

THE QUARTERLY

Stakeholder Newsletter



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



Speak. Share. Be Heard.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) and its Anti-Racism, Inclusion, Solidarity and Empowerment (ARISE) Division are excited to share the next quarterly newsletter, designed specifically for you – our stakeholders, partners, and, most importantly, individuals with lived experience. Whether you identify as a behavioral health consumer, advocate, peer supporter or ally, this space belongs to you.

The theme for this issue of The Quarterly is: “Intention and Possibility: A Focus on Youth Perspectives.”

This issue shares your stories, reflections and creative expressions inspired by the hopes, goals and visions young people are shaping for the year ahead. As we begin 2026, this season invites us to reflect on what intention, growth and new possibilities mean in our lives and communities.

This newsletter is a time to uplift youth voices and honor the ways young people contribute to healing, advocacy, creativity and connection. It also recognizes the mentors, caregivers and partners who walk alongside them. Together, these perspectives highlight the importance of belonging, support and access to mental health and wellness resources.

In a place as vibrant and diverse as Los Angeles, youth perspectives help guide meaningful conversations about recovery, wellbeing and community care. Their voices remind us that when we invest in young people, we invest in a stronger future for all.

“When we invest in young people, we invest in a stronger future for all.”

Thank you to our community stakeholders for sharing your perspectives, creativity and collective wisdom. Together, let’s continue exploring how intention and possibility can strengthen resilience, expand opportunities and deepen connection.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Quarterly and that the stories and creative works shared here inspire reflection and action. If you discover something new, connect with a resource or feel inspired to get involved after reading this issue, we’d love to hear from you at: DMHCC@dmh.lacounty.gov.



ANNA GANGEM

Roberto's Story: A Place to Call Home

Disclaimer: Images do not represent the individuals who wrote or are featured in these stories.

For Roberto, stability once felt out of reach. Growing up in foster care meant moving around a lot and between several homes, never staying long enough to feel safe or grounded.

When he aged out of the system, Roberto faced the harsh realities of adulthood without a safety net. He struggled to find housing, keep steady work and balance school, all while carrying the weight of past trauma.

"Transitioning out of foster care was one of the hardest things I've ever experienced," Roberto shared. "I didn't know where I would sleep some nights, and the stress made it hard to keep up with school or work."

Thankfully, that's when Wellnest stepped in. With support from his case manager, Rafael, and the Wellnest Housing Services team, Roberto found stable housing, an essential first step

toward independence. "Having a place to call my own gave me the foundation to focus on school and work without worrying where I'd sleep," he said.

Beyond housing, Roberto accessed emotional health services that helped him process foster care experiences and begin to heal. "Having someone consistently check up on me, guide me through paperwork, and remind me I wasn't alone has made a huge difference," he shares.

Today, Roberto is focused on building a stable future for himself and his older brother, Alejandro. He credits Wellnest with helping him move from uncertainty to possibility. "For someone like me who came out of foster care with very little, having Wellnest step in has given me stability hope, and a chance to build a better future for me and my brother," he said.



CHRISTA PAIWEN WANG

Between Cultures, I Am Still Learning

I came to the United States at the age of eighteen, feeling tense and deeply unsettled. Everything around me was unfamiliar. The country, the culture, and the people were all new to me. I had to communicate with classmates, teachers and my host family in a language I was still learning. Each day brought new challenges that required my full attention. I did not allow myself to slow down or pause to breathe because I felt the urgency to adapt and survive.

For a long time, I truly believed that solving problems was more important than paying attention to emotions. That belief did not come out of nowhere. I grew up in a traditional Chinese family where practicality and endurance were valued, and emotions were rarely talked about. I learned that once a problem was handled, feelings would naturally fade away. So, when something felt heavy or uncomfortable, I told myself to push it aside and keep going. I did not think of this as ignoring my emotions. At the time, it felt like maturity. It felt like responsibility. I thought this was simply how life worked. For a while, this way of living seemed effective. I adjusted quickly, kept up with expectations, and appeared resilient on the outside. But internally, something else was happening. The emotions I chose not to deal with did not disappear. Instead, they slowly collected. I tucked them away, telling myself I would come back to them later, though later never really came. Each time a new conflict appeared, those buried feelings resurfaced, often stronger and harder to control. When that happened, I went back to what felt familiar. I focused on fixing the situation, calming myself down just enough, and moving forward again. Over time, I began to feel stuck in this pattern. I was constantly managing reactions instead of understanding them, and it left me emotionally drained in ways I could not fully explain.



