

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: February 16, 2024

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (Hybrid)

Attendance

CECLC Members: Lizette Banini, Philip Gaye-Bai, Lashalle Campbell, Lolita DavisCarter, Cratè Darden, Elizabeth Ebot, Mozana Ebrahim, Anita Fineday, Josefina Geronimo, Chris Green, Ann Hill, Foua-Choua Khang, Kimetha Johnson, Tonia Lofton, Abdirahman Mumin, Margarita Ortega, Micaela Schuneman, Shawn Sorrell, Paul Slack, Farhia Said, Pachua Vang, Manuel Zuniga

DHS Staff: Malissa Adams, Cate Dymit, Helen Ghebre, Leigh Grauman, Nina Harris, Ashley Oolman, Rebeca Sedarski, Steven Wilson

Public Attendees: Yele Akinsanya, Kamaty Diahn, Angela Fields, Linda Sloan

Agenda

Lunch & Community Networking / WebEx Opens

- 1:00** **Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement**
- 1:05** **Introductions, Welcome & Check-in Activity [Breakout Sessions]**
 - Check-in question (10 min)**
 - Do you consider yourself an Apple or Orange?
 - Debrief CECLC Meet and Greet Day at the Capitol (Breakout Sessions - 30 min)**
- 1:45** **Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes**
- 1:50** **Community Celebrations & Shout Outs**
- 2:00** **DHS Update: 2024 Equity Forum “Beyond the Unwind: Centering Equity Together”**
Nathan Chomilo, Medical Director | Medicaid & MinnesotaCare
- 2:15** **Workgroup Updates**
 - Legislative Workgroup
 - Topics & Issues Workgroup
 - Internal Operations Workgroup
 - CECLC Leadership Update – Foua Choua Khang & Shawn Sorrell**
- 2:25** **DHS Equity Directors & Equity Analysis Toolkit**
- 3:10** **Break**
- 3:15** **Discussion: Developing Equity Metrics [Breakout Sessions]**

4:00

Rename the Internal Operations Workgroup Closing

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Foua Choua and Shawn Sorrell welcomed everyone and led the council through the land acknowledgement and introductions.

Decisions Made

Review and approve January meeting minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and January minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Paul Slack
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Foua Choua opened the floor for members to share Community Highlights.

- **Residents of Color Collective Essential Needs for Unsheltered Persons**
 - Please donate travel size items to help us create self-care kits for the unsheltered. (Drop off items between 8:00am-3:00pm)
 - Date: Donation Drive February 17 through March 7
 - March 7 at the Moreland address we will make the bags from 5:30-7:30pm
 - Location: Residents of Color Collective, 217 W Moreland, West St. Paul, MN 55118
- **Immigrants and Disability in Central MN**
 - Event: Discussion Topics include Physical Disabilities, Cognitive Disabilities, Mental Health, Healthcare Resources
 - Date and Time: Saturday February 24, 2024, at 1:30-4:30pm
 - Location: St. Cloud Public Library, 1300 W St. Germain Street, St. Cloud, MN 56301
 - Contact for more information: Abdirahnman@fomn.org @ 619-808-4040, www.fomn.org
- **The Rock in My Throat**
 - **Join us for an unforgettable evening celebrating Kao Kalia Yang's latest children's book, "The Rock in My Throat."**
 - Date and Time: Tuesday, March 12 from 5:30-7:30pm
 - Location: Minnesota Humanities Center, 987 Ivy Avenue East, Saint Paul, 55106 MN.
 - https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kao-kalia-yang-book-launch-the-rock-in-my-throat-tickets-796213785867?aff=oddtcreator&mc_cid=e998506d46
- **Council of Minnesotans for African Heritage – African Heritage Day on the Hill at the Rotunda**
 - Date and time: Friday February 23, 2024, from 2:00-4:00pm
 - Location: Minnesota State Capitol at 75 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55155
 - Event details are in the flyer: **This event provides an opportunity to speak with legislators about the African American Families Preservation Act and other community priorities.**

