade Richardson, Senait Admassu, Tadios Belay

DMH Admin: Dr. Chiyah A. Lawrence, Dr. Evelyn Espinoza, Jamie Walker, Dr. Jennifer Alquijay, riKu Matsuda

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Senait Admassu to approve minutes and seconded by Romalis Taylor
 - BAH UsCC Subcommittee approved April 2025 meeting minutes
-

DMH Updates

Dr. Jennifer Alquijay provided the following DMH Updates:

- Annual Hate Based Incident Report
 - Anti-Black racism incidents went up 12% and anti-Latino incidents went up 15%. The biggest increase in hate based incidents was in Middle Eastern incidents which went up by 150%. Anti-religious hate based incidents went up 131% and anti-transgender incidents increased by 24%. Anti-female incidents increased by 44% Disability related incidents increased from three incidents to 11 by 200%.
 - The Hate Based Incident report is being shared in response to the board motion that talks about addressing hate based incidents and the UsCC unit is committed to working toward reducing hate based incidents.
 - Dr. Ingram inquired around whether or not the data in the report was obtained via survey or hate crime reporting. Dr. Alquijay clarified that the incidents that she reported on do not rise to the level of hate crimes as hate incidents are non criminal acts motivated by prejudice or bias. There is data around hate crimes elsewhere in the report.
 - Dr. Ingram inquired about any strategies for remediation that are in place for people who experience hate based incidents – what are we doing for folks? Are there things that DMH does specifically for people who report hate incidents? ? Is there a methodology or strategy to address that in terms of getting some remediation for folks?
 - in the past, there was a chat line for people who have experienced hate crimes or hate incidences – a dedicated line where people could get mental health support. She strongly recommended that something like this be

revisited; possibly as a part of the existing warm line where people are trained to help people who are experiencing hate based incidents.

- There is existing support around hate crimes. As many of these incidents do not rise to the level of a hate crime, there should be somewhere to go to get specialized assistance in helping with the emotional distress related to hate or race based trauma.
 - Dr. Alquijay suggested this be considered for a CBP proposal and stated that she will bring it up to the DMH Staff Advisory Council as well as managers. Romalis Taylor asked that Dr. Alquijay report back on Dr. Ingram's recommendation at the next BAH UsCC meeting.
- As we transition to BHSA, upcoming UsCC elections are important as the UsCC co-chairs represent the subcommittee at BHSA community planning team (CPT) meetings. All UsCC members are encouraged to attend CPT meetings.
- Jamie Walker provided the following BHSA update:
 - We are encouraging members of all stakeholder groups to consider attending BHSA planning meetings so that stakeholders have a voice as we transition to the new process. BAH has been very well-represented thus far, as Romalis Taylor attends the planning meetings.
 - BAH Co-Chair elections are coming up. Voting eligible members can be nominated for co-chair. Dr. Lawrence shared that we only have one candidate so far. If anyone is interested in nominating themselves or someone else for the open candidate slot, they should contact Dr. Lawrence.
 - Co-Chairs will have to attend BHSA planning meetings. There will be a co-chair training so new co-chairs will not have figure things out on their own. We will support you.
 - Dr. Ingram provided an update on Life Links. The UMOJA Project team has been attending SALT Meetings (the new directory will focus on service areas 1, 2, 6 and 8 vs. the 2012 Life Links directory focused on SPA6), Faith-Based and Healthy Neighborhood meetings to recruit people for two focus groups per service area during the month of April. The team has also been outreaching to various service providers with a service provider survey. The team hopes to have received most of the completed surveys by the month of May and will be able to begin putting the directory together.
 - Dr. Ingram requested more input from BAH UsCC members as they have received less than 10 surveys from BAH UsCC subcommittee members. Dr. Lawrence will send the survey link to the BAH UsCC distribution list.

BAH Outreach Update

Queen Nina Womack provided the following update re: BAH Outreach:

- At the BAH UsCC retreat, subcommittee members discussed outreach events that we would like to do (e.g., pass out flyers, put on events, etc.). Unfortunately, we were not able to secure a budget for outreach and there consequently hasn't been that much outreach done.
 - Queen Nina has passed out flyers at her food pantry and wellness organization and has hosted an event where she also passed out flyers but has been severely limited due to the lack of funding for BAH specific outreach.