I did not realize how disconnected I was from my own emotions until something very simple exposed it. When people asked me, "How do you feel?" I never hesitated. I always answered, "Good." I said it automatically, without checking in with myself at all. It was not that I was lying. I just did not know how to answer differently. Years later, during my internship, a supervisor casually said something that stopped me in my tracks. "Good is not a feeling." I remember how quiet everything felt in that moment. That single sentence made me aware of how little practice I had in naming what I was actually experiencing. I had learned how to function, adapt and keep moving forward, but I had never learned how to pause and ask myself what I was feeling or why. That realization helped me understand that difficulty

(Continued on next page)



A supervisor casually said something that stopped me in my tracks.

"Good is not a feeling."

identifying emotions is often a learned habit. When emotions are not given language or space, they become invisible even to the person experiencing them.

Reflecting on how youth express themselves, I have noticed that emotions often appear indirectly through silence, humor, irritability, withdrawal or overachievement. Many young people are not disconnected from their emotions. Instead, they are navigating environments where emotional expression is not always modeled or encouraged. What might sometimes be labeled as avoidance or defiance can actually be someone's attempt to manage feelings without the words to name them. From a personal perspective as I reflect on my experiences, youth voices become clearer and

louder when emotions beneath are seen and felt, when feelings become a priority over solutions. When our emotional experiences are met with curiosity rather than correction, we begin to develop healthier and more grounded ways of understanding ourselves. For those navigating multiple cultures, I've found that intention often begins with survival, adapting, achieving and belonging. Possibility emerges when emotional experiences are given legitimacy. When we are allowed not only to solve problems but also to feel, reflect and rest, new futures become imaginable.

Between cultures, I am still learning. I now carry a different belief with me. Addressing emotions is not a distraction from progress. It is part of how healing, growth and possibility begin.



“For those navigating multiple cultures, I’ve found that intention often begins with survival, adapting, achieving and belonging.”

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DAKOTA AGATOL

A Seat at the Table



Growing up, I lived in the in-between
Homes that cared,
People who tried,
But a quiet part of me always knew
They weren't my forever.
I felt it in the way I kept my things packed,
In how lightly I stepped,
Never wanting to make the space feel too much like mine.
I learned to smile with caution,
To belong just enough,
But never enough to fall apart when it was time to leave.
I was always searching.
Not for a house
For a place where the word home
Would finally stay.
Two adoptions came and went,
And I tried so hard to believe,
Every time:
Maybe this is where forever starts.
But something inside me never settled,
Never let me exhale all the way.
So by the time the third adoption came,
Hope felt fragile in my hands
Something I protected,
Something I wanted,

Something I was scared to trust.
And then...
Forever came quietly.
Not rushed,
Not forced,
Just steady
Like something that had been waiting for me
Long before I ever knew to look for it.
My forever family.
Not assigned to me
Chosen by me,
And choosing me back
In all the ways that matter.
Thanksgiving feels different now.
It doesn't feel borrowed.
It doesn't feel temporary.
It feels full,
Warm,
True.
And what I'm thankful for
Is bigger than any table,
Bigger than any meal,
Bigger than this one day.
It's them.



My mom

Fierce, fearless and gentle all at once.
A lion in the way she protects,
A soft sunrise in the way she comforts.
Her love doesn't whisper
It stands tall,
Strong enough to shelter,
Gentle enough to heal.

My dad

Calm and easygoing,
With that warm Hawaiian spirit running through him...
But underneath that peaceful quiet,
He's a bear
Steady, loyal and protective,
The kind of strength that makes the world feel safer
Just by being there.
And I can't count the ways I'm thankful
To belong to love like theirs
Love that doesn't leave,
Doesn't fade,
Doesn't disappear
When the holiday ends.
And there is something else on my heart today
Something for every kid
Still waiting,
Still hoping,
Still packing their life into bags that aren't meant to be
permanent:
I see you.
I was you.
I know what it feels like
To wonder if forever is real,
To feel like you're always being brave
In places that don't stay yours.
But hear this,

With all the truth I have in me:
Forever doesn't always come fast
But it does come.
Sometimes in the third try,
Sometimes in the tenth,
Sometimes when you've stopped expecting it.
And when it does arrive
When the right people find you,
Or when you choose them,
And they choose you right back
Your heart will finally breathe
In a way you've never felt before.
I know,
Because mine finally did.
This Thanksgiving,
I'm grateful for the long road,
For the strength it carved into me,
For the family I got to choose,
And for the forever
That finally found me
Exactly when I needed it most.