- African Heritage Day on the Hill: link to the registration form is: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjDexQir2A1NLudxifHoTsoxUNFpaUDNVMkNUWVA5UVZBNVdKQUdRT0FONC4u>
- **Community Guest:** Philip brought a community member: Kamaty Diahn, ED Director of Liberian in Minnesota
 - Website: <https://www.olmbp.org/>
 - The Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM) is a community base 501c 3 Non-profit organization that caters to the needs of Liberians in the State of Minnesota.
- **The Community Connections Conference:** An annual free event that connects residents of Minneapolis, community groups, neighborhoods, and local government. This year's conference will have workshops, performances, fun activities for the whole family, an expo, and a community dialogue.
 - Date: Saturday, February 17, 9am-4pm
 - Location: [Minneapolis Convention Center](#), first floor, Hall E, 1301 2nd Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55404
 - Registration link: <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/ncr/inclusive-community-engagement/connections-conference/>
- **Foster Youth Day on the Hill**
 - March 4 from 1:00-3:00pm
 - Minnesota State Capitol, 75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, St Paul, MN 55155
 - Registration is open. It includes a March and Rally in the afternoon. This is a youth led event and it is great to have other supporters join in! Here is the link with more information about this event: [Home | FCYDH \(fosterchildandyouthday.com\)](#).
- **Black History Month Celebrations:** Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis
 - The partnership between the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County for Black History Month events are upcoming, starting with a breakfast and resolution on Thursday, January 25, 2024.
 - For more information please open the link: <https://www.minneapolis.org/calendar/holidays/black-history-month/>

Community Articles:

- <https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/coalition-of-latino-led-groups-announces-policy-priorities-for-minnesota-legislature/>
- <https://www.startribune.com/many-minnesotans-with-disabilities-earn-far-less-than-minimum-wage-a-push-for-equal-pay-continues/600341714/>

Community Guests:

- Philip brought a guest from the Organization of Liberians in MN, Director Kamaty Diahn, ED <https://www.olmbp.org/>. Most of the staff within OLM are comprised of volunteers. OLM creates programs to help people navigate and access funding, resources, employment services, and more. Kamaty provided an overview of the history of the Liberian community, and how it was one of the first countries that US Born freed slaves migrated back to. They developed the nation. In 1837, the Commonwealth of Liberia was established. Liberia was modeled after the United States of America with three branches of government and is a Unitary state. The first 13 presidents elected in Liberia were African American, with one of the most unique communities within the African Diaspora. Within Minnesota, over 75% of Liberians are employed within the Healthcare industry workforce.

CECLC Meet and Greet Day at the Capitol Debrief

Council Member Reactions/Thoughts

- Foua Choua and Shawn asked council members to share their thoughts and reactions from the CECLC Capitol Meet and Greet.
- Members shared their reactions:
 - This was a great time to connect with the legislature.
 - A member shared that they got a chance to speak with two of the legislators and that appeared very committed to the work of the CECLC and it was very inspiring.
 - Members reported feeling very inspired through learning from one another.
 - This was an awesome event, and it felt good to participate within this opportunity. We hope there are more opportunities to participate within the CECLC.
 - We believe in this Council, and we showed up even when feeling fearful to converse with some of the legislators.
 - We felt empowered by having the strength in numbers of other CECLC council members to support each other talking with the Legislators.
 - Two takeaways: the food and refreshments were awesome, and this event inspired several of us to feel rejuvenated to perform this awesome work.
 - It felt really energizing to come in person and to connect with other CECLC members in person and share my enthusiasm.

What would you recommend the CECLC Meet and Greet in 2025?

- Members shared that partnering with other Ethnic Councils to include them within the invite of 2025 planning for the CECLC meet and greet at the Capitol would be beneficial engagement.
 - Members suggested that we move the meet and greet event at the Capitol out 1-2 weeks later after the Legislative session starts so that we have a chance to meet and build interactions with more legislators.
- Foua Choua shared how this is the Nexus point within the CECLC as it has been in operation for 10 years, this is our 11th year.
- It was emphasized that it would be helpful to get community narratives and feedback on how the MN legislative policies and practices adversely impact their quality of life.
 - Members shared the importance of incorporating more community voices within the Meet and Greet Day at the Capitol.
 - Members encouraged us to start engaging and bringing core groups of organizations and community leaders to the meetings on a regular basis so that we can align their goals with their purpose and be ready for the next year.

