

WHATCOM COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER NETWORK

*Our logo
here!
coming
soon*

January 2021 newsletter

In this issue:

- Mental health panel review
- COVID-19 vaccine update
- Job postings
- Meeting survey

BIPOC Support Convening

The North Sound Accountable Community of Health is hosting a regular convening for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) working in social and health services.

Email David@northsoundach.org for more information.

CHW Opportunities

- WACHWA (state CHW association) has been asked to share our expertise in developing culturally appropriate training for Community Health Workers to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences and Suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. We are looking for 5 people who represent the cultural, lingual, and geographical diversity of our communities in Washington State to help us. Participation will be decided on a first-come, first-served basis. Two sessions will take place in February and early March. There are limited funds to compensate you for your time. If you are interested, please email lfrah@chwsfwa@gmail.com
- Sponsored training for Spanish-speaking medical interpreters in behavioral health settings. Space is limited and first come first serve. Please contact Keith for more information Keith.Zang@DOH.WA.GOV.

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Survey: Meeting time and focus

We would like to review our Membership meeting day/time and focus of our time together — your feedback is invaluable!

Especially if you are unable to make our usual meeting time, but also we want to make sure we're really earning your time with us, by bringing you something you can't get elsewhere!

<https://bit.ly/2NzAAw>

(You don't need to fill this out if you already did from our Jan. 22 meeting.)

Vaccines and CHWs

This information is updated through Jan. 27

Community Health Workers are among the population eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine phase 1A. If you are not scheduled to be vaccinated through work, go to

FindYourPhaseWA.org

to search for vaccination sites. Demand is exceeding supply, so the Dept. of Health advises leaving messages or emailing with your contact information so you get a reply with an appointment time when it comes available. We need to continue to have patience!

For your communities:

- Visit FindYourPhaseWA.org
If someone is not yet eligible for the vaccine, they can leave their contact information to be notified when they are eligible
- Contact their insurance company for information.
- For those without internet, they can call 2-1-1 for information on the vaccine phases and how to make an appointment.

Like COVID-19 testing, the vaccine is also free to those seeking it. If you know someone uninsured, not established at a provider's office, or both, they can seek an appointment at Walgreens, Huggen, or SeaMar for a vaccine covered by federal funds. (Thank you Brittany Fuentes for sharing this info!)

The Dept of Health is also seeking CHWs to be on the COVID-19 Vaccine Collaborative, beginning Feb. 3. The members will support COVID-19 vaccine planning and implementation efforts, provide feedback on vaccine outreach efforts, and share vaccine updates and materials with their respective communities/sectors and other Collaborative members. Fill out the form at <https://bit.ly/39mHnBj>

Panel on Mental/Behavioral Health in Whatcom

We hosted a panel of behavioral health experts on Jan. 22 to share info and guidance on mental health and substance use issues and programs. You can watch the full meeting on our website in February!

We were joined by Malora Christensen (Sea Mar/GRACE/LEAD), Grant Guiley (UCNW), and Anne Reed (Sea Mar).

What are some of the most common mental health issues you are seeing in the community?

- Malora: Higher emergency department and police utilization. Meth usage, schizophrenia, personality disorders.
- Grant: Meth and alcohol is number one in Whatcom. Trauma is a major cause of substance use, seeing inability to manage self and emotions.
- Anne Reed: agree on trauma. COVID has made it more challenging. Increased fear, hopelessness, suicidality. DBT (Dialectical behavior therapy is a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy) group/mindfulness has been beneficial for some patients at Sea Mar. Fear of lack of resources, conspiracy theories, adverse trauma

What services does your organization/program provide?

- Anne: Sea Mar has Adult Mental Health, Adult Substance Use, MAT (medication-assisted treatment) program for heroin and opioid addiction.
- Grant: As a Federally Qualified Health Center, we try to be a one stop shop. Integrated Behavioral Health/Primary Care Behavioral Health adds a primary care level of BH services to do preventive work, such as Case Management, a professional that work with individuals that helps them deal with social determinants of health. Specialty Behavioral Health includes traditional therapy and psychiatry, and have a child and family counselor (looking for another).
- Malora: the GRACE program embeds social service providers within emergency responders – meet individuals in community, tend to be in crisis and struggle with mental/behavioral and substance abuse health conditions. GRACE tries to be a bridge between crisis and care that is sustainable. Not long term case management services, stabilize and pass on to other case management.

What are other BH opportunities in the community?

- Lake Whatcom – PACT Program
- Compass Health
- Lifeline Connections
- Malora: there aren't really crisis services. Just dispatch through VOA (Volunteers of America crisis line 1-800-584-3578), but there is still a gap due to intake process and capacity of current programs. It still takes time to get into services, which doesn't quite meet that emergency/crisis need.

What are realistic expectations to set with community members about the availability, timeframe and efficacy of receiving services?

- Anne: No-showing intake appointments is a common issue. 12 intake spots a week at Sea Mar. Trying to screen and assess for different services, trying to schedule first BH appointment within 2.5 weeks. Do not have to be medical patient for BH services.
- Grant: Waitlist of 100+ people, capped caseload. System is overstressed. When you do get into a program or therapy, treat it well. Inpatient beds are few and far between and inconsistent availability. Regular consistent treatment is better than emergency. Unity Care NW BH only open to medical patients at this time, with 3-6 month waitlist.
- Malora: Advice for CHWs- build professional rapport with service providers. GRACE has a long waiting list. Referrals are prioritized from police department, ER, paramedics.

How can community health workers connect community members to your services?

- Malora: Opportunity Council leading effort to bring a community information exchange website or phone number (like 211) that can share resources and stay up to date.
- Grant: To seek BH services at Unity Care, need to be a Unity medical patient. If you are, ask your PCP for a BH referral. Unity is currently accepting new patients at Bellingham and Ferndale.
- Anne: BH open to community members, call front desk number and ask to "start mental health services." They don't have meds only visits (have to be engaged in counseling). Be able to answer the question: "Why do you want counseling?"

What is giving you hope within your field?

- Malora: Defunding the police/redirecting funds to social services to community response model. Efforts to talk about what a 911 BH response could look like. Bellingham City Council, Whatcom Health Dept, task force to do research about what 911 BH could look like. Community will want flexible community based outreach case management services, and new stabilization facility.
- New programs that are happening. Increasing implementation of short-term counseling for skills development.

What is needed?

- Sea Mar sees high amount BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) clients, and has need for bilingual counselors, and BIPOC counselors
- Malora: data collection is important. How is race impacts police services can't be known unless the correct data is collected. There are efforts to try to collect appropriate data.



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Lifeline Connections: several open positions

Lifeline encourages applicants that are in recovery to share their stories as part of the application process.
<https://lifelineconnections.org/career/>