Digital Access for People with Low Income

WHAT?

The inequitable access to technology has always been an issue for people with low income. Low-income households sometimes have lower rates of in-home internet connectivity compared with higher-income groups. With the onset of COVID-19 the digital divide has become an even greater issue as organizations, resources and community spaces close their doors to the public. For some, this has limited people's ability to use computers and access free Wi-Fi. Services that were previously provided in person now have to be accessed by phone, text or email.

SO WHAT?

Daily aspects of people's lives are being increasingly touched by digital technology and those without access can be excluded from equal opportunities to education, employment and government services access. Access to internet should be an essential service and can be a key driver for improving social and economic well-being. During the pandemic, people with low income who are unable to afford a cell phone, data plan, or internet access suddenly have no way to get the services and resources they require. Food security, doctor's appointments, mental health counselling, harm reduction supplies, safety, family connections, employment, education, supervised visits and housing all have become a challenge to access for people who have no source of digital connection.

Fast Facts

- The United Nations considers digital access a basic human right
- Almost half of Canadian households with an annual income of $30,000 or less do not have access to high speed internet
- 1.2 million children live in poverty and only 1/3 of the lowest-income families have internet at home
- Students with internet at home generally have a higher graduation rate than those that do not

NOW WHAT?

Undertake a campaign to advocate for devices and low cost broadband services access for low income families to major telecommunications organizations/community partnerships. Lobby the Federal government for increased funding for low income families. Mapping and promotion of community WI-FI hotspots.

- https://ppforum.ca/publications/ontario-digital-inclusion-summit-summary-report/
- https://acorncanada.org/resource/internet-all
- https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/111.nsf/eng/home

Contact
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The Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) Coalition of Simcoe County is a countywide alliance of organizations providing services to children, youth and their families in Simcoe County.

Vision

All children, youth and families thriving in a strong, nurturing community.

Mission

To maximize the capacity, effectiveness and cultural uniqueness of the child, youth and family service system through collective efforts.

Values

Integrity
Respect
Innovation
Collaboration

CYFS Member Agencies

Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle
Barrie Police Service
Barrie Public Library
Canadian Mental Health Association-Simcoe Branch
Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
Catulpa Community Support Services
Child Advocacy Centre Simcoe/Muskoka
Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York
Community Connection/211 Central East Ontario
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
Conseil scolaire Viamonde
County of Simcoe
CSC Chigamik CHC
Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services
E3 Community Services
EarlyON– Simcoe North
Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County
Empower Simcoe
Georgian College
Gilbert Centre
Gilda's Club of Simcoe **Muskoka**
John Howard Society
Kerry's Place
Kinark Child and Family Services
La Clé d'la Baie en Huronie
Mackenzie Health
New Path Foundation
New Path Youth and Family Services
NSM LHIN
Orillia Public Library
Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre
Seasons Centre for Grieving Children
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions
United Way Simcoe Muskoka
Waypoint Centre for Mental Health
YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka
Youth Haven