2024 Equity Forum Updates: Beyond the Unwind from Dr. Nathan Chomilo

Agenda presentation: DHS Update: 2024 Equity Forum *“Beyond the Unwind: Centering Equity Together”* with Nathan Chomilo

Dr. Nathan Chomilo shared slides on the Medicaid Equity Forum.

Presentation Highlights

- Persons who give birth can access Doula care services without receiving a referral from a healthcare provider.
 - Policy reimbursement and billing rates for Doula reimbursement have been increased recently.

2024 MN Medicaid Equity Forum

- Dr. Nathan Chomilo shared that his office will host the 2024 Medicaid Healthcare Equity Forum, with in-person and virtual options on Healthcare Equity forum 2023.
 - DHS will host two separate forums: one in-person and one virtual using the same agenda and content for each forum.
 - **In-person forum: Friday, April 12, 2024**, from 8:30am-4:00pm. Location to be determined.
 - **Virtual forum: Friday, March 22, 2024**, from 8:30am-4:00pm
 - Permalink: <https://www.mnsure.org/assister-central/announcements/index.jsp?id=34-609226>
- Dr. Chomilo shared he is seeking panelists to participate within the 2024 Equity Forum Panel Discussions. He has requested that we consider potential panelists or projects to highlight and send our recommendations, questions, and ideas about the Medicaid renewal to Leigh Grauman at leigh.grauman@state.mn.us.
- Dr. Chomilo shared he will come back to discuss the racial equity reform on Medicaid and provide status updates.
- Call to action: consider panelists for engaging conversations about healthcare inequities.

Health Care Renewal

- When the COVID-19 Unwind of the Public Health Emergency ended several of the policies ended, which resulted in 1.5 million MN's having to go through the process again to reapply for their healthcare benefits.
- CECLC members asked about the process for community members and how they should proceed, if they missed their time to renew their healthcare benefits and what would be the best way for them to get back to applying if you have missed your renewal window on accident.
- Dr. Chomilo shared that when you complete the renewal healthcare application within the first 4 months of a missed deadline coverage will still be applied retroactively to avoid unnecessary financial burdens on applicants.
- Applicants are encouraged to start completing the renewal for their coverage online as soon as possible <https://mn.gov/dhs/renewmycoverage/>.
- Helen Ghebre shared the MNSure website for applicants whose coverage was cut off and need help getting back on the medical assistance/MNSure: <https://www.mnsure.org/>.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

At its last meeting, Shawn Sorrell asked members for support of a Co-Lead to help lead the Legislative workgroup. Joanna Rosa volunteered to help Co-lead the Legislative workgroup. The CECLC voted for her to be one of the Co-leads.

Nicole and Ann Bobst helped the workgroup discussed status updates on the Legislative Session Proposal. Legislative workgroup discussed the planning and logistics for the CECLC Meet and Greet Day at the Capitol on

February 13. They discussed the essential importance of engaging community providers at CECLC monthly meetings.

Topics & Issues Workgroup

At its last meeting, the workgroup continued discussion with Anita Fineday and Hannah Quinn from the DCYF Implementation Team. They provided status updates on their outreach and engagement strategies to receive consultation and feedback from Native American and Indigenous communities on the design and implementation of increasing equity within the development of the new division.

Topics and Issues and the Implementation DCYF team discussed the great need for Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention of staff from marginalized communities to help lead within the innovative design of Department of Children Youth and Families.

Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup

Foua-Choua Khang who is helping Cratè Darden co-lead said the workgroup continued discussion on renaming the workgroup, reviewing its scope of work, ways to engage DHS and support Community Relations, and equity metrics. The newly revised workgroup structure hopes to help the CECLC achieve some of the following duties: informing Anti-Racism efforts, building community responsiveness through co-creating with DHS, building metrics that define our focus and assess the needs of the CECLC (measurements and evaluation), identifying the areas of significant importance for CECLC members.

The workgroup discussed a focus of building intentional relationships and supporting our tribal liaisons and nations, with hopes to engage them within CECLC monthly meetings. The workgroup discussed reaching out to Sean McMoore who supervises the Talent Acquisition team, to reengage their staff upon James Cooper's recent departure.