Aunt Mary



DR. JAYDEE TUMAMBING HUGHES | CLINIC DIRECTOR, ELLIE MENTAL HEALTH

Grade A Mentorship

For a long time, I straddled a line. A line that kept moving about that even I had difficulty keeping my feet grounded. As a 1.5 generation Filipina American, growing up in the Philippines and moving to the United States at 13 WAS BEYOND CHALLENGING. I had no idea that what I experienced was racism, misogyny, sexism and detrimental to my health.

I found myself resentful towards my parents: a latchkey child, the eldest, and responsible for my siblings. Why did we move here again? At home, we had family, customs and culture. Here, we had McDonalds, In-N-Out and disdain. My parents worked overtime, working towards the “American Dream.” Their dreams projected onto me, I succumbed to the social pressures of being an American adolescent. You want to belong? Move away from your norms.

As a young adult, the voices in my head were conflicting and confusing. I couldn't differentiate my parents' love and advice from my internalized hate. A young mother attempting to raise her child in a world that confused her, I made so many mistakes. Generational patterns continue.

Then, I met my first mentor. Unbeknownst to her, she would be the reminder of my parents' love - and that doesn't end the story. My first mentor is a woman of color who corrected my papers with purple and red ink, and still graded them with A's. In her own words, she told me that the marks and suggested edits weren't unrealistic expectations but a way to communicate belief in someone who had lost herself, without noting her potential. I flourished under her mentorship and met others who also held me until I could hold myself.

I began to imagine a future that I didn't think possible. I stood on shoulders of giants, one of them was five-foot seven and my father. On these shoulders, I was finally able to comprehend his words: *diyan ka nadapa, diyan ka tumayo* - that's where you fell, that's where you get up. For so long, I thought he meant, just dust yourself off and keep going. Don't rest, just go. Now, I know that it was more complicated than that. It was like receiving my papers from my mentor, marked up in ink, with an A grade at the bottom. My dad BELIEVED that I could do it. He KNEW I would do it. Before he passed away from cancer, in his disoriented state, he knew that I would remember things that our family would need, not with pressure or unrealistic expectations, but with love.

As I solidified new relationships, existing ones strengthened further, and my sense of self no longer felt like puzzle pieces precariously stuck together with old glue. The voices in my head still echo the pain of the past, but in crevices that don't dominate my existence. It is still surreal to me that I now have the opportunity to lead a group of helpers, as I was led. Now, I dare to hope for the future, even amidst clouds and doubt.



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ERIN CASEY

Pull Up at My Friend's Place

At My Friend's Place, we recognize that the experience of homelessness and racism are deeply intersectional. With 88% of the young people we serve identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), we see firsthand how the current and historic impact of oppression has resulted in a world where young people of color experiencing homelessness continue to be disproportionately and systematically marginalized. Additionally, BIPOC young people experience daily race-based traumatic stress which exacerbates mental health and erodes a sense of safety and well-being. At My Friend's Place, we believe that the path to healing from race-based traumatic stress is for it to be named and validated first and foremost, and for young people to have access to community, connection and joy.



Our annual Pull Up event is a powerful celebration of resilience and the fight against racism. It is a testament to our commitment to uplifting and supporting the young people who are most affected by these intersecting issues, as we work together towards a more equitable and just future. Pull Up: Celebrating Youth of Color in the Fight Against Racism was started in 2025 by our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee which consists of staff, board members, alumni and young people currently receiving services. Every year, we commission a young artist to create the design for the event. This past year, the theme of Pull Up was Backyard BBQ and the artist commissioned was a young artist named Michael.

It can be difficult to find moments of joy amidst homelessness, so Pull Up is a day focused on cultivating joy for the young people we serve. This year, festivities included a special meal, live DJ, carnival games and dunk tank, basketball contest, makeup and nail workshop, and photobooth!



These photos are from Pull Up 2025, including Michael's design on the cake for the event, attendees wearing t-shirts that were live silk-screened with the design, and our first design in 2025 by a youth artist named Key.



Better Youth Short Films

I am a mentor at Better Youth where our young people made short films inspired by the real-life experiences and issues faced by themselves and their peers. The films tackle important subject matter such as overcoming trauma, mental health issues, and being a young person in foster care, all told from the perspectives of the young people courageously sharing their own lived experiences. Please see below for links to the short films, film trailers and information about the films.

[Ring Of Passion](#)

[The Perfect Shoe 911](#)

[Universe Why?](#)

MERSHANA KNIGHTON

RING OF PASSION

Resilient. Ambitious. Self-Disciplined. A true fighter with grit and gloves.

