THE EMPOWERMENT CONGRESS
Mental Health Committee

Solutions to Bridge Mental Health Disparities in Historically Under-Represented Ethnic Communities

A Dialogue
July 14, 2012
Serving the communities in Los Angeles comprising the Los Angeles County Second Supervisorial District, the Empowerment Congress is here to educate, engage, and empower all members of our diverse communities to ensure our collective voice is heard by:

- Encouraging and enlisting the full participation of our community to improve our quality of life
- Educating and informing our community on how government works
- Developing strategies that shape policy and legislation
- Connecting our community with public resources

Founded in 1992 by then Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Empowerment Congress is a dynamic partnership among neighborhood groups, residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and community leaders. The Empowerment Congress served as a model and precursor to the City of Los Angeles’ Neighborhood Councils. It is now serving over 2.5 million residents in the Los Angeles County Second Supervisorial District.

The Empowerment Congress is an ongoing effort in participatory government, founded on the principle that elected officials are most effective when the constituents they serve are actively involved in the decision-making process. Two decades after its inception, the Empowerment Congress has now expanded its programs and mission of civic engagement and community empowerment to the Los Angeles County Second District, which includes nine cities (Los Angeles, Carson, Compton, Culver City, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale, and Lynwood) and many unincorporated areas: Athens, Baldwin Hills, Del Aire, East Compton, El Camino Village, Firestone, Florence, Graham, Ladera Heights, Lennox, Marina del Rey, Rancho Dominguez, View Park, West Carson, West Compton, West Rancho Dominguez, Westmont, Willowbrook, Windsor Hills, and Wiseburn.

The Empowerment Congress is comprised of nominated and appointed members organized to engage their peers in efforts to improve their communities and directly impact policies and decisions that impact the lives of all residents in the 2nd Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County.
MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Formed in 2006 by then Assembly Member Mark Ridley-Thomas, this monthly forum, which today serves the Second District, ensures that constituents are apprised of and can give voice to mental health issues of concern. Mental health providers, allied public and nonprofit organizations, consumers, family members, advocates, concerned citizens and others join to discuss and share ideas which address mental health-related issues and advance policy and other important initiatives.

Since the Committee’s inception much effort has been devoted to educating participants about Proposition 63 - the Mental Health Services Act - and how constituents can benefit. Last year the Committee served as a nexus for coalition-building on behalf of increasing services to those who are homeless and mentally ill.

Currently the Committee’s work is focused on the design of mental health services in concert with health care reform. To that end, the Committee focused its annual workshop at the Empowerment Congress Summit in January 2012 on “Bridging Disparities in Access to and Receipt of Mental Health Services by Under-Represented Ethnic Populations (UREP).” Panel presentations and individual group discussions focused on specific impact of disparities on the African American, Asian Pacific Islander and Latino communities in District 2, with a special focus on beneficiaries of public assistance and services.

Today’s discussion builds on the work of our January workshop participants, with the following purpose, goals and objectives:

- Raise awareness of increased need for public behavioral health services in response to heightened community stressors in our local neighborhoods, including high rates of poverty, exposure to violence, unemployment and housing insecurity.
- Inform the Empowerment Congress Mental Health Committee as it continues its advocacy throughout the year and beyond.
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Co-Chairs
Elizabeth W. Pfromm
Jack Barbour, M.D.

2012 Participating Members
Kathleen Austria, Second District
Treva Blackwell, DMH
Veronica Carranza, Amigas Empowerment Network
Evelyn Clark, Multiservice Family Center
Rafaela Covarrubias
Joseph DeGuerre, LACCC
Dadisi Elliott, New Directions
Martha Escandon, Amigas Empowerment Network
Ron Fisher, District 2
Becky Gaba, Didi Hirsch
Donna Grayson, Grayson’s Awareness & Outreach
Carey Grier, BLACCC, LACCC
Herb Hatanaka, Special Services for Groups
Jasmine Hill, PACS
Joyce Jackson, Kedren Community Mental Health Center
Mariko Kahn, PACS
Yolanda Ketchum, Parent
Marie Lamothe-Francois, Compton Central Health
Dora Leong Gallo, A Community of Friends
Terry Lewis, LA County Mental Health Commission
Jashin Liberto, LAUSD
Julie Loeb, DMH MAT Unit
Aurora Lopez, Los Angeles County Public Health
Evelyn Metoyer-Williams, Community Activist
Sawako Nitao, LACCC
Berta Ortiz, Kedren Community Mental Health Center
César Portillo, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic
Ellie Afshar, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic
Alejandra Reyes, Children’s Collective
Maria Salinas, DMH
Susan Smith, LAC DPH
Archie Souder, BLACCC, LACCC
Evelyn Watler
Jacquelyn Wilcoxen, DMH SA6
We thank the following organizations for providing representation and participation at Mental Health Committee meetings in 2011 & 2012:

- LA County Department of Mental Health
- LA County Public Health
- LA County Mental Health Commission
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic
- South Central Health & Rehabilitation Program (SCHARP)
- AFSCME
- A Community of Friends
- Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
- Kedren Mental Health
- Special Services for Groups
- Los Angeles County Client Coalition
- Black Los Angeles County Client Coalition
- Amigas Empowerment Network
- Jeffrey Foundation
- Grayson’s Awareness Outreach
- Midnight Mission
- Junior Blind
- NAMI Urban LA
- Pathways To Your Future
- Great Beginnings for Black Babies
- St. Francis Center
- YWCA
- PACS
- Compton Central Health
- Children’s Collective
- Multiservice Family Center

We are also deeply grateful to the individual advocates, consumers of mental health services, family members and residents who have participated and contributed to our work.
Today’s dialogue is specifically designed for community members from the Los Angeles County Second Supervisorial District, including consumers of mental health services and family members. Our dialogue today is geared toward identifying solutions to bridge the gap in access to resources to Mental Health services.

This event is inspired by the format developed and offered by Days of Dialogue (www.daysofdialogue.org), which has provided the Mental Health Committee assistance and support in developing this dialogue. Days of Dialogue seeks to be “a catalyst in the community problem solving process by creating dialogue on sensitive social issues among diverse community groups. By facilitating respectful, purposeful conversation on a broad range of public issues and public policies and topics, we foster understanding, and encourage people to improve their quality of life through civic engagement.”

Through the efforts and support of the Honorable Avis Ridley-Thomas, Chair of the Days of Dialogue Advisory Board, facilitation for today’s event is provided by Los Angeles City Attorney Dispute Resolution Officers. We are especially grateful for today’s cadre of volunteer facilitators, led by Program Director Renata E. Valree and Ivy Harrell.
TODAY’S SCHEDULE

8:30 am  Registration

9:00 am  Welcome & Introduction  
Betsy Pfromm and Jack Barbour, Co-chairs

9:15 am  Celebrating Empowerment Congress’ 20th Anniversary  
The Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

9:30 am  Building Well-Being & Mental Health in Under-Represented Ethnic Communities  
Keris Jän Myrick, Ph.D., Project Return and  
Board President, National Alliance of Mental Illness

10:00 am  Ground Rules & Process  
Ivy Harrell  
L.A. City Attorney’s Office Dispute Resolution Program

10:10 am  Dialogue Phase 1

10:40 am  Dialogue Phase 2

11:35 am  Reconvene & Conclude  
Complete survey, gift basket drawing

11:45 am  Adjourn to Resource Tables
Hon. Mark Ridley-Thomas  
*Los Angeles County Supervisor*  
*Second Supervisorial District*

Since he was overwhelmingly elected in November 2008 to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Mark Ridley-Thomas has distinguished himself as an aggressive advocate for the Second District’s over 2 million residents. He has promoted the district’s interest on a variety of fronts, including transportation, job creation and retention and local hiring. In the area of health policy, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has worked to jump start the opening of the new Martin Luther King, Jr. hospital, which has created a governance model of excellence, and a campus with multiple health and human services. A former member of the Prop 63 Commission, he has encouraged an integrated approach to wellness that includes mental health care and a prominent role for school-based clinics. His advocacy has helped secure an equitable share of funding for public-private partnership health clinics in underserved areas.

Prior to his election to the Board, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas served the 26th District in the California State Senate where he served as Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus in 2008 and led the Caucus in unprecedented levels of cooperation and collaboration with counterparts in the Latino, and Asian-Pacific Islander Legislative Caucuses. Mark Ridley-Thomas was first elected to public office in 1991 when he served with distinction on the Los Angeles City Council for nearly a dozen years and departed as Council President pro Tempore. He later served two terms in the California State Assembly, where he chaired the Assembly Democratic Caucus. In each of his roles, he has been widely regarded as the foremost advocate of neighborhood participation in government decision-making. By virtue of his founding of the Empowerment Congress, arguably the region’s most successful twenty year experiment in neighborhood-based civic engagement, he is considered the founder of the Neighborhood Council movement.

