



**Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee Teleconference Meeting Summary**  
**Date: Thursday, February 10, 2022 | Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**MHSOAC**  
**1325 J Street, Suite 1700**  
**Sacramento, CA 95814**

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**Committee Members:**

**Staff:**

**Other Attendees:**

Mayra Alvarez, Chair Senait Admassu Estrella Amaro-Jepesen Claire Buckley Veronica Chavez Eugene Durrah Luis Garcia Jim Gilmer Jonathan Lee Etsegenet Teodros Yia Xiong Richard Zaldivar	Toby Ewing Adrej Delich Amariani Martinez Tom Orrock Norma Pate Maureen Reilly	Anna Angela Brand Jaime F Stacie Hiramoto Cynthia Salas
<u>Other Commissioners Present:</u> Al Rowlett		

Committee members absent: Nahla Kayali, Lee Lo, Yolanda Randles, Corinita Reyes

**Welcome, Announcements, and General Public Comment**

Commissioner Mayra Alvarez, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m., welcomed everyone, and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Chair Alvarez asked Committee Members to complete the survey on the effectiveness of the Committee’s work in 2021 and where efforts should be focused in 2022. The Committee’s general focus will remain the same:

- Provide input on the Commission’s Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) and efforts to address inequities in internal processes and grant programs.
- Identify ways to document and communicate inequities in California’s mental health system to inform policy and practice.

- Identify policy and practice reforms and explore existing efforts and model programs to address inequities.

Chair Alvarez welcomed Commissioner Rowlett to the meeting and asked him to introduce himself.

Amariani Martinez, MHSOAC staff, reviewed the meeting protocols, called the roll, and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

#### General Public Comment

Jaime F, peer advocate, stated there are many issues being faced by the Black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) community. The speaker asked to collaborate with the Commission to learn from each other better ways to serve the BIPOC community and support each other.

### **Agenda Item 1: Action – Approval of the December 8, 2021, Minutes**

Stacie Hiramoto, Director, Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), referred to the vote on the last page of the minutes and noted that it would be helpful to record the reasons that Commissioners do not vote in support of motions. She asked about next steps in the process for this vote on recommendations to bring to the Commission for approval.

Chair Alvarez stated she made a request at the January Commission meeting that the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Subcommittee take up the recommendations from this Committee to discuss the implications for the PEI process, which was accepted by the Commission Chair.

Chair Alvarez asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the December 8, 2021, CLCC meeting.

Committee Member Zaldivar made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Committee Member Buckley.

Vote recorded with participating members as follows:

- Approve: Committee Members Admassu, Amaro-Jeppesen, Buckley, Chavez, Durrah, Garcia, Gilmer, Lee, Teodros, Xiong, and Zaldivar, and Chair Alvarez

### **Agenda Item 2: Racial Equity Action Plan: Final Review**

#### **Presenter:**

- Anna Naify, MHSOAC Consulting Psychologist

Chair Alvarez stated the Committee will provide input on the Commission's first Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) and will specifically address areas related to building equity in grants and ensuring sustained focus on Action Plan goals.

Anna Naify, MHSOAC Consulting Psychologist, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the mission statement, progress made, components being considered for the REAP, the draft REAP, and accountability and next steps. She stated community engagement is

the cornerstone of transforming the mental health system to be more racially equitable. She noted that the scope of the REAP has been expanded beyond grants and internal operations.

### Discussion

Committee Member Buckley asked about service providers who specifically provide racial and ethnic services. It is important to consider the intersectionality of these services. She asked about addressing the need for tolerance and acceptance in every agency that is not specifically devoted to a racial and ethnic lens.

Dr. Naify stated the REAP starts with the tools that the Commission currently has to impact its own operation and the communities. The hope is to demonstrate process and commitment and to inspire others to do the same. She agreed that there are local barriers and a lack of service providers in general, especially diverse service providers. This REAP may not be able to address those big issues but it is taking important steps to move in that direction.

Committee Member Buckley stated the older adult community is seriously challenged by communication aspects, which have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. She asked about the digital divide and if the older adult population will be included in outreach efforts.

Dr. Naify stated a communication strategy has not yet been developed for the REAP. This can be considered and built into the communication strategy after the plan is approved.

Chair Alvarez stated part of the discussion today is not necessarily to have all the answers, but to ensure that the right questions are being asked about what should be included in the REAP for the greatest impact. It is important to consider what this plan will look like in action and how it will respond to the concerns and questions raised.

