



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION

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April 24, 2025

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Lisa H. Wong, Psy.D.
Director, Department of Mental Health
510 South Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90020

Dear Supervisors and Director Wong:

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (MHSA) PUBLIC HEARING: MHSA ANNUAL UPDATE 2025-2026

On April 10, 2025, the Behavioral Health Commission (Commission) held its Public Hearing relative to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Annual Update 2025-2026. The Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) submitted their Annual Update on March 10, 2025, for a 30-day Comment Period. A total of 65 members of the public participated at the April 10th Hearing (both in-person and via online) and 9 persons provided Public Comment. This letter provides a summary of the comments received by members of the public and subsequent input by the members of the Commission.

Stakeholder Participation

LACDMH continued to improve efforts to engage stakeholders throughout the Community Planning Process. One hundred community and institutional representatives were invited to participate in the formation of a Community Planning Team. This team met for nine consecutive months. The Commission was concerned, however, by the noticeable decline in participation at the Public Hearing. In previous years, many more stakeholders, including representatives of the Service Areas and Underserved Cultural Communities, participated and provided public comments.

Annual Update Statistics

The Annual Update included a detailed review of pertinent statistical information identifying services provided by the Supervisorial District and Service Area. Statistics were also provided to show services offered by ethnic/language demographic and age

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group. LACDMH is commended for its clear and thorough presentation of demographic information as recommended by the Commission last year.

Public Hearing Participation

A robust outreach was conducted by LACDMH, particularly our Commission staff, to invite members of the public to participate in the April 10th Public Hearing. The Commission database includes 8,169 individuals and organizations that were invited to the meeting.

Issues Addressed by members of the Public and Commissioners

Unspent Funds

Concern was raised in Public Comment relative to a significant balance of projected unspent funds (budgeted at \$729.9 million). The County's underserved communities continue to seek behavioral health assistance. Additionally, we remain under emergency order in our response to the unhoused. It is essential to use these funds in an efficient and urgent manner.

Recommendation

The Commission requests quarterly progress reports related to the unspent balance and, in particular, identify methods to spend these funds in a timely manner.

Increased Community Engagement

Despite the deployment of an enhanced Community Planning Team, concern still exists that community engagement is lacking throughout the process. In particular, the absence of most of the Service Area Leadership Teams (SALTs) and Underserved Cultural Communities (USCCs) in the Public Hearing process was noticeable. Also, soliciting stakeholder response by means of conventional surveys was noticeably low. It led the Commission to speculate whether these groups were, in fact, fully engaged in the process.

Recommendation

DMH staff are requested to consider innovative methods to encourage and entice stakeholders to participate in a fuller way. Options to consider include meeting times and locations. The Commission requests staff to provide an update at an upcoming meeting on methods used to seek a more robust level of participation.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

The various County agencies and departments involved in the MHSA process continues to grow. Attention is needed to facilitate good productive communication among these agencies. For example, the transition to the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) requires the Commission to expand its expertise to include the Substance Use community (SUD) through the Department of Public Health's Substance Use and Prevention Control (SAPC). Additionally, the Board of Supervisors recently took steps to establish a new County-led Homeless initiative.

Recommendation

Cross-sector alignment must be facilitated in order to provide a thorough and productive disbursement of MHSA funds throughout the pertinent agencies. The Commission seeks regular briefings from LACDMH staff on the process to achieve collaboration among the County's departments.

Other Issues Addressed:

- a. There appears to be a lack of engagement with the 88 independent cities in Los Angeles County relative to the MHSA process, particularly as it relates to the County's unhoused communities. More collaboration needs to be identified.
- b. There is a call for more attention to better inclusivity and dignity in language used in LACDMH printed materials. An example of dignified language is the suggestion to use the term "unhoused" rather than "homeless."
- c. Commissioners are concerned relative to the overall low participation in programs such as the department's Full Service Partnership (FSP) compared to the size of the County's population.
- d. LACDMH is encouraged to collaborate with the Department of Public Health, the Sheriff's Department and other pertinent agencies to improve programs which lead to Suicide Prevention, wellness and postvention efforts. A model can be found in the Santa Clarita Valley Suicide Prevention Committee.
- e. LACDMH is asked to further develop the powerful Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model with emphasis on 3–5-year-olds attending public or private preschools, modeling research from the Georgetown Model.
- f. Using the Foster Youth Independence (FYI) Program of Santa Clarita as a model, LACDMH is requested to consider implementation of a Foster Care Allies and Case Management Program, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services.

We thank the Board of Supervisors for your careful consideration of this Annual Update and, once again, commend our LACDMH leadership and team for the tremendous effort to produce this report. We look forward to continuing collaboration with your offices as we seek to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Michael Molina, Chair
Los Angeles County Behavioral Health Commission