BAH Brochures

- The new BAH brochures have been approved and printed. As we want everyone to be able to distribute them at any events you may have, please send the appropriate mailing address to BAHUsCC@dmh.lacounty.gov so that Dr. Lawrence can provide brochures. Note: as Doctor Wong is asking that we limit how much we print; to save resources, I'll send a few brochures to all who Dr. Lawrence will send a small number of brochures as well as the PDF version that is downloadable and fillable so that you can all have information about BAH to disseminate.

Capacity Building Project Updates

Olina Bishop provided an update on the Student Wellness Leadership Training Program:

- There was a wonderful response to the project. The students were lovely and very attentive. Parents were also very receptive and responsive.
- The training project was a 12-hour course that was done in two six-hour sessions. The last two sessions of the training project were held last Saturday.
- Students will be conducting their presentations in April. Students chose to hold their presentations at local parks in their service area. Examples of the presentations students will be doing include using stress balls to meditate, alleviate, and decompress; an outdoor breathing retreat; nourish and flourish (personal connection to healthy foods); etc.
- The students will have their final monthly meeting on April 26.

Akili Warren provided an update on the Wellness Outreach Project for Black and African Communities

- Athletic Mentorship Partners (AMP) is a community based organization prioritizing behavioral health, drug abuse prevention, mental health, wellness, lifestyle and family bonds through mentorships, athletic programs and partner wellness services. The structure of the wellness outreach events will include mental health seminars and physical activity.
- The first event is scheduled for Sat., April 26 from 11:00AM to 3:00PM.
 - The event will include mental health discussions, coping mechanisms, breaking the stigma, resources rental, intergenerational trauma, mental health, wellness tips activities, meditation, yoga art networking workshops.
 - Marketing outreach has included social media campaigns, collaborations, community outreach, and e-mail campaigns. Dr. Lawrence has shared the flyer with the BAH UsCC.
- The remaining two events will likely include beach flag football as the physical activity.
- Dr. Lawrence encouraged Akili to share the topics he outlined in the curriculum he submitted for the project. The mental health topics will include coping mechanisms for young adults; suicide prevention and awareness; and life, with or without sports *and* the importance of nutrition for mental health cooking on a budget and managing anxiety and depression.
- Dr. Lawrence acknowledged that this CBP is different from that which was discussed at the BAH retreat but is in line with the Statement of Work (SOW) that vendors received during the solicitation process. According to the SOW, the vendor was to facilitate three mental health Wellness days where there would be Two seminars and other mental health related activities such as yoga, cooking, class, dance, etc.

Break

African Diaspora: The 6th Region

Queen Nina Womack gave a presentation on the African Diaspora: The 6th Region.

- She shared about the impact of being born and raised in South Los Angeles and the negative images and portrayals of people of African descent – African as well as African Americans. It was not until an African American history class in college that she learned the truth about Africa, the transatlantic slave trade, etc. Since then, she has furthered her studies in that subject matter and using her skills in in event producing event management, and her organization Lets Be Whole to promote African culture so we can learn.
- People of African descent are considered the 6th region of the African diaspora. We can call ourselves the 6th region or we can call ourselves the African diaspora. The African Union defines us as the 6th region. The African Union is a continental organization consisting of 55 African countries, and they're established to promote unity, economic development and political stability across Africa.
 - This designation acknowledges people of African descent living outside of the continent as an integral part of Africa's development and future; this includes us in North America, people of African descent in Brazil, South America, Colombia, Europe, etc.
 - The AU encourages us to participate in numerous ways, such as through investment, through trade, through knowledge sharing and advocacy for Africa, which is our heritage.
- The United Nations Permanent Forum for People of African Descent is a consultative platform aimed at enhancing the safety quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. Its purpose is to advise the Human Rights Council on alignment with the international. National Decade for People of African descent to address issues like racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, sexism and the need for reparations.
- The African Diaspora 6th region has a major role in shaping African Union and United Nations policies, securing investments and advocating for African descendant rights. Our involvement in policies, trade development, education, and cultural diplomacy can influence the UN and the US.
- If you have any questions or want to get more involved email Queen Nina at nina@letsbewhole.com.

Community Events and Announcements

- There is an in-person BAH planning meeting this upcoming Tuesday at St. Anne's. There will be a virtual meeting on Friday, April 25.
- BAH Co-Chair elections in May
- CBP proposals have been finalized: Black Led Organizational Leadership, Black Youth Empowerment Summit, Bridging the Gap Between Foster Youth and Systems. DMH will be creating the statements of work for them this spring and then they will be out for solicitation after July 1st.
- Various community events will be emailed to the BAH UsCC distribution list.

Community Engagement

Labor Acknowledgment

Upcoming Meeting: May 1, 2025 (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/>