Administrative Updates

Shawn Sorrell and Foua Choua Khang thanked the CECLC for their participation within the Meet and Greet day at the Capitol event. Shawn gave special recognition and shout-out to Philip Gaye-Bai for bringing a community guest to the CECLC meeting and being intentional to help us incorporate the community's voice into our CECLC monthly meetings. Foua Choua shared she has received inquiries in regard to when Department of Children Youth Families Division will develop a duplicate version of the CECLC or if the CECLC will become the council for both divisions.

Presentation from the DHS Equity Directors

Presentation Highlights from Ashley Oolman and Malissa Adams on the Equity Policy Toolkit

- Within the presentation, the Equity Directors described their roles and the history of how the CECLC instrumental advocacy for the creation and expressing the need of their roles, in leading equity.
- Ashley described the importance of the Equity Directors building out their structures, systems, and processes.

- Ashley shared the Org Structure for the Equity Directors and the great diversity amongst the directors and how each Equity director is designated over a specified area.

Challenges faced by the Equity Directors

- The Equity Directors highlighted some of the challenges they face within their roles, such as defining power dynamics and their difficulties trying to influence without authority.
- CECLC co-chairs asked how the CECLC support the Equity Directors going forward.
- Foua Choua shared the significance of the Equity Directors (coming home) receiving relational support from the CECLC.
- Equity Directors have been subject to unfair treatment as the work is unsustainable, and they do not have the same positional power as other directors across DHS.
- Equity Directors shared that role reclassification is one of the best ways that DHS can help support us. Review data from the Hay Study.
- We need teams who can be dedicated to having these conversations and committed to the work of reclassification to help this equity work be defined through defining an equity structure.
- Equity Directors need the power to demand the changes to be able to sustain the work, through receiving the support of building a team and being able to hire staff that help us implement this essential work.

DHS Equity Policy

- Ensures that these broader organizational plans align.
- Analyze everything that we do, who it impacts. and how.
- Point out that all employees need to utilize the Equity Analysis Tool, when creating policies, programs, and procedures. We have limitations within enforcing that these standards are followed.
- CECLC asked if the Equity Directors have utilized Dr. Stephanie Burrage to help them make movement, as she has the ear of our Governor Tim Walz.
- Ashley shared she is performing special projects and working closely with Dr. Burrage and the Chief Inclusion Officer to help the Equity Directors develop advocacy and support.
- The CECLC will have to dedicate more time to discussing this and working with HR to discuss classification standards as their representation is super valuable.
- The policy has been revised and we are discussing who does what with the policy, and how to hold divisions accountable for implementing and utilizing an equity analysis.
- Enhancements for Policy Review and Attestation will be required for employees on an annual basis.
- Encourage DHS divisions to conduct an equity analysis for various divisions across DHS when proposals and policies are being created.

Equity Analysis Toolkit

- The toolkit has been developed to help mitigate the challenges and barriers within increasing equity.
- All the analyses are streamlined through having them electronically. It is an online form, and the spreadsheet can be filtered through administration.
 - Automation and training SharePoint Dynamic Form
 - Workflow for Notifications
 - On-Demand Training

- How to inform the work; all the equity reviews are in one place on the SharePoint database.
- The compliance structure is difficult because we are working hard with divisions to convince them to conduct and utilize the Equity Analysis Toolkit, as an accountability system has not been created for those who are not utilizing it when they need to.
- CECLC asked how Equity Directors know when a DHS Division is utilizing the Equity Analysis Toolkit.
- Equity Directors can see the results of utilizing the toolkit and we are able to assess if divisions are reaching out to the end user and permit the shift.

Implementation Updates

- Instrumental within implementing the policy.
- Intentional of centering the leaders.

Discussion: Developing Equity Metrics

- What will equity look like to you? Defining Equity
- We will discuss this more in depth at the next meeting.

Rename the Internal Operations Workgroup

- Foua Choua shared she would like the council to vote on the name **Equity Alignment** at its March meeting to rename the Internal Operations Workgroup.

Decisions Made

- Motion to approve the CECLC priorities as written: Lolita DavisCarter
- Second: Farhia Said
- The motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM