



**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
Black & African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC)
Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
October 2, 2025 10am-12pm**

Welcome

Introductions/Check-In

Co-Chairs: Romalis Taylor and Sade Richardson

Attendees: Afimaye Galarraga, Bobby Musique Cooks, Dr. Brenda Ingram, Camille Forby, Charline Nunez, Erica Robinson, Gina To'omalatai, Irene Ratliff, Jane D'Anna, Jasmine Sampson, Jeremiah Pitts, Joann Reeder, Miss Jonnie Muckelroy, Joy Kamau, Joyce Sales, Kai (Casper) Alexander, Dr. Karen S. Gunn, Kirsten Pannell, LaTonya Fenderson, Nancy Steward, Pauline Giscomber, Pharoah Mitchell, Pluscedia Williams, Queen Nina Womack, Rhoda Addam, Romalis Taylor, Ross Canning, Sade Richardson, Senait Admassu, Shelley Woods, Tony Crews, Wendy Cabil

DMH Admin and Staff: Dr. Carla Jaramillo, Dr. Chiyah Lawrence, D. Christina Barnes-Matthews, Dewayne Hervey, Donnise Vonner, Dr. Erica Melbourne, Kevin Collins, Kinyah Robbins-Harrold, Kisha Thompson, M.C. Harris, Mirtala Parada Ward, riKu Matsuda, Sara(captioner), Victor Manalo (Commissioner), Yue Hua Xu

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
- https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/dmh/1192442_CommunityAgreementsforStakeholderEngagement-English.pdf

Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve by Wendy Cabell, seconded by Dr. Brenda Ingram. Minutes approved unanimously with no corrections.

Behavioral Health Commission

Dr. Victor Manalo introduced himself as the new chair of the Los Angeles County Behavioral Health Commission, noting this is his third year on the commission and he is meeting with all UsCCs throughout October.

- The Mental Health Commission has been renamed the Behavioral Health Commission due to Proposition 1, but commissioners and core mission remain the same. The Commission advises Board of Supervisors and Department of Mental Health on behavioral health matters.
- The commission now integrates substance abuse services (previously under Department of Public Health) with mental health services, with specific focus on unhoused populations
- Commissioners serve as volunteers without pay, as required by state law. The Commission is recruiting three new commissioners, including one person under age 25.

- Irene Ratliff inquired about commissioner stipends; Commissioner Manalo confirmed state law prohibits payment.
- Commissioner Manalo invited student participation and offered his contact information
- Mirtala Ward announced plans to reinstate UsCC report-outs at commission meetings, which stopped during COVID.

DMH Updates:

Mirtala Parada Ward provided the following DMH Updates:

- BHSA Transition
 - Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) will sunset June 30, 2026, transitioning to Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA)
 - All prevention dollars are moving to state level, not county level. Prevention funding has been replaced with housing services for homeless populations, representing approximately 30% of budget.
- Capacity Building Projects
 - Currently, there is no budget for UsCC capacity building projects for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2026. A decision on funding availability is expected by end of November 2025.
 - If funding becomes available, projects will focus on planning and engagement rather than stigma reduction and cultural competency/responsiveness. If funding becomes available, there may be reductions from the previous allocation of \$350,000 per UsCC.
 - All four Capacity Building Projects for fiscal year 2025-2026 received multiple bids and are currently under review by ISD (Information Systems Division). Award decisions expected soon
- Integration with Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)
 - All services are now integrated with Substance Abuse Prevention and Control. There is a focus on integrated mental health and substance abuse care.

Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Updates

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

- Stakeholder Process
 - BHSA is currently in the final 3-4 meetings for the year and recently completed a housing work group. 30% of BHSA dollars allocated to housing initiatives.
 - UsCC updates will now be included at Behavioral Health Commission meetings, shifting from previous SALT-only reporting. Guidelines (format and requirements) for UsCC presentations to commission will be shared at the Joint O&E meeting on October 14.
 - Key meeting dates:
 - October 9: BHSA meeting;
 - October 14: In-person CPT meeting followed by joint ONE meeting
 - October 17: Housing forum
 - October 28: Prevention Forum
- SB43 Community Education

- A presentation on SB43 and Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act changes is scheduled for the Joint O&E meeting on October 14. The Joint O&E meeting is open to all; RSVP is requested.
- A series of community education meetings is planned.
- Dr. Horn commended co-chairs Romalis Taylor and Sade Richardson for consistent presence and advocacy at stakeholder meetings.

