

Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) Launches First-Of-Its-Kind Comprehensive Alternative Treatments Benefit Package

New benefit empowers Apple Health (Medicaid) members to use less costly, non-invasive treatments for chronic pain as they choose

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Summary

Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) is Washington State’s first and only Medicaid carrier to offer its members a comprehensive, flexible Alternative Treatments benefit package of a combined 20 acupuncture, chiropractic and massage therapy visits. With this package, CHPW Medicaid members now have coverage for non-invasive treatment options to manage chronic pain and other conditions like headaches, allergies, anxiety and depression. CHPW members can decide how and where they want to use these treatments and can see any licensed Washington provider without the need for prior authorization from either their primary care provider (PCP) or CHPW. The Alternative Treatments benefit, which costs CHPW members nothing, is aligned with the health plan’s approach of supporting all aspects of its members’ health and well-being (physical, mental, behavioral, social and environmental needs). CHPW’s offering is unique in serving Medicaid recipients, providing access to these alternative health services typically found only in commercial health insurance plans. It is also unmatched in recognizing that many cultures value these three treatments as traditional medicine.

Story

With CHPW’s first-of-its-kind Alternative Treatments benefit package, its Medicaid members now have more non-invasive and drug-free treatment options to help relieve conditions like headaches, allergies, back pain, anxiety and depression. The package offers members 20 no-cost visits for acupuncture, chiropractic and massage therapy.

“This benefit package is a way for Community Health Plan of Washington to provide lower cost options for addressing pain than more invasive treatments like spinal injections or surgery and safer options than prescribing opioids or other pain management prescriptions,” said Dr. Paul Sherman, Chief Medical Officer for CHPW.

Now, CHPW members receiving Medicaid have the flexibility and choice to allocate 20 visits across the three treatments as they deem necessary. This allows individuals the opportunity to stick with these alternative treatment plans for a longer-term course of therapy and use what they find to be most effective. Additionally, members can choose to see any licensed Washington provider of these services and do not need prior authorization from their primary care provider (PCP) or CHPW.

“CHPW is a partner in our members’ health journeys – listening and supporting them – because they know their health best,” said Dr. Sherman. “We’ve worked hard to empower people from all communities and backgrounds to have more options so they can meet their own health needs and those of their families. While CHPW is a leader in offering this Alternative Treatments benefit for Washington Medicaid members, it is another step in our journey to break down barriers to care.”

CHPW introduced the Alternative Treatments benefit as part of its commitment to meeting the holistic needs of the diverse communities it serves and based on feedback from its members, its provider network of Community Health Centers (CHCs), and in consultation with chiropractors, acupuncturists and massage therapists to better understand the needs of their patients in offering an effective treatment plan. Typically, alternative treatments are found in commercial health insurance plans, but CHPW is now bringing these options to its Medicaid recipients, many of whom identify with minoritized communities in which acupuncture, chiropractic and massage therapies are traditionally and culturally valued.

In addition to leading the charge to offer alternative treatments as an option for Washington Medicaid members, CHPW's Washington-based staff works in all communities to support members with other [necessities like housing and food access](#) and has case managers to guide them every step.

With revolutionary benefits and ongoing, community-level support, CHPW is continuing to advocate for Medicaid members to be the decision-makers in their health care.

Relevant Links

- [More about CHPW](#)
- [More about CHPW Apple Health \(Medicaid\)](#)
- [More about Alternative Treatments Benefit](#)
- [Q&A with Dr. LuAnn Chen on Alternative Treatments](#)

About Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW):

Founded in 1992 by a network of community health centers (CHCs) in Washington State, Community Health Plan of Washington is a community-governed, not-for-profit health plan formed to help coordinate care and advocate for people who were not being served by traditional insurance companies. The mission of CHPW is to deliver accessible managed care services that meet the needs and improve the health of Washington communities and to make managed care participation beneficial for community-responsive providers. CHPW serves approximately 280,000 members through Medicaid (income-based program called Apple Health in WA) and Medicare (age and disability-based program) across the State. CHPW 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. Its parent, 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 chpw.org or connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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