A story about a determined woman that will inspire and educate future generations.

THE BETTER YOUTH.ORG FILM COHORT OF 2025 PRESENTS AN ORIGINAL SHORT DOCUMENTARY "MERSHANA KNIGHTON: RING OF PASSION"

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SYD STEWART SHAWN JACKSON DIRECTOR NAYELY BARRERA

FILM COHORT FACILITATORS & MENTORS KEN KERBS KRISTINA SULLIVAN INTERVIEWERS NAYELY BARRERA HENNESSY DIAZ EDITORS BORIS FUENTES KEN KERBS CINEMATOGRAPHERS NAYELY BARRERA BORIS FUENTES VALERIE HERNANDEZ HENNESSY DIAZ KEN KERBS ORIGINAL MUSIC BORIS FUENTES MALIK TATE AND BENSOUND.COM

<https://filmfreeway.com/RingOfPassion>

The Perfect Shoe
A Film By Nayely Barrera

STARRING
Emely Espinoza
Angi Ali
& Canvas

WHEN HER YOUTH WAS TORN APART, JOY, A DISTANT STAR, SHE NEVER STOPPED YEARNING FOR THE PERFECT PAIR.

THE BETTER YOUTH FILM COHORT PRESENTS A SHORT NARRATIVE FILM BY NAYELY BARRERA "THE PERFECT SHOE" EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SYD STEWART SHAWN JACKSON FILM COHORT FACILITATORS AND MENTORS KENWALT J. KERBS KRISTINA SULLIVAN INTERVIEWER AND DIRECTOR NAYELY BARRERA COSTUME DESIGNER KIMMY TAYLOR STARRING EMELY ESPINOZA ANGI ALI & CANVAS FEATURING CHARWINE JACKSON KRISTINA SULLIVAN SYD STEWART AND KENWALT J. KERBS EDITOR DE NABRE PULLER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR JAHON KALLPATRICK PRODUCERS NAYELY BARRERA KRISTINA SULLIVAN SET DESIGNER RICE SRAMADISE BORIS FUENTES AND CHRIS WALZBUCK OPENING ANIMATION BY BETTER YOUTH ANIMATION KRISTON BEGGING AND SHANT WEBSTER CINEMATOGRAPHERS RUC TICHUNANG VALERIE HERNANDEZ BORIS FUENTES RUC TICHUNANG VALERIE HERNANDEZ BORIS FUENTES ALICE TYLER SULLIVAN RICE SRAMADISE JAHON KALLPATRICK DE NABRE PULLER BEST GUY HARVEY BELLAMY SCRIPT SUPERVISORS KIMMY TAYLOR AND JAHON KALLPATRICK STILL PHOTOGRAPHER BORIS FUENTES MUSIC BY BENSOUND.COM ENDING CREDITS ART CREATED BY MATTHEW COLLADO A BETTER YOUTH FILM ORIGINAL 2025

<https://filmfreeway.com/ThePerfectShoe911>

Better Youth Film Cohort presents
Universe Why?
A Film By Hennesy Diaz

Trust: Love and Friendship.
The will to live.
He follows the "Why?"

starring
Anthony Aquino
Emily McCormick

THE BETTER YOUTH.ORG FILM COHORT PRESENTS AN ORIGINAL SHORT NARRATIVE FILM "UNIVERSE WHY?" BY HENNESSY DIAZ EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SYD STEWART SHAWN JACKSON FILM COHORT FACILITATORS & MENTORS KEN KERBS KRISTINA SULLIVAN INTERVIEWER HENNESSY DIAZ EDITOR MATTHEW COLLADO COSTUME DESIGNER HENNESSY DIAZ KRISTINA SULLIVAN CHARWINE JACKSON ANGI ALI & CANVAS FEATURING ANTHONY AQUINO EMILY MCCORMICK AND CHARWINE JACKSON COSTUME DESIGNER KIMMY TAYLOR SET DESIGNER DE NABRE PULLER TILLY SULLIVAN JAHON KALLPATRICK KRISTINA SULLIVAN CINEMATOGRAPHERS VALERIE HERNANDEZ RUC TICHUNANG ALICE TYLER SULLIVAN RICE SRAMADISE BEST GUY HARVEY BELLAMY SCRIPT SUPERVISOR JAHON KALLPATRICK ORIGINAL MUSIC NAYELY BARRERA VALERIE HERNANDEZ TYLER SULLIVAN MUSIC BY BENSOUND.COM A BETTER YOUTH FILM ORIGINAL 2025

<https://filmfreeway.com/UniverseWhy>

NATHALIE UMAÑA

Unmute Your Mind:

Intention, Connection and Youth-Led Possibility

At Bassett High School, intention often begins with a simple question students ask one another: **How are you really doing?** From that question grew Unmute Your Mind, a student-led mental health campaign created and carried forward by students in the Health Academy who are part of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA).

