



BLACK CAUCUS COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUGUST 11, 2024

“EMPOWERING HEALTH: CONVERSATIONS ON SEXUAL HEALTH & HIV IN BLACK IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES”

INTRODUCTION

On August 11, 2024, the Los Angeles County Commission on HIV Black Caucus and the U.S. Africa Institute hosted a community listening session at Airport Royal Cuisine in Los Angeles. Facilitated by Damone Thomas and Kofi Peprah, this event convened members of the Black immigrant community, including the African diaspora, to discuss the stigma surrounding sexual health and HIV, challenges in accessing healthcare, and the impact of cultural factors on healthcare engagement. Attendees received a \$50 gift card, a meal, and access to community resources.

OBJECTIVE

Through community listening sessions focusing on seven key populations identified in the Black Caucus (formerly the Black/African American Community Taskforce [BAAC]) recommendations, we aim to quantify the sexual health needs of Black communities in Los Angeles County. These discussions will guide improvements in HIV prevention and care service delivery, ensuring cultural responsiveness and a comprehensive understanding of the diverse sexual health care needs of our Black communities in Los Angeles County.



KEY DISCUSSION TAKEAWAYS

Mental Health Stigma: Participants voiced a pronounced reluctance within the Black immigrant community to address mental health concerns, attributing this to deep-rooted cultural beliefs and a lack of support systems. The stigma associated with mental health prevents many individuals from seeking or even discussing necessary mental health services, highlighting a critical area for community education and intervention.

Access to Information: A recurring theme was the community's struggle with accessing reliable and relevant health information. Participants noted that information about healthcare services is often not available in accessible languages or formats, which hampers the community's ability to navigate the healthcare system effectively. There is a clear need for targeted information campaigns that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Cultural Factors Impacting Healthcare Access: Cultural beliefs and practices were identified as significant factors that hinder access to healthcare services. Participants noted that traditional views on sexuality and health can discourage open conversations about these topics and prevent individuals from seeking care.

Cost of Healthcare: Financial constraints were identified as a major obstacle to accessing healthcare services. Many community members, especially those with uncertain immigration status, find the cost of healthcare prohibitive. This issue is compounded by a lack of insurance coverage and knowledge about available financial assistance programs, underscoring the need for cost-effective healthcare solutions and enhanced awareness of available support.

Cultural Barriers: Cultural differences, including language barriers and varying norms around discussing health, particularly sexual health, create significant obstacles. The stigma surrounding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other sensitive health topics makes it difficult for community members to seek help. Addressing these cultural barriers through community education and culturally competent healthcare services is vital.

Trust in Healthcare Providers: Trust emerged as a crucial factor affecting healthcare access. Concerns about confidentiality and fears that healthcare providers might share their health information within the community deter many from seeking care. Building trust through ensuring confidentiality and improving the cultural competence of healthcare providers is essential.

Religious Beliefs: Strong religious beliefs in the community often conflict with certain healthcare practices, particularly those related to sexual health and reproductive services. These beliefs can prevent individuals from seeking information and treatment for STDs and other health issues. Culturally sensitive approaches that respect religious values while providing accurate health information are needed to navigate this complex landscape.

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FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop Anonymous Online Resources: Implement online platforms that provide health information discreetly to help overcome stigma and language barriers.

Create Culturally Sensitive Safe Spaces: Establish environments where community members feel safe to discuss health issues openly, which will help in building trust and encouraging the use of healthcare services.

Promote Regular Health Checkups: Advocate for the importance of regular health screenings to foster early detection and intervention, which can also help in normalizing healthcare discussions.

Enhance Cultural Competency of Healthcare Providers: Provide training for healthcare workers to better understand and interact with diverse cultural backgrounds, improving the trust and effectiveness of the healthcare they provide.

Intensify Community Outreach: Increase efforts to educate and engage the African communities about the available healthcare resources, aiming to reduce stigma and inform about preventive measures.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This listening session was a significant step towards understanding and addressing the healthcare needs of Black immigrants in Los Angeles. By implementing the recommended strategies, there is a strong potential to improve healthcare access and outcomes for this community. Continued dialogue and partnership between community leaders, healthcare providers, and policymakers will be essential to the success of these initiatives. Emphasizing cultural sensitivity, confidentiality, and inclusivity will be key in overcoming the longstanding barriers to healthcare access faced by Black immigrants in Los Angeles County.