Committee Member Garcia stated the requirement for every county in California to create a Cultural Competency Plan has been in existence for over 20 years. He stated concern that training for equity and culturally and linguistically appropriate services is only four hours per year in some counties, two hours in others, and two to three hours for community-based organizations. He questioned whether providers can provide equity and culturally and linguistically appropriate services with only two to four hours of training per year.

Committee Member Garcia stated there is no reference in the REAP to culturally and linguistically appropriate services, equality, or family participation. Family participation is critical in many communities. It is important to provide language regarding diagnoses, symptoms, risk factors, and warning signs in multiple languages.

Committee Member Garcia stated appreciation that the REAP includes accountability. Accountability needs to start with the counties directly. Counties and community-based organizations need to take responsibility.

Chair Alvarez asked Committee Member Garcia, if these county Cultural Competency Plans had existed and had been a tool to be used, what he would suggest that the Commission do in addition to or in support of the county plans.

Committee Member Garcia suggested first outlining the implementation plan for the counties. Counties need to include how they plan to break down the community data

percentages of individuals being served by age, ethnicity, race, etc. Every year, based on the funding received by the counties, the counties need to include how they plan to increase the percentage of individuals being served in each community and by what percentage, because generally only the domain of access is concentrated on and does not consider the lower percentages of services accessed by the same individuals three to six months later.

Committee Member Garcia stated Medi-Cal requires medical necessity, symptoms, and clinical interventions. Not all counties do this well because of the lack of accountability and commitment. He stated the hope that the \$4 billion for children and adolescent services will be used to reduce disparities and inequalities.

Committee Member Gilmer stated the blueprint of the REAP looks inclusive. He stated the need to ensure that, when doing these types of action plans, the blueprint builds racial and social equity. He stated there are elements included in the REAP about stakeholder contracts. Many Committees have been eliminated over the years. He stated concern that stakeholder input is powerless. There is no empowerment of stakeholder groups or Committees to be an advisory body to the Commission where they take public input and act on it to drive policy. In order to achieve racial and social equity, stakeholders must be given equal power. Empower the stakeholders and Committees to be valued and accepted so that their input will drive policy decisions at the Commission level. Until then, the racial and equity house is fake.

Committee Member Gilmer stated the hope that the Commission will empower regional collaboratives of racial and ethnic grass roots organizations at the local level to be engaged locally with their counties as well as on a statewide level. Until there is synchronicity between upstream and downstream, there will continue to be a revolving circle and be very divergent in accomplishing any type of measurable outcomes in racial and social equity. Racial and equity specificity needs to be built into the rollout of this plan.

Committee Member Teodros asked if the term “all Californians” includes undocumented individuals.

Dr. Naify stated the Strategic Plan does not differentiate on status.

#### Public Comment

Jaime F stated, when speaking of race and ethnicity, cultural humility should also be looked at to better serve diverse communities and to speak to communities in ways that will provide the best support. Taking the four-hour training because it is required by the county does not make individuals experts in cultural humility. It takes lifelong learning and self-evaluation. There are a few guiding principles for cultural humility such as ongoing compassionate self-awareness and being open and teachable. The speaker suggested, in order to be truly culturally appropriate, revisiting the verbiage and define what cultural humility is in this context in order to learn to walk in another person’s shoes and normalize the conversation. The speaker asked to speak with Dr. Naify offline.

Cynthia Salas, Equity Service Manager, Ventura County, agreed with previous comments about how the implementation of this work will happen. It is difficult to ensure that civil rights and cultural and linguistic competency are implemented without the workforce or authority. Without meeting these requirements, disparities and inequities will continue.

Cynthia Salas stated the challenge of finding bilingual providers is an ongoing battle. Part of the solution is to speak to legislators to hold universities and colleges that produce this workforce accountable to ensure that those professionals come out of their institutions. She suggested that the Commission advocate for legislation that is tied to that. Systemic change starts at the top with the board of supervisors, CEOs, and directors of agencies that are being asked to implement and push these efforts, but needs to address the entire system. She asked the Commission to give counties the authority or title to follow through with the requirements made in this REAP through legislation or a solid team that is permanent so that this work can continue.

Committee Member Garcia stated appreciation for Cynthia Salas's comments. There are other individuals in Ventura County who are doing a magnificent job. He encouraged her to continue to do the work with integrity because that is the way to move forward.