What makes Unmute Your Mind powerful is not just its message, but how it lives in the everyday rhythms of campus life. Students lead the campaign both online and in person, using social media, cartoon-style visuals, and playful, low-pressure activities that invite participation rather than demand it. The tone is intentional as mental health doesn't have to feel heavy to be meaningful. Sometimes it can be colorful, kind and quietly connective.

One morning, the campaign showed up in the smallest of ways. At the start of first period, students distributed clothespins for a quick activity designed to spark connection. The invitation was simple: give a clothespin to someone who might enjoy a new friend connection. No speeches. No explanations. Just a moment of human recognition. For many students, that small gesture was enough to break silence, lower walls, and remind them they weren't alone.

This kind of student-driven engagement has shaped more than peer relationships; it has opened doors to possibility. During Wellness Wednesday, a student-centered event focused on wellbeing and equity, the Bassett High School Health Academy



connected with East Valley Medical Center. What began as a brief introduction grew into a meaningful partnership. Today, that connection supports a senior internship program that offers students hands-on experience in the medical field, helping them imagine futures they may not have previously seen for themselves. Much of this growth has been guided by the leadership of Arianna Franklin, a student who has helped carry Unmute Your Mind forward with creativity and care, and by Ms. Rodriguez, a teacher who continues to help translate student vision into lasting opportunity. Together, they reflect what is possible when youth voice is trusted and supported rather than directed.

Unmute Your Mind reminds us that intention is not always loud. Sometimes, it's a clothespin passed quietly between students. And possibility often begins there - in moments of connection, creativity and courage led by young people who are learning to unmute not only their minds, but their futures.





SASHA MCCULLOM

The Window of Tolerance

I'm drinking a blue Powerade right now.

That wouldn't seem like such a monumental feat to anyone else, but it is to me.

The last time my lips met with some blue Powerade, I was eating chicken nuggets and macaroni while watching Avatar the Last Airbender on one of the only two TVs in a crisis center. The chicken nuggets seemed to go down pretty easily, but I was still struggling to stomach my sorrow. In fact, my sorrow seemed to be consuming me.

It had eaten away at me, bite by bite for years. Thankfully, I managed to reach out for help before my sorrow got the chance to finish feasting on me.

Little did my sorrow know, it was having its last meal.

Day by day, week by week and month by month after I was released from that crisis center, I found a way to cope with the rules of the game that I had the biggest love/hate relationship with: The game of life, a game that seemed simply unbeatable just a year ago. The smallest moves on the gameboard used to stump me:

Taking a shower felt like having to travel across 100 tiles.

Taking my meds felt like having to travel across 1,000!

But finally, one day I crossed from one tile to the next and I noticed that it felt just the tiniest bit easier. I began to breathe easier and easier as the weeks since my last self-submission to the crisis center began to grow.

Life no longer felt like just a stuffy room. One day it dawned on me:

My Window of Tolerance was beginning to re-open.

It had opened juuuust a crack, but that sliver of fresh air seemed to be all that I needed:

My weekly therapy sessions began to feel less like chores. Taking my medication no longer felt like a useless esophageal movement.

Showering became the highlight of my day instead of the bane of my existence.

I went from struggling to cross the game of life's tiles to gliding from one tile to the next!

My Window of Tolerance was wide open now.

One sunny day this past June, I'd looked up and realized that I had finally found my way back into my Optimal Zone.

Reaching out for help for my depression on a random day in December 2024 was the hardest thing I've ever done. It seemed so damning in the moment. Having to go inpatient for the first time felt like the beginning of the end.

But really, it was the start of my triumph against both hypo- and hyperarousal. As the months and therapy sessions went on, I found myself learning to cope with life and stress in healthy ways that I never had before.

Re-opening my Window of Tolerance no longer felt so daunting.

This life game seemed to have gone from Extremely Hard to Easy mode.

My hair began to blow in the breeze that my now wide-open Window of Tolerance had created.

As I sipped on my blue Powerade in the psych ward, I never imagined that life would feel easy again one day.

I've never been so happy to prove a past version of myself so wrong.

