



Community Health Network of Washington Receives \$3.8 Million Digital Navigator Grant to Extend Digital Access to Health Care and Equity Resources throughout Washington

Grant will strengthen Link to Care WA program and reach beyond community health centers

SEATTLE – September 19, 2023 – Community Health Network of Washington (CHNW) announced today it has been awarded a \$3.8 million Digital Navigator grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, Office of Broadband for continued work to improve access to digital navigation services—including phones, wi-fi, data service, and education. Services will be delivered through CHNW’s network of 21 nonprofit Community Health Centers, which provide care to over 1 million patients statewide regardless of their ability to pay. Services will include using Link to Care WA, a support and referral hotline that is available in English and Spanish, hosting web-based digital literacy skills training, and distributing devices to patients in need.

The funding builds on CHNW’s [Link to Care WA program](#), which includes a Hotline (877-757-1832), with staff who can talk through the program, explain technological terms, and provide step-by-step support, a [website](#), and in-person support with pre-paid smartphone distribution at partner community health center sites. These digital navigation services also include connection to federal subsidy programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program and Lifeline (for broadband internet and cellphones, respectively), as well as ongoing digital literacy education that equips people with the knowledge to comfortably use the internet to meet daily needs. Comprised of federally-qualified health centers with nearly 200 locations across the state, CHNW is the parent of the not-for-profit health insurance carrier [Community Health Plan of Washington](#) (CHPW).

“Eliminating technological barriers to health care by putting phones in people’s hands, connecting them to the internet, and then educating them on all they can do with that technology, not only improves their access to their doctors and clinics, it improves access to employment, education, and other essential social supports that make up their health in its broader sense,” said Leanne Berge, CEO at CHNW and CHPW.

CHNW will partner with Behavioral Health Institute (BHI) to conduct a Digital Inclusion Assessment of community health centers across the state. Based at Harborview Medical Center, the BHI brings experience in catalyzing and testing innovative practices in clinical care settings and developing strategies to scale and sustain those practices to reduce disparities and improve outcomes. The health centers identified through this process as having the greatest patient need will be supported for phone distribution, including pre-paid hot spots and data plans, to increase patient use of health portals and their ability to engage in telehealth.

“This funding from the Department of Commerce will help us promote the Link to Care WA Hotline and provide digital navigation services to more people across the state, through additional community health centers and community-based organizations,” said Berge. “We’ve seen the Link to Care program improve people’s comfort and confidence in using their phone and online tools to manage their health care, so now we can expand that reach to help more people make appointments, manage prescriptions, and connect with their care providers.”



The Link to Care WA program began offering comprehensive digital navigation services to community health center patients across Washington state in January 2022.

“We’ve seen our patients use the Link to Care WA services not only to maintain communication with their doctor but to stay in touch with loved ones from afar and stay plugged in at school remotely,” said Rhonda Hauff, CEO of Yakima Neighborhood Health Services. “We know digital equity is about whole-person health care and have seen how Link to Care WA moves Washington closer to that robust health care vision we all share.”

About CHNW:

Since 1992, Community Health Network of Washington (CHNW) clinics have been providing Washington state residents with affordable, community-based care. Informed by their understanding of social determinants of health, CHNW brings together Community Health Centers (CHCs) and other health leaders with their shared values of equal access to care and social justice. Through leveraging their shared resources and expertise, CHNW has been able to undertake strategic public policy and advocacy efforts in both Olympia, WA, and Washington, D.C., to ensure access to health care for every Washington state resident. Community Health Network of Washington serves nearly one million individuals across Washington through its member federally qualified community health centers across the State of Washington, and now offers Individual & Family Plans on the Washington health exchange. To learn more, visit chnw.chpw.org or connect on [LinkedIn](#).

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