The Supervisor is a graduate of Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles and earned a baccalaureate degree in Social Relations (minor in Government) and a master’s degree in Religious Studies (concentration in Christian ethics) from Immaculate Heart College. He went on to receive his Ph.D. in Social Ethics from the University of Southern California focusing on Social Criticism and Social Change.
As president and CEO of Project Return Peer Support Network (PRPSN), Keris Jän Myrick oversees one of Los Angeles’ premier self-help organizations for people recovering from mental illness. PRPSN operates a countywide network of peer support clubs and services run by and for mental health consumers. She has consulted with the California Institute of Mental Health on the Clinically Informed Outcomes Measurement project, and is a national trainer and presenter for the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) education programs such as “In Our Own Voice.”

Keris is the president of the NAMI board at the national-level, and former treasurer for the NAMI board at the California state level. She serves as a systems leadership team representative in County Department of Mental Health planning process for the Mental Health Services Act, and is a member of the American Society for Training and Development.

In 2011 Keris was featured on the front page New York Times article, “A High-Profile Executive Job as Defense Against Mental Ills.” She has a Master of Science degree in industrial-organizational psychology and organizational psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology of Alliant International University. Her Master of Business Administration degree, with an emphasis on marketing, is from Case Western Reserve University.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: PHASE 1

• Introductions:
  o What is your name?
  o Do you live or work in Los Angeles County District 2?
  o What brought you to today’s dialogue?

• How do you define well-being and mental health in your life?

• What has worked in creating and supporting social and emotional well-being in your life?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: PHASE 2

- Reviewing the input from our January workgroups, are there additional community assets you would name that support well-being in our community?

- Name two or more strengths in your particular ethnic or racial community that you find especially effective in promoting individual or community well-being?

- How do we use those strengths to build individual & community well-being?

- If you could identify just one thing that really works and that you think would help your community build well-being, what would that one thing be?

- Recapping the solutions that we have just discussed, how do we make these ideas available to more people in our community?

- What do you think our next steps should be in this dialogue?
Focus groups at the Empowerment Congress Mental Health Committee workshop in January focused on the following questions:

1. **What are the key mental health concerns of your community?**
2. **What do you perceive to be barriers to getting help for mental health concerns in your community?**
3. **What are the chief assets in your community that help prevent or reduce the impact of mental health problems? What community strengths help improve community mental health? What has worked in your community? What does the ideal mental health program or service look like for your community?**

Participants self-selected for discussions in the following community groups, resulting in the following input:

**African American** groups noted the following:
- Key Concerns included Access, Training, Impact on Longevity.
- Barriers focused on Family, Fear/Stigma, and Lack of Info on Services
- Assets included Providers, Family and Mentors

**Latino** groups noted the following:
- Key Concerns included Lack of Information & the Developmentally Disabled
- Barriers focused on Systems, Street Culture, Substance Abuse, Time & Cost, Stigma
- Assets included Child Programs, and Bilingual/Bi-Cultural Providers

**Asian Pacific Islander** group noted the following:
- Key Concerns included Lack of Information & Stigma
- Barriers focused on Culture
- Assets included Church & Social Groups, Department of Mental Health, and Asian Professionals
GROUND RULES

The following guidelines have proven very useful in creating an environment for honest and productive dialogue.

- Speak openly and honestly
- Listen carefully and respectfully to each person
- Keep comments brief and stay focused on task
- Explore differences respectfully and look for common ground
- Trust that the facilitator has the best interest of the group at heart
- Turn off your cell phones
Our gratitude to the following for their assistance in logistical support for today’s event:

Honorable Avis Ridley-Thomas
Chair, Days of Dialogue Advisory Board

Joan V. Crear
Deputy for Special Projects
Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

Courtney L. Wilkins
Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

Renata E.Valree, Program Director
Dispute Resolution Program, Office of the City Attorney

Ivy Harrell
Dispute Resolution Program, Office of the City Attorney

César Portillo
Vice President of Clinic Advancement, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic

Joanna Galeas
Community Partners

Today’s volunteer facilitators from the Dispute Resolution Program
Please visit www.empowermentcongress.org for updates on the Mental Health Committee and to join us for other Year of Empowerment events throughout the year.