In just a year, my hopelessness morphed again and again until it had reached its final form:

Joy. As the last minute of 2025 began to tick by, I looked back on all of the life tiles that I'd crossed over the course of the year. Definitely almost flipped the board a few times, but I still made it!

I sighed in relief as I finally crossed the finish line and retired Sasha's old ways of living.

I rested my head on the sill of my gaping Window of Tolerance as I rang in the new year.

Instead of cursing her like I used to do, I now found myself thanking December 2024 Sasha for being brave enough to sip on her blue Powerade in the psych ward.

If she could see me now, she'd be bewildered at how I've managed to grow and evolve so much from that last sip to this one.

TANEA ROBINSON

Seeing the Future Through Youth Eyes

Youth perspectives remind us that the future is not just something to wait for – it is something we shape today. Their voices tell stories of resilience, growth and self-discovery, offering fresh insights into mental health, identity and wellness. Many young people navigate challenges that test their strength and creativity. Through mentorship, community support and intergenerational learning, they find guidance, connection and a sense of purpose. These relationships help transform obstacles into opportunities, showing how intention can spark possibility.

Creative expression amplifies youth voices in powerful ways. Art, poetry, music and digital storytelling allow young people to explore identity, imagine new futures, and share hope. Each piece becomes a window into how they see the world, dream big, and claim space for themselves and others.

Listening to youth is more than hearing their words; it is learning from their perspectives, celebrating their achievements, and

supporting their journeys. Their stories remind us that mental wellness, self-discovery and community change are deeply intertwined, and that every young person has the power to inspire growth and possibility in those around them. By centering youth voices, we honor intention, embrace possibility, and imagine a future shaped by creativity, courage and hope.



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Intention and Possibility: A Focus on Youth Perspectives

Every person who endures homelessness has a unique experience with the homeless response system - the good, the bad, and even somewhere in the middle. Listening to and learning from people with lived experience is a crucial part of creating the programs and services that are designed to help them. In November 2023, the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative (now the Department of Homeless Services and Housing [HSH]) received a Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement (YHSI) grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which focused on centering the voices and expertise of people with lived experience into mainstream county systems. At the heart of the YHSI work is the Cross System Leadership Table (CSLT) which places young people with lived experience at the center of shaping the systems meant to support them. This work is grounded in the belief that youth perspectives hold both wisdom and possibility. And that meaningful change happens when those voices guide policy, practice and investment.

YHSI is made up of 14 committee members, alongside a growing network of system partners, including the Departments of Mental Health and Children and Family Services. All are committed to intergenerational learning, creating and implementing solutions and a system of accountability. Together, youth leaders and partners engage in honest dialogue that leads to policy and system reform through the lenses of lived experiences growth, resilience and self-discovery, while also confronting the real barriers young people face when navigating homelessness.

Over the past year, YHSI has translated youth insight into concrete systems change. The table has advanced recommendations related to the Measure A Spending Plan, Transitional Age Youth (TAY) expansion of the Homeless Prevention Unit and Intensive Case Management Services, HSH organizational chart, and additional cross-system priorities. Each recommendation reflects a youth-informed understanding of what support looks like in practice, not just in theory.

Looking ahead, YHSI will conduct a youth-led needs assessment to elevate youth voices on a scale and inform future policy decisions aimed at preventing and ending youth homelessness. This effort will center mental wellness, stability and dignity through a youth lens, while identifying gaps and opportunities across systems. In parallel, YHSI is developing recommendations and a pilot for a Cash Assistance Program, rooted in trust, autonomy and the belief that young people are experts in their own needs. This moment is about intention - being clear about our purpose and possibility, and imagining a future where young people are supported, resourced and empowered to thrive. Through storytelling, creative expression, and systems change work, YHSI continues to hold space for youth vision and hope, while building pathways toward a more responsive and humane system.

There is so much possibility when youth voices lead.



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Submission Deadlines

Stakeholder Newsletter Q2 2026

Thursday, April 30 | Call for Content Submissions Opens
Friday, May 15 | Content Submissions Due

Together, let's create a space where every voice is valued, every story matters, and our diversity becomes our shared strength.

Detailed information will be shared via email and other channels about how to submit your content but here is a heads up about the submission deadlines:

The second Quarterly issue of 2026 is on the way this June! As we move into a new season, LACDMH invites you to reflect on how growth, momentum and community connection are unfolding in your life and work.

We hope you will help shape your Newsletter by submitting stories, artwork, reflections and creative ideas. Submissions are welcome in any format, and all content will represent diverse voices from the L.A. community and be equitably sought from all stakeholder groups (e.g., SALTs, UsCCs, CCC, Health Neighborhoods, Faith-Based Partners, Peer Counsel).