Anna stated she belongs to a community of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, she is Jewish, and speaks Russian. There are many similar individuals in California, but they are an invisible minority. Individuals who immigrated from western and eastern Europe are invisible because they appear white, although the white community does not accept them because they have accents and historical trauma. She urged this Committee to see if a category can be created for individuals who do not belong in the established categories.

Stacie Hiramoto commended Committee Members Garcia and Gilmer and Anna for their comments. She also commended this Committee for keeping the spirit alive because so much effort goes into plans like this but the same issues have continued to be seen. The proposed REAP looks fine but it will all be about the implementation.

Stacie Hiramoto suggested that this Committee hear about the California Mental Health Equity Project that will be working with counties and the community to improve the implementation of the county cultural competence plan. She welcomed Anna to join in the planning of Phase III of the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP).

### **Agenda Item 3: CLCC Goals Related to the Commission's Portfolio of Programs**

#### **Presenter:**

- Norma Pate, MHSOAC Deputy Director

Chair Alvarez stated the Committee will hear a presentation on the Commission's various programs and will discuss potential CLCC goals which may support those initiatives. Discussion will include a summary of Committee Member survey results and an invitation for Committee Members to share how their work aligns with the Commission's initiatives.

Norma Pate, MHSOAC Deputy Director, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the MHSOAC budget overview and expenditure plan, which was included in the meeting materials. She stated the Governor's Proposed 2022-23 Budget provides three new staff positions for the Commission and over \$71 million for various grant programs.

Chair Alvarez summarized the CLCC 2022 Survey Results document, which was included in the meeting materials. She noted that the survey is still open and encouraged all Committee

Members to participate in the survey as a way to give direct input on the focus areas of the Committee. She asked for feedback on the MHSOAC budget and the CLCC survey.

### Committee Member Feedback

- Ensure that this funding will be available to small agencies.
- Meet with community-based organizations to learn their potential and why counties may invest in building their capacity but do not engage them to become service providers.
- Make a standing agenda item sharing the takeaways from the last meeting and where those items are currently. Letting Committee Members know the results of their feedback, whether it was used or not in decision-making, gives an idea of the impacts of the work being done by the Committee.
- Incubation capabilities of funding providers is paramount to starting new initiatives and new companies and developing seed funding opportunities for creative, innovative services not currently being provided. Incumbent service providers are not capable of great changes such as hiring all new staff that represent diverse communities.
- Accountability is one of the big issues in everything.

### Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto stated the purpose and the possibilities of this Committee are not clear. She asked if the focus of this Committee is to try to get the Commission to become more culturally competent and to weigh in on their projects or if this Committee's focus is systems change. She asked if this Committee has any power over the counties.

Stacie Hiramoto stated it is difficult to comment on the budget because it is so broad. She stated this Committee should try to influence the Commission and its work. If this Committee wants to influence what the Commission does, she suggested that the Commission lobbies and supports certain budget items proposed by the Governor and Legislature. One of the things that communities are supporting, particularly communities of color and the LGBTQ community, is the Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, sponsored by CPEHN, the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California, Black Women's Health Network, the Public Health Institute, and others. This Committee could recommend to the Commission that staff support this item in the budget. This will make a big difference because this budget proposal will direct \$100 million to establish the California Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, which would go to community-based organizations.

Stacie Hiramoto suggested that this Committee review the PEI Report, which will be on the May Commission agenda.

Cynthia Salas asked about the long-term plan for the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative in the budget and if school districts or counties are expected to fund the wellness centers.

Deputy Director Pate stated the goal is for these programs to be implemented to create the partnerships between schools and counties. The implementation and evaluation pieces will

address the sustainability need as well as the goal of sustaining these programs with other funding.

Angela Brand, Project Manager/Field Manager, Center for Applied Research Solutions, stated finding the purpose, vision, and goals of this Committee is an incredibly important conversation to continue having. The California Mental Health Equity Project (CMHEP), a new project of the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), is engaging in launch activities and listening sessions. She suggested thinking about opportunities for this Committee and the Commission to partner with the CMHEP. It will be going into counties and communities to gather feedback to help the DHCS revise the requirements for the cultural and linguistic competence plans at the county level.

### **Adjourn**

Chair Alvarez recapped today's discussion. She asked Committee Members who have not already done so to respond to the survey and to send future agenda items to staff. She stated the next MHSOAC meeting will be held on February 24<sup>th</sup> and the next CLCC meeting will be held on March 10<sup>th</sup>. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.

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