

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
PROGRAM SUPPORT BUREAU – QUALITY IMPROVEMENT DIVISION
UNDER SERVED CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (UsCC)

Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families

Summary Report Guidelines

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families was developed as a community-centered initiative to promote mental health awareness, education, and engagement within the Armenian community in Los Angeles. Our goals were to educate the community on wellness topics, reduce mental health stigma, and provide culturally relevant resources-while actively engaging local health professionals. The festival created a culturally welcoming and inclusive environment where children and families could access educational seminars, creative activities and wellness resources.

The project was implemented in multiple phases through ongoing collaboration with a dedicated project subcommittee. The subcommittee played an integral role throughout the planning and implementation process by providing feedback, recommendations, and guidance on program development, outreach strategies, seminar topics, wellness activities, and community engagement efforts. Their contributions helped ensure that the festival authentically reflected the needs and interests of local Armenian families while remaining aligned with the project's broader wellness and educational objectives.

Phase 1 – Planning & Development

During the first phase of the project, the planning committee and subcommittees focused on establishing the foundational framework for the festival. Key activities included:

- Identifying and confirming the event venue and location
- Developing marketing and outreach strategies tailored to the Armenian community
- Designing flyers and promotional materials for community distribution
- Developing seminar curriculum and educational content
- Creating pre/post survey and seminar evaluation forms to measure participant feedback and program effectiveness

Throughout this phase, the subcommittee reviewed planning materials, provided recommendations on culturally relevant programming, and contributed to outreach strategies aimed at maximizing community participation.

Phase 2 – Festival Implementation

The second phase focused on the facilitation and coordination of the festival's core programming, including educational seminars, interactive activities, and community wellness resources. Seminars were led by psychologists, mental health professionals, and wellness experts whose expertise spanned clinical practice and cultural competency. Topics included child mental health and development, parenting strategies, nutrition, play therapy, support for new mothers, and overall family wellness. Each session was designed to meet Armenian families where they are—offering practical guidance rooted in cultural understanding and professional insight.

Complementing the seminars, the festival offered a rich variety of hands-on activities designed to engage children and families through meaningful, culturally relevant experiences:

- Healthy lifestyle and nutrition activities
- Arts and creative therapy experiences
- Sports and movement-based activities
- Community wellness resource booths
- Family engagement and cultural activities
- Stage performances such as Armenian folk songs and cultural dances performed by children and teenagers, Armenian traditional instruments played, such as drums (Dehol) by children.

Throughout the implementation phase, subcommittee members played an active and integral role—coordinating activities, supporting community engagement efforts, and providing real-time feedback to ensure the event ran smoothly and responsively.

Phase 3 – Outcome Summary & Reporting

The final phase centered on gathering participant feedback, analyzing survey responses, and compiling the Outcome Summary Report. The evaluation process provided meaningful insight into community participation, participant satisfaction, educational impact, and the festival's overall effectiveness.

Feedback gathered from families, volunteers, presenters, and community partners painted a clear picture: there is a strong and growing interest for culturally relevant wellness programming within the Armenian community. Respondents consistently highlighted the festival's positive impact on participating children and families — affirming that the event resonated deeply and met a genuine community need.

The successful completion of all three phases marks a significant milestone for the Arev Wellness Festival. More than an event, the festival strengthened the bonds between community organizations, wellness professionals, and local families — laying a meaningful foundation for continued collaboration, advocacy, and culturally grounded mental health programming in Los Angeles.

PROJECT RESULTS

The Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families achieved its core mission of bringing together children, parents, wellness professionals, community organizations, and volunteers in a culturally grounded space dedicated to mental wellness, education, and community connection. The event created a culturally inclusive environment where Armenian families felt welcomed, supported, and engaged.

The festival met its primary objectives of advancing mental health awareness and delivering accessible, evidence-informed educational resources to the community. Seminars and structured discussions addressed critical topics including parenting, children's mental health, healthy habits, and the impact of various factors such as technology on child development. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions directly to professionals, engage in open discussions, and receive practical tips, tools, and community wellness resources to support healthier lifestyles at home.

Interactive programming for children was highly successful in encouraging creativity, social interaction, and healthy engagement. Activities including lavash and gata making, flower therapy, art therapy, chess, robotics, sports, and the "Sugar Detective Challenge" were intentionally designed to carry therapeutic value while promoting emotional wellness, teamwork, and healthy living through experiential, culturally relevant learning.

A dedicated stage program featuring performances by community dance groups, choirs, and local public school students provided a meaningful platform for celebrating Armenian cultural identity and heritage — reinforcing the festival's commitment to culturally grounded programming.

The event also strengthened partnerships between community organizations, wellness professionals, and local families. Various mental health and wellness organizations participated by sharing information about services, wellness programs, and community resources available for children and families. This increased community awareness of local support systems and encouraged continued engagement beyond the festival itself.

Participant feedback collected through surveys and evaluation forms reflected high satisfaction with the event's organization, educational content, wellness activities, and overall environment. Participants highlighted the value of culturally relevant programming and the importance of accessible, family-oriented community event.