THE THEME FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS:

Summer of Wellness: Connection, Care & Community

Practical wellness tips, local resources, outdoor healing and community events.

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Q2 2026 Diversity and Multicultural Calendar

Courtesy of the ARISE Division - Cultural Competency Unit and the Cultural Competency Committee

April

- 1-9 - Passover
- 2 - World Autism Awareness Day (United Nations)
- 2 - Sizdah Bedar (Nature's Day - Iranian festival)
- 3 - Memorial of Jesus Christ's Death/ Good Friday (Christian)
- 4 - Children's Day (Taiwan, Republic of China)
- 5 - Qingming Festival (commemorating ancestors in Taiwan, Republic of China)
- 5 - Easter (Christian)
- 6 - International Asexuality Day (LGBTQ+)
- 7 - World Health Day (Global)
- 10 - National Youth HIV and AIDS Awareness Day (U.S.)
- 10 - Day of Silence (LGBTQ+)
- 11 - Parkinson's Disease International Awareness Day (Global)
- 13-14 - Yom Hashoah (Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day)
- 22 - International Earth Day
- 22 - Administrative Professionals Day
- 24 - Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day
- 24-25 - Gathering of Nations (Native American)
- 25 - Show Your Mettle Day (Empowering persons with limb loss, U.S.)
- 25 - World Healing Day
- 26 - National Lesbian Visibility Day
- 29 - World Wish Day (Global)
- 30 - Children's Day (Celebration of children in Mexico)

MONTH-LONG OBSERVATIONS

- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Arab-American Heritage Month
- Autism Awareness & Acceptance Month
- Celebrate Diversity Month
- Couple Appreciation Month
- Earth Month
- Emotional Overeating Awareness Month
- Genocide and Human Rights Awareness Month
- International Black Women's History Month
- Limb Loss Awareness Month (U.S.)
- National African American Women's Fitness Month
- National Child Abuse Prevention Month
- National Donate Life Month (U.S.)
- National Minority Health Month
- National Occupational Therapy Month
- National Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month
- National Volunteer Month
- Paralyzed Veterans Across America Month (U.S.)
- Tartan (Scottish-American) Heritage Month
- Testicular Cancer Awareness Month
- Women's Empowering Month

Q2 2026 Diversity and Multicultural Calendar

Courtesy of the ARISE Division - Cultural Competency Unit and the Cultural Competency Committee

May

1	-	Buddha Day (Buddhist)	21	-	Mental Health Action Day
5	-	Cinco de Mayo (Mexican American)	21	-	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (Global)
5	-	Children's Day (Korean)	21	-	Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD, third Thursday of May)
5	-	World Asthma Day (Global)	21-23	-	Shavuot (Jewish Holiday) (2026)
7	-	National Day of Prayer (U.S.)	22	-	Harvey Milk Day (LGBTQ+)
7	-	National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (U.S.)	23-24	-	Declaration of the Báb (Baha'i festival to celebrate the Báb's announcement in 1844)
8	-	World Red Cross & Red Crescent Day (Global)	4	-	National Brothers Day
10	-	Mother's Day (U.S.)	26-27	-	Eid Al-Adha (Celebrating the Feast of Sacrifice in Muslim)
16	-	National LGBTQ+ Elders Day	28-29	-	Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)
17	-	International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (LGBTQ+)	30	-	Memorial Day (U.S.) (2026)

MONTH-LONG OBSERVATIONS

Asian/Pacific Islander American Heritage Month
Better Speech and Hearing Month (U.S.)
Haitian Heritage Month
Indian Heritage Month
Jewish-American Heritage Month
Mental Health Awareness Month (U.S.)
Mobility Awareness Month (U.S.)
National Nurses Month
Older Americans Month (U.S.)
South Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

Q2 2026 Diversity and Multicultural Calendar

Courtesy of the ARISE Division - Cultural Competency Unit and the Cultural Competency Committee

