Attn:	**Community Editors**	**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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OCHN Offers COVID-19 Mental Health Tips

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (March 16, 2020) – As public health officials strategically plan to protect the physical wellbeing of individuals during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) challenge, Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) is encouraging people to also take care of their mental health. The agency, which is contracted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to oversee and manage public behavioral health services in Oakland County, offers the following suggestions to reduce COVID-19 related anxiety and stress.

Monitor and Minimized Overexposure to Media Reports: While important to stay informed about changing events regarding COVID-19, OCHN, mental health experts are encouraging people to take a break from news coverage. This is especially true if viewing of the news is causing additional stress and anxiety, or interfering with participation in daily activities.

Talk to Children: Parents should have age appropriate conversations with children about changes in their lives because of COVID-19. This includes school closings and the cancellation of extracurricular activities. It is important to reassure them that these actions are meant to keep them safe and are temporary. Kids also need to know that once determined safe by health experts, they will return to school and their normal routines. Parents whose children are experiencing persistent and overwhelming stress from the COVID-19 situation should contact OCHN's Crisis Helpline at 800.231.1127, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can also contact a healthcare provider.

Community Support: Avoiding large gatherings of people, does not mean avoiding people completely. Check in on neighbors, especially those who are elderly or live alone. Develop a neighborhood community outreach plan to offer support where needed and to those who need it most. This could include assisting working parents with childcare issues because of school closings.

Stay Connected: Social distancing can cause people to feel lonely and isolated. Make a conscious effort to stay connected with friends, family members and loved ones. Phone calls, texting, and social media allow people to stay close from wherever they are. Letter writing is another option to stay in touch.

Ask for Help: People who are experiencing persistent and overwhelming fear and stress from the COVID-19 situation should contact the OCHN's Crisis Helpline at 800.231.1127, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can also contact a healthcare provider.

(See Attached Resources and Stress Relief Techniques.)

About OCHN

OCHN has a long-standing history of promoting independence, choice, and community inclusion for adults and children with intellectual / developmental disabilities, mental health concerns, and substance use disorders. 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.

Most of the 28,000 people who receive services through Oakland County's public mental health system, which is managed by OCHN, have Medicaid insurance coverage.

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Resources and Stress Relief Techniques

- **Online Mental Health Resources:** like myStrength is free of charge when using the code OCCMHA to register.
    1. Visit www.myStrength.com.
    2. On the myStrength.com home page, click on "Sign-up."
    3. Enter the following Access Code: OCCMHA
    4. Complete the myStrength sign-up process with a brief Wellness Assessment and personal profile.
    5. **Go Mobile!** Using the access code above, get the myStrength app for iOS and Android devices at www.mystrength.com/mobile

- **Box Breathing Techniques:**
    1. Sit comfortably in a chair with both feet flat on the ground
    2. Slowly exhale all the air you can
    3. Slowly inhale for a count of 4
    4. Hold your breath for a count of 4
    5. Exhale for a count of 4
    6. Hold your breath for a count of 4
    7. Repeat these steps until you are ready to stop

- **Ground Techniques:**
    1. Sit comfortably in a chair with both feet flat on the ground:
        a. List 3 things you can see
        b. List 3 things you can hear
        c. List 3 things you can feel

    2. Pick up or touch items near you:
        a. Think about the weight of the item
        b. How well does it fit in your hand?
        c. Is it cool or warm to the touch?

    3. Hold a piece of ice:
        a. How does it feel?
        b. How long does it take to melt?
        c. How does the melting water feel on your skin?

    4. Move your body:
        a. Jumping Jacks
        b. Jumping up and down
        c. Jogging in place
        d. Yoga
        e. Stretching

5. Do math (it shifts the section of your brains primary function to help center you):
   a. Count backwards from 100
   b. Do multiplication tables in your head
   c. Pick a number and find as many ways as you can to make it (20: 5x4, 10+10 etc.…)

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   a. Count backwards from 100
   b. Do multiplication tables in your head
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7. Recite things from memory:
   a. Your favorite songs
   b. Poems
   c. Move or TV show lines

8. Sit with your pet:
   a. Pet them if you can
   b. Notice how their fur feels
   c. If you can hold them, notice how they feel in your lap

9. Make mental lists:
   a. Your favorite foods
   b. Your favorite TV shows or movies
   c. Your favorite books

10. Make plans for the future, when this has passed (because it will pass):
    a. What friends will you want to meet up with?
    b. Where would you want to go?
    c. What is something you want to try that you haven't done yet?

11. Listen to music:
    a. Where were you when you first heard the song?
    b. What does it mean to you?
    c. Do you know the words? If so, sing along!!