



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Health Plan of Washington Hosts Panel Supporting Mental Health During COVID-19

Behavioral health providers will answer questions submitted by the community during the free virtual event

SEATTLE – December 9, 2020 – [Community Health Plan of Washington \(CHPW\)](#), Washington's local not-for-profit Medicaid (Apple Health) and Medicare managed care plan, is hosting a free virtual event to share mental health advice and resources with the Washington public on Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at 6:30 PM PT. Blake Edwards, Behavioral Health Director of Columbia Valley Community Health, Dr. Paul Sherman, Chief Medical Officer of CHPW, and Dr. Terry Lee, Senior Behavioral Health Director of CHPW, will answer questions and participate in the panel discussion.

CHPW is leading this conversation on mental health as Washington communities experience increased levels of anxiety, depression and social isolation due to COVID-19. Washington State Department of Health's November 2020 [behavioral health report](#) found 1.8 million Washington adults are experiencing symptoms of anxiety and almost 1.2 million adults reported experiencing symptoms of depression on most days. These increased stressors are colliding with seasonal affective disorder, a type of depression that is related to changes in the seasons.

Additionally, recent COVID-19 safety guidance is impacting many Washingtonians' holiday plans, especially those over the age of 65, who may be most vulnerable. This means that many people may not be able to be with family and friends and may experience increased isolation this holiday season.

"Managing our emotional well-being is an important part of being healthy overall," said Dr. Paul Sherman, Chief Medical Officer at Community Health Plan of Washington. "By giving people everywhere the opportunity to ask experts their most pressing questions, we hope we can help them receive the advice they need to support their health during these uncertain and hard times. Additionally, we hope that people who may not typically seek advice about stress or anxiety will feel more comfortable in this setting where they can remain anonymous."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has put additional strain on factors that influence our mental health, like the season change, holidays, employment, and relationships," said Blake Edwards, Behavioral Health Director at Columbia Valley Community Health (CVCH). "CVCH is proud to partner with Community Health Plan of Washington in hosting this virtual panel discussion. We hope to provide people across the state an opportunity to get immediate feedback to pressing mental health questions."

CHPW's discussion about mental health will be held for 30 minutes and is free and open to the general public. In addition to answering community questions, other topics of discussion include access to care and drivers that influence mental health like employment, schooling, and the holiday season. Details below:



- WHAT:** Ask the Experts: Winter Mental Health Talk with CHPW
- WHEN:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020
6:30 PM PT
- WHERE:** Virtual panel on Zoom:
[Zoom Link - 12.15.2020](#)
RVSP and post questions publicly or privately on Facebook: [Community Health Plan of Washington Facebook Page](#)
- WHO:** Dr. Paul Sherman, Chief Medical Officer, CHPW
Dr. Terry Lee, Senior Behavioral Health Director, CHPW
Blake Edwards, Behavioral Health Director, Columbia Valley Community Health
- WHY:** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to fear, isolation, depression, and other mental health impacts for Washingtonians across the state. Community members need immediate support to manage their mental health during the holidays, and CHPW hopes to provide them with answers to their questions related to mental health during this panel. For more information and mental health advice, visit CHPW's free public Mental Health Resource Center: www.chpw.org/BehavioralHealthCenter.

About CHPW

Founded in 1992 by a network of community and migrant 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 265,000 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 its profit back into the CHCs to help them deliver better care to all people. CHPW also seeks to identify and address health disparities and inequities, while coordinating services within a broader population health framework. Its parent, Community Health Network of Washington, serves nearly one million individuals across Washington through its CHC network sites. To learn more, visit chpw.org or connect on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

About Columbia Valley Community Health

Columbia Valley Community Health, (CVCH) is a Federally Qualified Health Center that offers medical, dental, behavioral health, midwifery, pharmacy, WIC and outreach services to all residents of Chelan and Douglas counties, and surrounding areas, regardless of ability to pay. We care for over 35,000 patients per year between our nine locations in Wenatchee, East Wenatchee and Chelan and various on-site locations, such as Wenatchee Valley College and local schools.



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Contact:

RH Strategic for Community Health Plan of Washington

Danielle Ruckert

(206) 607-1311

druckert@rhstrategic.com