In summary, the Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids and Families successfully fulfilled its stated objectives by:

- Promoting mental health and wellness awareness
- Increasing access to educational and community resources
- Encouraging healthy family engagement and participation

- Providing culturally relevant and responsive wellness programming
- Strengthening community collaboration and cross-sector partnerships
- Creating a safe, positive, and supportive environment for Armenian children and families

The festival's outcomes affirm a demonstrated and significant need within the Armenian community for continued investment in culturally informed, family-centered wellness programming and provide a strong foundation for future initiatives.

PROJECT COSTS

The following provides a breakdown of project costs associated with the planning, recruitment, implementation, and reporting phases of the Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families.

Deliverable / Phase	Description	Amount
Deliverable / Phase 1 – Project Development & Planning	Development of agenda and schedule for 8 seminars and 8 wellness activities; development of comprehensive pre/post questionnaire; development of evaluation survey; securing the event location; development of flyers and promotional materials	\$21,000.00
Deliverable / 4.2 B – Participant Recruitment	Recruitment of a minimum of 400 youth and families from Service Areas 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 through community outreach, marketing, and promotional efforts	\$12,000.00
Deliverable / 4.3 A – Culturally Relevant Mental Health Resource List	Research and compilation of a comprehensive ethnic and multicultural (EE/ME) specific mental health resource list	\$2,000.00
Deliverable / 4.4 A – Project Implementation	Conducted 8 wellness seminars and 12 wellness activities; provided culturally appropriate food, pastries, refreshments, and complimentary coffee throughout the duration of the event	\$13,000.00
Final Summary Report	Preparation and completion of the final outcome summary report	\$1,000.00
Subcommittee Presentation	Presentation of project outcomes and findings to the subcommittee	\$1,000.00

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: \$50,000.00

LESSONS LEARNED

The Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families successfully delivered culturally relevant wellness education and meaningful community engagement, while also surfacing some challenges that will inform the planning and execution of future initiatives.

Seminar Scheduling & Community Availability One of the primary challenges involved scheduling seminars across three time slots on a Sunday. Morning session attendance was significantly impacted by community members' church attendance. Future festivals would benefit from a scheduling approach that better reflects the community's weekly rhythms and cultural routines.

Program Length: The seven-hour event format — running from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM — was identified as a barrier to sustained engagement. Expecting participants to remain engaged across a full day of seminars and activities was ambitious, and fatigue visibly affected overall engagement as the day progressed. Future events should consider a condensed format with a curated selection of high-priority sessions to maintain energy and engagement levels throughout.

Mental Health Stigma & Engagement Barriers Participation in certain seminar topics was affected by persistent mental health stigma within the community. Some attendees were reluctant to engage openly in the presence of acquaintances, limiting candid participation in sensitive discussions. Future planning should explore formats that offer greater privacy, such as smaller breakout sessions.

Entry Management & Attendance Tracking The use of multiple entry points resulted in inconsistent sign-in compliance, compromising the accuracy of attendance data. Implementing a single sign-in point with dedicated volunteers would significantly improve data collection and overall entry flow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes, participant feedback, and operational lessons identified through the inaugural Arev Wellness Festival, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the planning, implementation, and impact of future community wellness initiatives.

1.Streamline Program Length and Scheduling Reducing the overall duration of the event and limiting the number of concurrent seminars is recommended. A more concentrated program structure will sustain participant engagement and increase the overall quality of attendance across sessions.

2. Implement a Single, Staffed Entry Point: Establishing one designated entrance with a staffed check-in station is essential for improving participant flow and ensuring consistent and accurate attendance data collection.

3. Structure Concurrent Programming More Effectively Future programming should limit the number of overlapping sessions or establish a clearly communicated session hierarchy to guide attendee decision-making. This will improve attendance distribution, reduce scheduling conflicts, and ensure that priority programming receives adequate participation.

4. Optimize Venue and Space Allocation: High-attendance sessions and featured seminars should be assigned to primary event spaces such as the main hall or stage, while breakout rooms are reserved for smaller workshops, targeted discussions, and interactive activities.

These improvements will help future programs run more efficiently while maintaining strong community impact and providing meaningful mental health education and wellness support.

OUTCOMES

The Arev Armenian Wellness Festival for Kids & Families successfully advanced its core mission of strengthening community capacity through increased access to culturally responsive mental health education, wellness programming, and family-centered support resources.

The festival engaged over 500 kids, young adults and families through a combination of community outreach and direct event participation. Programming consisted of 8 educational wellness seminars and 12 interactive wellness activities, collectively delivering a comprehensive and culturally grounded experience for attendees of all ages.

Participant engagement and seminar attendance were systematically tracked using sign-in sheets and pre- and post-event surveys. This data collection process enabled the project team to assess participation levels, measure shifts in mental health awareness, and evaluate the overall educational impact of the festival — providing a meaningful evidence base for continued program development and future reporting.

