

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Access for All UsCC Minutes

August 13, 2025

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Attendees: Héctor Manuel Ramírez (co-chair), Olina Rose Bishop, Maria Elena Arauco, Wendy Cabil, Amy Kay, MargaretAnn Mendenhall, Gabriela Velasquez, Irma Velasquez, Junko Nagamatsu, Joseph Burton, Daisy Diaz, Sosa Knight, Geraldine Cabrera, Kat Amador, Vanessa Castro, Rogelio M, Carlos Benavides, Diana Corrales, Racquel Decipeda, Guillermo Medina Jr., Bea Leung, Antwon Wilson, Fran Sereseres

DMH staff: Keianna Crenshaw, Alex Elliott, riKu Matsuda, Martha Ortiz, Dewayne Hervey, Tracy Tisino, Andrea Grimes, Yailin Noriega, Cintia Huitzil, Carla Jaramillo, Christina Barnes-Matthews, Keith Wells, Suyapa Umanzor, Chiyah Lawrence, Geraldine White, Sonny Monge, Angela Guzman, Anshu Agarwal, Kesha Bristow, Reuben Wilson, Lori Kerr, Mirtala Parada Ward, Anna Yaralyan, Jamie Walker

Interpreters and captioner: Alex (Spanish), Claudia (Spanish), Sharon (ASL), Darcy (ASL), Sara (CART)

Agenda Items	Discussion and Recommendations
Welcome and Disability Etiquette	Co-chair Héctor Manuel Ramírez welcomed participants, provided a visual description, and shared the disability etiquette. This includes the importance of visual descriptions, pronoun usage, and reviewing communication options for questions and participation.
Land Acknowledgment	Héctor Manuel Ramírez read the land acknowledgment .
Labor Acknowledgment	riKu Matsuda read the labor acknowledgement .
Presentation: DMH Alternative Crisis Response (ACR) Team by Reuben Wilson and Sonny Monge	Alternative Crisis Response (ACR) Team Presentation: Program Overview - Developed in response to Board of Supervisors request to shift mental health crisis response from law enforcement to mental health professionals - Goal: Minimize law enforcement role in mental health crisis response when safe to do so

	- 24/7 countywide crisis field operation - Doubled number of field teams over two years - Cut response times by 7% Crisis Care Continuum - Four Pillars 1. Someone to Contact: 988 crisis line and DMH 24/7 helpline (800-854-7771) 2. Someone to Respond: Crisis field intervention teams (clinician + community health worker) 3. Somewhere to Go: Urgent care centers and crisis residential treatment 4. Somewhere to Treat: Long-term care and support connections Community Feedback and Concerns: Presentation materials were othering and lacked representation from people with lived experience. Community members shared experiences of harm and particular risks for Black, Latinx, Native American, LGBTQIA2S+, and deaf and hard of hearing communities. Service not designed "by us, for us" - missing disability community input. Specific Accessibility Gaps in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services: • No ASL-fluent crisis team members • Reliance on language line services (described as ineffective) • Lack of mental health-trained interpreters • Use of family members as interpreters (inappropriate dual role) Department Response • Acknowledgment of feedback and need for improvement from liaison • Commitment to engage with disability community for program development • Recognition that program is still developing and open to input
Presentation: Hearts for Sight – Expanding Mental Wellness for VIPs: 2024-2025 Capacity-Building Project Report by Joseph Burton and Racquel Decipeda	Program Overview • First-time County program recipient • Target: Adults 18+ who are blind, visually impaired, or have low vision • Curriculum based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs • Combined mental health education with eco-therapy/outdoor recreation Program Structure • Required 24 hours of participation (exceeded with 60+ hours offered) • 12 different activities in nature settings • Small group discussions in outdoor environments • Nature walks and hikes following curriculum sessions Curriculum Focus Areas 1. Physiological Needs: Access to nutrition, sleep, shelter

2. Self-Esteem: Celebrating personal achievements
3. Self-Actualization: Nourishing personal potential

Program Locations and Activities

Virtual introductory session, Griffith Park (Vista Dell), Live Oak Park (multiple sessions), Debs Regional Park, Kenneth Hahn Recreation Area, Carbon Canyon Regional Park, Partnership with Routes in Motion (adaptive cycling), Crystal Lake finale event (chartered buses, mountain-top celebration)

Outcomes and Impact

- Over 40 participants recruited
- Exceeded participation requirements (some logged 52 hours vs. required 24)
- Addressed social isolation through peer connections
- Improved self-awareness and coping skills
- Increased confidence in accessing mental health resources

Survey Results

Significant improvements in:

- Social engagement
- Comfort discussing mental health
- Awareness of culturally sensitive services
- Access to culturally sensitive services

Participant Testimonial

"Since joining the Hearts for Sight program, I am compelled to not only show up but to open up and share my perspectives and struggles. This has been therapeutic, energizing and refreshing especially in peaceful outdoor settings."

Transportation Challenges

- Access paratransit reliability issues for timely arrival
- Long travel times (up to 3 hours) for participants from distant areas like Palmdale/Lancaster
- Hearts for Sight addresses this through chartered bus transportation for events

Metro Accessibility

- Discussion of braille signage needs
- Metro assistance services available but limited
- Need for visually impaired community input on signage accuracy

Héctor said it was an exemplary capacity-building project, noting it was "by people with disabilities and for people with disabilities" and exceeded typical reporting standards.

DMH Updates	Dr. Alquijay is no longer with DMH. Mirtala Parada Ward will cover the administrative business previously handled by Dr. Alquijay, including DMH updates.
Announcements	Upcoming Events - August 20th: County-wide disability services surveys and listening sessions - Cultural Competency Committee meeting today at 1:30 PM (monthly)
Closing	Héctor thanked everyone for joining including captioner, interpreters and support staff. Next meeting: September 10, 2025