



**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)  
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
September 4, 2025 10am-12pm**

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## **WELCOME**

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

**Co-Chairs:** Romalis Taylor and Sade Richardson

**Attendees:** Afimaye Galarraga, April Bernabe, Blanca E. Watson, Dr. Brenda Ingram, Chell'e Jones, Crystal Whiteaker, Gina To'omalatai, Gregory Parker, Irene Ratliff, Jane D'Anna, Jennifer Coria, Jibril Hussen, Jonnie Muckelroy, Joseph Lang (captioner) Joyce Sales, Dr. Karen S. Gunn, Nakeya Fields, Miss Nancy Steward, Nfagie Koroma, Olina Bishop, Queen Nina Womack, Pharoah Mitchell, Reba Stevens, Rhoda Addam, Romalis Taylor, Sade Richardson, Senait Admassu, Shelley Woods, Sophia Wrench, Wendy Cabil

**DMH Admin and Staff:** Dr. Anna Yaralyan, Dr. Carla Jaramillo, Dr. Chiyah Lawrence, Dr. Erica Melbourne, Dr. Evelyn Espinoza, Jamie Walker, Mirtala Parada Ward, riKu Matsuda,

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### **Land Acknowledgment**

- LA County Land Acknowledgment:  
<https://lacounty.gov/government/about-la-county/land-acknowledgment/>

### **Community Group Agreements**

- Community Agreements for Stakeholder Groups were read

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### **Approval of Minutes:**

- The August 2025 meeting minutes were approved with corrections.

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### **DMH Updates:**

Mirtala Parada Ward provided the following DMH Updates:

- Capacity Building Projects (CBP)
  - Between the seven UsCC's, 26 went subitted for solicitation. All four of the BAH CBPs. If interested in bidding on any of the projects make sure to go to the ISD website.
- As Dr. Alquijay is no longer with LACDMH, interviews will be held to identify her replacement in the near future. Mirtala will make herself available a much as possible.
- BHSA
  - MHSA is going away as of June 2026 and we will be transitioning to BHSA. UsCC CBPs are funded by MHSA. BHSA requirements will differ from MHSA requirements.
  - It is very important for co-chairs to be present at Community Planning Team (CPT) meetings as this is where advocacy is needed and where informtion regarded the changes is obtained.
  - CPT meetings are open to the public and can be joined virtually. Note: virtual attendees are not able to engage in dialogue, but you are at least able to listen and be informed.

- The UsCC budget for next year has not been allocated yet. Mirtala is working with BHSA around how the VBPs will be funded for FY2 26-27.
- Because there will no longer be Prevention dollars as a part of our funding, there will be a 30% decrease in the budget. We, LACDMH, are in the process of reinventing ourselves with a new funding source and aligning ourselves with BHSA funding requirements.
- Questions
  - Are we advocating for ourselves to be a part of the budget at all? No, UsCCs do not appear to be going away. BHSA has different requirements and different funding sources.
  - Is there some sort of equivalent to prevention or is the BHSA not about prevention and prevention is coming through another door? The prevention dollars are not going away. The state will keep the prevention dollars versus giving them to the County. We hope that the state will roll out guidance of how counties could get some of the prevention dollars back.
  - For clarity, we will not have CBPS FY 26-27? To clarify, not saying that there will be no CBPs for FY 26-27, we just do not know what that budget looks like yet. The current projects are for FY 25-26 and must be completed by June 30, 2026. DMH has not made a decision about the capacity building projects. There is a good chance that CBPs will continue, there is also a chance they might cut the budget and they could go away in the future.
- We have to pivot to the requirements of the new plan, we have to redefine a continuum of care for the department. This is why going to the CPT meetings is so important. In the past we set priorities and benchmarks, this time around, BHSA is given as five or six priorities and these of the state priorities.
  - Note: Romalis Taylor noted that the UsCCs have not been addressed at the CPT meetings, nothing has been shared around the role that the UsCC will play moving forward. He is hoping Mirtala will have dialogue with leadership about the UsCCs and how we outreach to our communities.

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## **MHSA/BHSA Updates**

Dr. Darlesh Horn provided the following MHSA/BHSA updates:

- Dr. Horn did not have any additional to share beyond what Mirtala Parada Ward shared during DMH updates.
- Dr. Horn stated that she would like to come to the next BAH UsCC meeting to give a full presentation on the most updated information about priorities, stakeholder engagement, where we are with the Behavioral Health Commission and identify ways to do additional advocacy in different areas.
- Dr. Horn acknowledged that Romalis has been foundational at the Community Planning Team (CPT) meetings as he is there on a regular basis.

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## **Immigration in African Communities**

Jennifer Coria from Clergy and Laity for Economic Justice and Sophia Wrench from the Public Counsel Office gave a presentation on Immigration in the African Community

- The presentation included information related to policy advocacy around the immigrant community as well as information about immigration rights when interacting with immigration enforcement.
- The presentation also included information related to things people can do including:
  - If you are an immigrant, it is important to prepare your family at a time in the event that you are arrested or deported, know where important documents are, know what to do with assets, etc.
  - If someone is arrested don't sign anything until you speak to a lawyer, asked for an attorney, and if you have a fear of returning to home country and say so.
  - Have good digital security also and know what information that you have in your phone, knowing what photos you post on social media and if any of those are potentially risky, in the event that your phone is taken and searched; make sure you are using secure messaging applications and using encryption; know that there are risks if you use public Wi-Fi.
- It was emphasized that risk management is paramount.
  - Regarding making a recording of any law enforcement interaction, for instance: it is important to name who it is that you are recording and to not share the information. When recording, flip your phone horizontally instead of recording vertically as when you flip your phone horizontally, you are recording less of the sky in the floor and more of what the action is happening. It is important to narrate what is happening as it is happening: "I am at the corner of two streets. There are five police here they are all armed. There are three police vehicles that are parked in front". Try to focus on just filming the law enforcement officers and not people nearby, because you don't want to put other folks' privacy at risk by filming them and uploading that anywhere.
  - As an individual, you need to decide what level of risk you are willing to take on. You can help people who are not able to go to work by, for example, using your class privilege to buy things and buy groceries and deliver them to your neighbors. You can also organize there are several organizations that do direct action.
- Dr. Lawrence provided the resources shared during the presentation via email.

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### **2026-2027 Capacity Building Projects Brainstorming**

Due to time, a discussion around Capacity Building Projects was postponed. Romalis encouraged the subcommittee members to think about what outreach and engagement they would like to see in the 2026-2027 fiscal year with hopes that by the next meeting, what the department will do as a result of BHSa will be more clear.

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### **Community Engagement/Community Events and Announcements**

- Dr. Brenda Ingram expressed a desire to advocate for capacity building projects being able to continue as opposed to disappearing after one year. She also shared that she is looking for agencies who would be interested in sharing a booth at Taste of Soul.

- Jamie Walker shared that LACDMH will have a booth however logistics related to that booth are not being organized here with LACDMH as it is something that happens with the County's HR department and that it is unlikely that the BAH UsCC will have any representation at that booth.

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### **Labor Acknowledgment**

Dr. Chiyah Lawrence read the Labor Acknowledgment

**Upcoming Meeting: Thursday October 2, 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/>