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OCHN Brings Awareness to National Deaf History Month and Mental Health

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (April 5, 2024) – In recognition of April being National Deaf History Month, Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) is raising awareness about the connection between hearing loss and mental health, especially as it relates to the aging population.

According to The National Institute on Aging, approximately one in three people between the ages of 65 and 74 has hearing loss. Another study estimates that older adults experiencing deafness are 47% more likely to have symptoms of depression.

“Hearing loss drastically impacts one’s ability to communicate,” explains OCHN’s Chief Medical Officer, Vasilis K. Pozios, M.D. “As people hear and understand less, feelings of frustration or the tendency to withdrawal socially can increase, leading to depression or anxiety.”

Other examples of how hearing loss can influence mental health include:

- Fear of missing important phone calls.
- Impaired speech or speaking loudly.
- Stigma or embarrassment of not hearing.

On average, people can take seven years to seek treatment from when they first notice a loss in hearing, and less than 25% of adults with significant hearing impairments use hearing aids.

OCHN encourages people living with hearing loss later in life to seek physical and behavioral health care, noting that some studies show improvement in symptoms of depression within three months of using hearing aids.

To learn more about OCHN, visit www.oaklandchn.org. Non-emergency Access services can be reached at (248) 464-6363. If you or someone you know needs immediate assistance, call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.

About OCHN

OCHN is contracted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to lead a provider service network and manage care for approximately 29,000 Oakland County residents at more than 400 service sites across the county. People who receive public behavioral health services through OCHN's provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health concerns, or substance use disorder. Most of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN's goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to "inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities" reflects an unyielding belief in a "Valuable System for Valued People." Programs and supports provided by OCHN's service network are available at www.oaklandchn.org.

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