

## **Health and Mental Health Committee Meeting**

February 22, 2021 6-7 pm

Cynthia Gonzalez, Committee Chair

Presenter: Aldo Cano Trevino, Outreach Coordinator, NYC Department of Health

Topic: Mental Health Training and resources during COVID 19 Pandemic

Jeremy Laufer took the roll call of committee members and board member attendees.

Cynthia Gonzalez welcomes the attendees. Cynthia share that she looks forward to sharing mutual feelings, concerns, and questions as they relate to the hardships brought on by COVID 19, many of which relate to the behaviors, emotional toll, and physical hardships of people in the district. People continue, to be resistant to wearing a mask and social distancing, handwashing, etc. All of this is new to our society, especially when you have trauma, and loss of loved ones. Also, massive testing and contact tracing. Someone may contact you to inform that someone you have been with has COVID. In addition, worrying about insurance, housing eviction, unemployment, and food insecurity. This exacerbates the emotional toll and fear of more losses.

This committee addressed these issues last July for board members. And now that we have the vaccine, there is hope. But when trauma hits you, the impact can last years and decades. If you have children unaccustomed to homeschooling, used to being socially active, it is a great loss for them, especially if they do not get help in time. Telemedicine cannot replace being live with a therapist who is next to you providing support and reading physical body language. Doing this remotely is limiting and challenging and can impair the therapeutic relationship. This presentation will provide resources to address these mental health needs.

Board Chair Cesar Zuniga stated that the more we support each other as neighbors and as a community, the better we will find a way to move forward. He spoke of the inequities in education and health care which are also mental health risk factors. We need to amplify reliable information because of the fear and anxiety in this community.

Mr. Trevino is inviting all attendees to participate in a program that is being offered to this district that has been disproportionately affected by COVID 19. Mr. Trevino is a Sunset Park resident and sees the need for this program. His unit is the educational component of the Department of Health and they provide free trainings and presentations on mental health wellness as well as vital information and resources. He seeks to partner with everyone in Sunset Park. He seeks to bring the resources to Center for Family Life, OLPH and other community stakeholders in Sunset Park and Red Hook.

Their first program was an in person, 8-hour training in Mental Health First Aid designed to help people identify signs and symptoms of mental health disorders. The goal was to create resilience and empower the participants to help each other and connect with community resources. The new online program is https 1 hour in length and the other is 3 hours. You can choose either. You can visit the following sites online:

**COVID 19 Community Conversations: Mental Health, Equity and Resilience**

<https://ww1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/index.page>

**Vaccine updates:** <https://ww1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid19-vaccine.page>

Mr. Trevino provided a description of the presentation and what participants will learn. The Q and A may go from 15- 45 minutes. He informed that NYC Well is a 24-hour call line available to all that can help people in crisis, answer questions and find services that will be long term. The training acknowledges the cultural stigma attached to seeking mental health services. The 3-hour training will provide participants with a certificate of Completion and has interactive activities. The trainings are available any day of the week. They have time slots so that you and your organization can plan. Mr. Trevino provided logistics (times of trainings) and details (trainings are available in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and other languages through translators). You can contact Mr. Trevino at [acanotrevino@health.nyc.gov](mailto:acanotrevino@health.nyc.gov). You will be provided with a flyer with registration information.

Cynthia spoke of people having mental health problems that are labeled as malingerers. This means people believe that they are pretending to be sick, and no one takes them seriously, believing they are lazy or seeking pity. These people are high risk and need help.

Alexa Aviles thanked Mr. Trevino for his presentation and partnership. She questioned how much conversation is dedicated to young people. Mr. Trevino shared that the previous presentations were designed for 18+ individuals because they talked about suicide, but the current presentations do not and any 13+ can participate. The new presentations understand that people are grieving the loss of family, friends, church, graduations and even being with parents. Ms. Aviles expressed concern for services requiring parental consent which can be a barrier.

A participant, Rosa, had a question in the Q&A. Can you register individual, or do you have to be part of a group? He stated no, you can take it yourself. But he feels the dynamic is better when the group participates with people they know and trust.

Griselle Amador thanked Mr. Trevino for coming to the United Senior Center.

All the links were sent to CB7.

Cynthia thanked Paul Mak for providing vaccine appointments to the board members and to the United Senior Center. She expressed concerns about the COVID mutations coming from the UK and hopes we will see an end to this pandemic.