

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Access for All UsCC Minutes

September 10, 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, Racquel Decipeda, Guillermo Medina Jr., Bea Leung, Fran Sereseres, Tony Weaver, Daneta Calderon-Vital

DMH staff: Keianna Crenshaw, riKu Matsuda, Martha Ortiz, Tracy Tisino, Andrea Grimes, Cintia Huitzil, Carla Jaramillo, Christina Barnes-Matthews, Keith Wells, Suyapa Umanzor, Chiyah Lawrence, Anshu Agarwal, Lori Kerr, Mirtala Parada Ward, John Palacio, Evelyn Espinoza, Regina Ramirez, Yue Hua Xu

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 .
Panel: Deaf Awareness Month Panelists: Junko Nagamatsu (GLAD), Andrea Grimes (DMH), Amy Kay (Five Acres) Moderator: Héctor M. Ramírez	Question 1: What are respectful ways to raise awareness about issues facing the deaf community? Junko Nagamatsu: Emphasized the importance of deaf and hard of hearing people presenting and leading discussions; noted that “hearing impaired” is offensive terminology; deaf and hard of hearing are respectful terms; stressed need for accessibility accommodations including interpreters and CART services Andrea Grimes: Called for greater empathy when deaf and hard of hearing people express concerns; advocate for deaf and hard of hearing people to have a place at

decision-making tables' emphasized "nothing about us without us"

Amy Kay: Urged hiring more deaf professionals who can speak from lived experience; stressed that allies should support but not speak for the deaf community; noted gaps in service and need for deaf individuals to identify barriers

Question 2: What is the importance of learning about deaf culture beyond Deaf Awareness Month?

Junko: Deaf Awareness Month provides opportunity to spread knowledge about deaf culture and ASL; important to continue nurturing awareness year-round to effect systemic change

Andrea: Hosting a day for deaf community members at her clinic to demonstrate solidarity; Provides on going training to clinic teams to create deaf-friendly environment; emphasized need for mutual respect between deaf community and allies

Amy: Deaf and hard of hearing individuals belong to multiple cultures simultaneously; Important to understand each person's unique perspective and cultural experience; Need for humility and individualized understanding

Question 3: What should County supervisors and department heads know about the needs of deaf and hard of hearing communities?

Junko: Seeks equal partners and not pity; Everyday communication barriers significantly impact mental health; Deaf community feedback must be genuinely incorporated into systems; Attitude and body language matter greatly in interactions

Andrea: Each deaf/hard of hearing person has unique needs; Importance of patience and transparency about service limitations; Need for better resource linking when services aren't available; Clients shouldn't be left without direction when clinic can't serve them

Amy: Deaf community needs direct services in their language (ASL) from culturally competent providers; Interpreters are inadequate substitute for direct ASL services; Many interpreters lack mental health training, leading to miscommunication and incorrect documentation; Critical concern- fewer services exist now than 26 years ago; No ASL-accessible drug rehab programs remain in LA County; Programs must be designed and run by deaf people for deaf people; Homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters often refuse deaf clients; Emergency services (5150 holds, psychiatric mobile response teams) lack ASL proficiency and access

Question 4: How does "Nothing About Us Without Us" fit into mental health policy and programming?

Andrea: Deaf and hard of hearing people must be at the table for decisions affecting them; Noted pattern of hearing people who know sign language getting jobs over

	qualified deaf candidates; Want to see community represented in leadership and decision-making Amy: Reiterated need for deaf community to build programs, not hearing people imposing solutions; Criticized ongoing “audism;” Program should be created by and for deaf community with allies in support roles Junko: Supported previous comments about deaf people building systems;’ Emphasized diversity within deaf community; Multiple deaf perspectives needed Question 5: What should the Access for All UsCC prioritize moving forward? Andrea: Appreciates attending meetings regularly for 5 months; values resources shared that can be brought back to clients Amy: Has participated for 10 years; subcommittee has failed deaf community since inception; previous deaf co-chair quit because recommendations weren’t implemented; Insufficient deaf representation on committee and panel; Funded projects have failed to involve deaf people meaningfully; DMH needs to award more funding for deaf services across all Service Planning Areas (SPAs); Must hire more deaf staff; Expressed frustrations with repetitive conversations without progress Junko: On committee since 2017; Attendance has grown from 3-5 people to 30; Some progress made but just scratching the surface; Requests continued advocacy and curiosity about deaf culture; Appreciates interpreters at monthly meetings as educational opportunity; Looks forward to growing support through Access for All meetings
DMH Updates	Mirtala Parada Ward: 1. Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Transformation: MHSA ends 6/30/26; DMH losing 30% of budget, specifically prevention funding; Outpatient services undergoing reconstructions; continued recruitment of ASL-proficient therapists 2. Community Planning Team (CPT): Now is critical time for advocacy during restructuring; All UsCC members urged to attend CPT meetings; Access for All has two votes in the CPT process 3. Prevention programs and capacity building projects: All prevention dollars moving to the state level; affects stigma reduction, suicide prevention, universal prevention programs; UsCC capacity building projects currently have no budget for next year; meeting scheduled for end of September to determine future funding; Programs may need to pivot to fit new BHSA continuum of care; Not disappearing but requiring transformation
Approval of August minutes	Minutes were approved with no objection by a motion from MargaretAnn Mendenhall, seconded by Amy Kay.

Closing	riKu shared three of three capacity building projects are out for bid. He thanked everyone for joining including community members, panelists, captioner, interpreters, co-chair, and support staff.
Next meeting	<u>September 10, 2025</u>