



# A Right to Heal: Mental Health in Diverse Communities



California Pan-Ethnic  
HEALTH NETWORK



AltaMed  
Your community health network

## Listening and Learning

### WHY?

To improve California's failing public behavioral health system, voters passed the Mental Health Services Act, 2004 (MHSA) to fund multiple initiatives including:

1. Community Services and Supports
2. Prevention and Early Intervention
3. Testing of Innovative Programs

In 2020, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) contracted CPEHN (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network) for 3 years to engage and uplift diverse voices to influence what local programs and services are funded in their communities. Year 1 and Year 2 accomplishments can be found [here](#).

### HOW?

**Listening sessions with diverse racial and ethnic communities** enables CPEHN to amplify the voices of historically marginalized communities whose needs and wishes have been overlooked or assumed.

At the local level, AltaMed: Civic Engagement collaborated with CPEHN and its statewide partner the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC) to facilitate a listening session with a focus on mental health services from the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) community perspective (27 participants). In addition, a listening session with 4 AltaMed Behavioral Health clinicians was held to further understand and support the delivery of mental health services in SELA.

27

individuals attended the listening session

4

AltaMed Behavioral Health clinicians attended a listening session

## WHAT?

### 3 Themes Heard From the Southeast Los Angeles Community

1

Increase Community Engagement

2

Law Enforcement Training

3

Difficulty Navigating Systems of Care and Receiving Quality Attention



## INCREASE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COVID-19 worsened our mental health, which is often considered a taboo topic. We need more listening sessions to increase awareness and address our mental health needs. These safe spaces allow the sharing of resources and stories among community members, both adults and youth, experiencing similar situations. Promotoras are essential culturally-competent providers connected to the community.

*"Es importante crear grupos de comunicación, tiene la habilidad de crear esa confianza, se necesita esa colaboración con el condado para poder hacer llegar la voz."*

## LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

We have concerns with the ability of law enforcement to help individuals in need of mental health care. We're unsure whether they've received appropriate training to help us and our families.

## DIFFICULTY NAVIGATING SYSTEMS OF CARE AND RECEIVING QUALITY ATTENTION

Referrals leading to dead ends, "being tied up in the system," and limited appointments are frustrating. We have difficulty accessing services through LA county offices and little information is available for communities of color.

*"It's not just about listening –  
It's about hearing what we're saying and providing resources that align with our needs."*



### **AltaMed behavioral health providers**

reinforced the needs of their community echoing that behavioral health (BH) services are necessary and shouldn't be considered a luxury. Yet, insufficient funding, workforce shortages, and missing links to social services undermine their efforts to provide the care their community needs. Solutions being investigated involve 3 areas:

1. **Community Involvement** - wellness center / community gardens / BH promotion campaign
2. **Workforce** - specialized BH nurse training / pop-up sites / career promotion / stipends / grants
3. **Policy** - provide AltaMed employees with bill tracker / assess California Medical Association's BH agenda

### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

**This is a historic opportunity** to translate what we've learned into action. While A Right to Heal as a project is ending, it has paved the way for MHSA community program planning to *reflect the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of mental health consumers* moving forward by continuing to listen to and support local communities in their advocacy for their mental health.

### **WAYS TO STAY INVOLVED**

**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Underserved Cultural Communities (UsCC) Committees** - Part of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) is to include and empower underrepresented ethnic/cultural groups, and the LA County of Department of Mental Health does so via the UsCC Committees. As part of the community engagement process, the UsCC Committees aim to collaborate closely with community stakeholders, improve the capacity of the public mental health system, and tailor and inform policy and decision making that are culturally competent and recovery-oriented. To join and be part of one of the many UsCC Committees and inform decisions, please refer to the site: [Underserved Cultural Communities](#).

**Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Latino UsCC Subcommittee** - As part of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) community engagement process, the LA County Department of Mental Health has different UsCC subcommittees, with one of them focusing on the Latino population. If you would like to engage and inform key decisions, please contact Community Liason, Luis Guzman, Psy., at [lgguzman@dmh.lacounty.gov](mailto:lgguzman@dmh.lacounty.gov). The meetings are every third Tuesday of the month from 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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## HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SELA

The loss of a job, a sudden death, or family trauma can affect the state of our mental health. Let us normalize talking about mental health in our families and communities and seek help when we need it. Share the resources below and commit to finding help when you or a family member needs it.

**Crisis Support Services** - Los Angeles and Orange Counties have crisis support services that can help in the event you or a family member have a mental health emergency. Learn about these services here:

[LA County Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams](#)  
[Orange County Crisis Services](#).

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** - provides education, support, and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives. To learn more, visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - provides a free and confidential information hotline available 24/7. This helpline provides information for individuals and families experiencing mental health or substance abuse issues. For information, call [844-804-7500](tel:844-804-7500).

**LA County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH)** - aids individuals with no insurance and Medi-Cal beneficiaries. To reach the Department of Mental Health, [call 855-854-7771](tel:855-854-7771) or visit [LACDMH](http://LACDMH).

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** - offers 24/7 call, text, and chat access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing suicidal, substance use, or any mental health crisis, or emotional distress. To access this service, [dial 988](tel:988). You can also dial this number if you are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support.

**iPrevail LA County Mental Health Support Group** - features a collection of mental health community support groups that are topic specific for users to access support and connections with individuals experiencing similar hardships. For more information, visit [iPrevail](#).

*For more about CPEHN's work mobilizing communities of color to advocate for public policies that advance health equity and improve health outcomes, visit [www.cpehn.org](http://www.cpehn.org).*