



Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) Hires New Chief Equity Officer to Align Work of Advancing Equity in WA Communities

Kelli Houston Brings “Expertise and Passion” as CHPW’s First Equity Executive

SEATTLE November 17, 2022 – [Community Health Plan of Washington \(CHPW\)](#), the not-for-profit Washington-headquartered health insurance carrier, has hired Kelli Houston as its first Chief Equity Officer. In this role, Houston will join CHPW’s Executive Leadership Team, providing oversight and accountability for improving its members’ care and health outcomes by advancing health equity initiatives, addressing health disparities, and improving access to quality health care for the broader communities being served. CHPW currently cares for more than 300,000 members who have its Apple Health (Medicaid), Medicare Advantage, and public-option Individual and Family health insurance plans. Additionally, Houston will help CHPW to cultivate a more equitable work environment for CHPW’s nearly 600 staff members by shaping and optimizing policies, programs, and practices within the organization. She joined CHPW on November 7.

Most recently, Houston served as Chief Equity, Diversity and Inclusion officer with Comprehensive Life Services, a certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic in Tacoma, WA, which also serves many of CHPW’s members with high-quality, integrated care services. She also has led and contributed to DEI efforts with Health Share of Oregon, Seattle Children’s Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, and PeaceHealth. She holds an MBA and Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management from the University of Phoenix.

“Given CHPW’s ambitious goals to address systemic racism and make inroads towards a healthier, fairer, more equitable world for the members and communities we serve, we are thrilled to welcome Kelli’s expertise and passion to our work, said Leanne Berge, CEO of Community Health Plan of Washington and its parent, Community Health Network of Washington.

With decades of professional experience in developing and leading diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in the healthcare industry in Washington and Oregon, Houston will collaborate with CHPW staff and community partners in creating and driving strategies that advance racial and health equity. This includes evaluating data, gathering feedback from those most impacted by health inequities, designing programs and measures to gauge progress in these efforts.

"My life’s work in the field of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion has been the perfect joining of my experience and my passion for work with deep personal significance, said Houston. “I look forward to expanding CHPW’s goal of providing equitable, and culturally-responsive care to the community, and working to ensure that we are on a pathway to becoming an anti-racist organization.”

Houston comes to CHPW skilled in DEI program development, leadership development, diversity training and human resources and business management and operations. She will serve as a consultant and champion for CHPW departments who regularly work with the 21 Community Health Centers (federally qualified health centers) who are the backbone of CHPW’s provider network.



Houston’s hiring comes as CHPW recently announced its [2022 Advancing Health Equity Community Grants](#). The \$250,000 grant to be shared equally among 25 community-based organizations (CBOs) directly serving people from minoritized communities in Washington state. The investment, which CHPW has allocated to 43 organizations in its three-year history, aims to support these organizations’ work addressing all aspects of health, including systemic social drivers of health*, to improve health outcomes.

To learn more about CHPW, visit chpw.org.

About CHPW

Community Health Plan of Washington is a community-governed, not-for-profit health plan founded in 1992 by a network of community health centers (CHCs) in Washington state. CHPW is a managed-care organization that connects members to various physical, behavioral and social support services, and reinvests surpluses back into the community to help advance health equity and improve access to high quality care for all people. CHPW serves approximately 300,000 members through Medicaid (income and asset-based program called Apple Health in Washington) and Medicare (age and disability-based program) as well as public-option Individual and Family plans across the state. Its parent, Community Health Network of Washington, serves nearly 1 million individuals across Washington through its federally qualified member community health centers. To learn more, visit chpw.org or connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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**Social drivers of health, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “are conditions in places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life risks and outcomes. To learn more about this, visit the CDC’s [website](#).”*