June

- 2** - American Indian Citizenship Day (U.S.)
- 5** - HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day
- 7** - National Cancer Survivors Day (first Sunday in June)
- 7** - National Children's Day (U.S.)
- 12** - Loving Day (Interracial relationship and families)
- 12** - Remembrance Day of Pulse Nightclub Shooting (LGBTQ+)
- 13** - International Albinism Awareness Day (United Nations)
- 14** - Race Unity Day
- 14** - Pride Day (Varies by city and country, LGBTQ+)
- 15** - National Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- 16-17** - Hijri New Year (Muslim)
- 18** - Autistic Pride Day (U.S.)
- 19** - Juneteenth (African American)
- 19** - Dragon Boat Festival (Taiwan, Republic of China)
- 20** - World Refugee Day
- 21** - Litha Summer Solstice (Pagan)
- 25-July 1** - Helen Keller Deaf Blind Awareness Week (U.S.)
- 25-26** - Ashura (Islamic holiday that occurs on the tenth day of Muharram)
- 26** - World Forgiveness Day
- 27** - The Birthday of Andrew Foster, known as the father of Deaf Education in Africa (June 27, 1925)
- 27** - National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Day (U.S.)

MONTH-LONG OBSERVATIONS

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month (Global)
Black Music Month
Elder Abuse Awareness Month
Immigrant Heritage Month
Men's Health Awareness Month
National Caribbean American Heritage Month
Pride Month (LGBTQ+)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month
Adopt a Shelter Cat Awareness Month

About All of Us

CULTURAL COMPETENCY COMMITTEE

The Cultural Competency Committee (CCC) serves as an advisory group for the infusion of cultural competency in all of Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) operations. The CCC advocates for the needs of all cultural groups. Its membership includes the cultural perspectives of consumers, family members, advocates, directly operated providers, contracted providers, and community-based organizations. Additionally, the CCC considers the expertise from the Service Areas' clinical and administrative programs, frontline staff, and management essential for sustaining the mission of the Committee. The CCC is led by two Co-Chairs who are community representatives and elected annually by members of the Committee.

dmh.lacounty.gov/ccu/ccc



ACCESS FOR ALL USCC

The Access for All USCC subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), for the purpose of increasing mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/access-for-all-uscc/>



AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE (AI/AN) USCC

The American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Underserved Cultural Communities subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), with the goal to reduce disparities and increase mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County. According to the 2010 USA Census Bureau report, Los Angeles County is the home to the largest AI/AN population, which is approximately 160,000 residents.

The AI/AN UsCC subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/american-indian-alaska-native-ai-an-uscc/>



ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (API) USCC SUBCOMMITTEE

The Asian Pacific Islander (API) UsCC subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), for the purpose of increasing mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County. The API UsCC subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/asian-pacific-islander-api-uscc

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/asian-pacific-islander-api-uscc/>



BLACK AND AFRICAN HERITAGE USCC

The Black and African Heritage Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), with the goal to reduce disparities, increase mental health access, and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County.

This subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/black-african-heritage-uscc/>



EASTERN EUROPEAN / MIDDLE EASTERN (EE/ME) USCC

The Eastern European Middle Eastern (EE/ME) USCC subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), for the purpose of increasing mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County.

The EE/ME UsCC subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/eastern-european-middle-eastern-eme-uscc/>



LATINO USCC

The Latino UsCC subcommittee was established under the original Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), for the purpose of increasing mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County.

The Latino UsCC subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/latino-uscc/>



LGBTQIA2-S USCC

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2-S) USCC subcommittee was established under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), now known as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), for the purpose of increasing mental health access and to produce stakeholder priorities which will advise LACDMH's action planning toward development and improvement of its services and partnerships to better engage underserved and marginalized cultural and ethnic communities in Los Angeles County.

The LGBTQIA2-S UsCC subcommittee provides LACDMH with community-driven and culturally specific capacity-building project recommendations and/or project concepts for implementation to increase mental health access, awareness, promotion, and decrease stigma with the ultimate goal to reduce cultural and ethnic disparities in access to care and service delivery.

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/about/mhsa/uscc/lgbtqia2-s-uscc/>



Disclosures and Acknowledgments

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING RESOURCES

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) supports the wellbeing of our County residents and communities. The LACDMH Help Line is available 24/7 to provide mental health support, resources and referrals at: 800-854-7771. Additional LACDMH resources are available at: dmh.lacounty.gov/get-help-now.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or Text 988 or chat online at 988lifeline.org

Crisis Text Line: Text "LA" to 741741 or visit crisistextline.org

CA Peer-Run Warm Line: Call 855-600-WARM (9276) or visit calhope.org

iPrevail: Access a Unique Mental Health Network on Any Device with Interactive Lessons, Peer Support Chats, and Community Groups All in One Place. Visit: lacounty.iprevail.com

Talk to Teen Line's trained teen listeners: Call 800-852-8336 Nationwide (6 - 10 PM PST), text "Teen" to 839863 (6 - 9 PM PST) or visit teenline.org

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