Seminar Topics and Participation Outcomes:

- **Social Skills, Communication, Parenting** – Serina Nersisyan
Signed-in: 8 | Pre-survey: 2 | Post-survey: 2
- **Raising Resilient Children, Armenian Parenting** – Avo Soltanian, LMFT
Signed-in: 5 | Pre-survey: 1 | Post-survey: 1
- **Effects of Domestic Violence on Children** – Anna Yaralyan
Signed-in: 6 | Pre-survey: 2 | Post-survey: 2
- **Help Parents Identify Drug Abuse and Support Children with Mental Health Issues** – Sona Hovsepian
Signed-in: 8 | Pre-survey: 2 | Post-survey: 2
- **Healthy Acculturation & Balancing Armenian Culture / Maternal Mental Health in the Armenian-American Community** – Amalya Tagakchyan
Signed-in: 7 | Pre-survey: 1 | Post-survey: 1

- **Building Confidence in Children: Helping Kids Thrive and Stand Up to Bullying** – Nora Chitilian
Signed-in: 12 | Pre-survey: 3 | Post-survey: 3
- **Screen Time and the Developing Brain: What Science Reveals** – Violet H. Mesrkhani
Signed-in: 15 | Pre-survey: 5 | Post-survey: 5
- **Play Therapy** – Viktoriya Petrosyan
Signed-in: 4 | Pre-survey: 1 | Post-survey: 1

Attendance data demonstrated strong engagement in seminars covering high-priority topics such as child development and parenting practices, indicating significant community interest in accessible, evidence-informed family wellness education. Comparatively lower participation in select sessions further reinforced the need for continued efforts to reduce mental health stigma, optimize event structure, and improve overall accessibility for future programming.

Collectively, the integration of educational seminars, culturally responsive content, and mental health resource dissemination contributed to measurable gains in community awareness and meaningfully strengthened linkages between participating families and local support services — advancing the festival's broader goal of building a more informed, connected, and resilient community.

Summary

The Arev Wellness Festival was a wonderful success, bringing together families, children, mental health professionals, educators, and community members for a day of wellness, learning, and connection. The event featured enriching seminars led by expert speakers, as well as a variety of engaging activities for children and families.

The educational seminars made a meaningful impact on attendees. Licensed psychologists and therapists addressed important topics such as parenting challenges, child development, and family mental health — all tailored to the needs of the Armenian community. Parents had the opportunity to listen to qualified professionals, ask questions, and walk away with practical tools and greater confidence. The open, welcoming atmosphere encouraged honest dialogue and genuine connection between speakers and participants.

Children and families also enjoyed a rich lineup of hands-on activities throughout the day. Art therapy sessions gave children a creative and nurturing outlet for self-expression. The chess area, organized by the Angeleno Chess Club, drew exceptional interest and engagement. The robotics booth was a crowd favorite, introducing children to technology in a fun and interactive way. The lavash-making experience was particularly memorable, connecting children and families to Armenian heritage through culture and tradition — an activity that children were still talking about long after the event.

The festival created a positive, educational, and welcoming environment for all who attended. We received many heartfelt thank-you from participants, speakers, and partner organizations, and there is enthusiastic hope to continue the tradition next year.

Community Feedback:

Ardi Kassakian, Mayor of Glendale: "The Arev Wellness Festival is a truly great and important event for our community. It brings people together in a meaningful way and reflects the values we cherish —mental health, family, and a strong sense of belonging. I commend the organizers for their dedication and look forward to seeing this wonderful tradition continue."

Elen Asatryan, Glendale City Council Member: "Thank you to the organizers for once again bringing such an exceptional event to our city. The Arev Wellness Festival is a shining example of what our community can achieve when we come together with purpose and heart. Your commitment to enriching the lives of Glendale families is deeply appreciated."

Violet Mesrkhani, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist: "I just wanted to express my sincere appreciation for all your hard work in organizing the Arev Kids' Festival yesterday! I know it takes a LOT of effort to make these events a success and your hard work is truly appreciated."

Levon Altunyan, Founder of Angeleno Chess Club: "It was a really wonderful event! You do an amazing job and chess wise this event was even better than the Tsakhkazard festival. More interest maybe because it was an enclosed area. Keep me posted about similar events and thanks again."

Karine Davoudi, Care Coordinator III, Child and Family, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services: "We were so proud to be a part of such an amazing event. Thank you for having us; we look forward to collaborating with you in the future."

Serina Nersisian, M.A., LMFT: "Thank you so much for organizing such an incredible event for our Armenian community. It was clear how much care and hard work went into making it such a success. My daughters had an amazing time. They still can't stop talking about the lavash experience! I also want to personally thank you for including me on such a wonderful panel of speakers. I enjoyed sharing information and connecting with the Armenian parents in our community."

Mary, Mother of 11-year-old Eva: "It was a fantastic event! Eva had so much fun participating in the art therapy activities, playing chess, and spending time at the robotics booth. As a mother of three children, I constantly face different challenges related to school and parenting, so I truly appreciated having the opportunity to attend the parenting seminar, listen to the speakers, and ask questions. It was both helpful and inspiring. The festival created such a positive, educational, and welcoming environment for families and children. We are looking forward to attending again next year."

Link to articles and pictures-<https://www.armeniankidsfestival.com/events/wellness-festival>