Life Links Project Update

Dr. Brenda Ingram provided the following update on the Life Links Project:

- Life Links Resource Directory
 - The UMOJAA Project is updating directory from 10+ years ago.
 - Geographical coverage is being expanded from SPA6 to all of LA County.
 - The directory will not just mental health/substance abuse providers but any culturally affirming services supporting mental health and well-being of Black and African heritage communities.
 - A survey link has been shared and must be completed by any providers to be included in directory.
 - Project completion expected November 2025.
- Taste of Soul Los Angeles – Saturday, October 18, 2025
 - Taste of Soul attracts 350,000+ attendees and is one of largest events west of Mississippi celebrating Black culture. It is a free event with 300+ vendors. Public transportation is recommended (Metro), street parking may be available 4-5 blocks away due to road closures.
 - Dr. Ingram's and the UMOJAA Project team will have booth at Taste of Soul on October 18th on Crenshaw Boulevard near 39th Street. Therapeutic Play Foundation will sharing the booth.
 - Materials with the survey link will be distributed at the event. Given LACDMH's encouragement to limit the number of printed materials, Dr. Lawrence will provide Dr. Ingram with a small number of BAH UsCC brochures as well as a flyer with the QR code for BAH meeting information that can be posted in the booth.

BAH UsCC Updates

Mirtala Parada Ward provided the update on fiscal year 2025-2026 Capacity Building Projects during DMH updates. The conversation around BAH UsCC priorities remains on hold and is pending clarity around what the department intends to do in response to BHSA.

Community Engagement

- Mental Health and Homelessness
 - Wendy Cabil raised a question about the possibility of Prevention funding being used for previous Capacity Building Project proposal that addressed homelessness in Service Area 1. Mirtala Parada Ward clarified that Prevention and Intervention dollars are going away and have been swapped for housing initiatives. There will be a lot of new housing programming coming from the Department. All services will also be integrated care (substance abuse and mental health).

- Dr. Brenda Ingram asked Mirtala Parada Ward to confirm is she heard correctly that prevention dollars are going to housing and that we're focusing on housing initiatives for subpopulations of homeless such as the chronically homeless.
 - Mirtala Parada Ward clarified that we no longer have Prevention dollars as they are all at the state level. There will be an increase in the budget for housing.
 - Dr. Ingram emphasized upstream prevention approach focusing on trauma histories that contribute to chronic homelessness; how we conceptualize that work can include prevention, for example, stabilizing housing is prevention. She encouraged us to think outside of the box.
 - Dr. Darlesh Horn cautioned that the state's guidelines and mandates around the funding must be followed and stated that this is all a part of the planning process that occurs at Community Planning Team (CPT) meetings.
- Wendy Cabil and Ms. Plus Williams shared insights on addressing the mental health aspects of homelessness as pathway to sustainable housing.
- Housing is one of the topics being addressed at the upcoming BHSA forums. The Housing Forum will be held on October 14. The forums are open to the community and BAH UsCC subcommittee members are encouraged to attend and give input such as what was discussed during this meeting.
- Stakeholder Participation
 - Senait Admassu raised concerns about community voice in BHSA planning as the ways underserved communities were previously categorized no longer apply and early intervention funding seems focused more on individual cases than the communities we serve (i.e., immigrants, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.).
 - Senait suggests representatives from this UsCC group attend the commissioner meetings to put community input on the public record.
 - Behavioral Health Commission meetings are open to public with public comment period; anyone can attend and provide input. Public comments accepted; some advance submission may be required for written record.
- CAF Stipends
 - Queen Nina inquired about CAF meeting stipend procedures.
 - Jamie Walker shared that CAF Claim Forms must be signed by the meeting liaisons after attending CAF meetings and submitted to CAF mailbox within 30 days.
 - CAF payments currently delayed due to annual accounting/procurement auditing process. Payments are being processed but may arrive out of chronological order.

Community Events and Announcements

Due to limited time remaining in the meeting, Dr. Lawrence asked anyone who has announcements to send them via email and will be sure to distribute the information to the group.

Labor Acknowledgment

Sade Richardson read the Labor Acknowledgment



Upcoming Meeting: Thursday November 6, 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/>