

Internet for All – NJ Local Coordination Workshop

Broadband Equity & Telehealth

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AARP[®]
New Jersey



Vision: A society in which all people live with dignity and purpose and fulfill their goals and dreams.

Mission: AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age.

Members: 38 million nationwide. 1.1 million Garden State members

How We Show Up: Wise friend in your life and fierce defender on your behalf.

"To serve, not to be served."

AARP's founder, Ethel Percy Andrus (1881–1967)

Disparities in Digital Equity for Seniors

- Nearly 22 million American seniors do not have wireline broadband access at home – 42% of those are over 65. Thirty-nine million people over 50 are lacking home wireline internet services. See OATs report: [*Aging Connected: Exposing the hidden Connectivity Crisis*](#).
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a hidden crisis in connectivity for our country's older adults.
- Technology is exacerbating social divisions and inequalities. OATS' research found disturbing correlations between digital disengagement and race, disability, health status, educational attainment, immigration, rural residence and income.
- Poor broadband not only limits access to essential public health information, social services, and digital healthcare services like telehealth and apps that manage chronic conditions, but it can also lead to risk of social isolation.

The Importance of Digital Equity for Seniors

- Reliable and affordable high-speed internet access is critical to the well-being of adults (e.g., telehealth, connection to family and friends, civic engagement, distance learning, remote work, etc.).
- Loved ones and caregivers are less able to support disconnected seniors effectively.
- Institutions such as governments, private health care providers and community-based organizations incur higher costs for delivering services.
- Digital literacy skills enable proficient use of telehealth.





Benefits of Telehealth

The use of communications technology to deliver the full suite of health care services, at a distance.

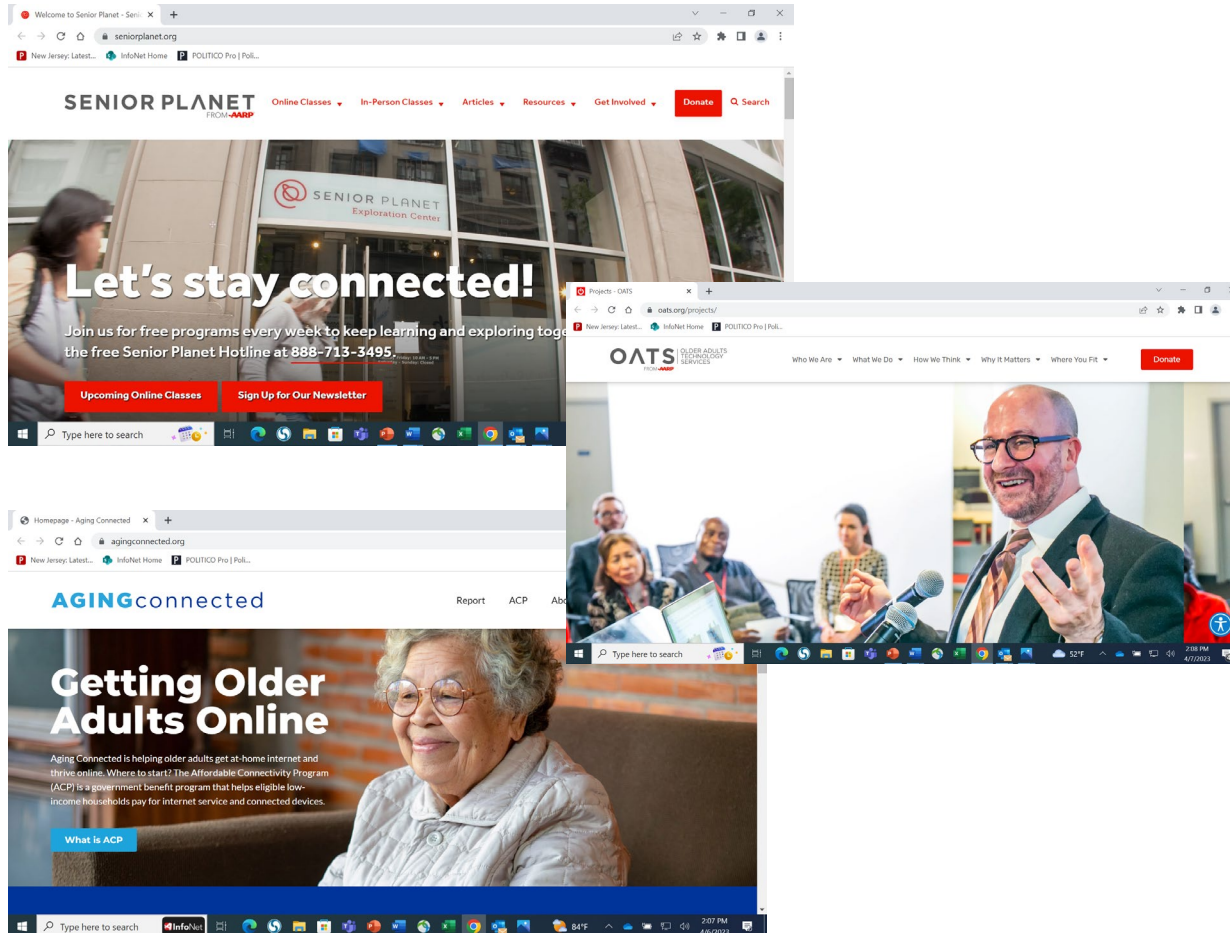
Telehealth allows patients to access information about their own health, receive the care they need without some of the barriers associated with traditional in person care – like travel – and allows them to live in their homes and communities as independently as possible.

- **Protection from exposure to infections:** including for the general public during public health emergencies like COVID-19 or for patients who are immunocompromised. With telehealth, patients can still receive care from their doctors without putting themselves or their providers at increased health risk.
- **Accessibility:** Attending a telehealth appointment can be both more convenient and less expensive for patients than an in-person appointment. Improves access for rural residents who may have to travel greater distances to see a provider, particularly when it comes to specialty care.
- **Reducing Health Disparities:** Telehealth can help eliminate some of the barriers that exist for people with disabilities or mobility limitations.

Telehealth Use Among Older Adults Climbs During COVID-19

- From 2019 to 2020, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of older adults who reported that their health care providers offered telehealth visits.
- In May 2019, 14% of older adults said that their health care providers offered telehealth visits, compared to 62% in June 2020.
- The percentage of older adults who had ever participated in a telehealth visit rose sharply from 4% in May 2019 to 30% in June 2020.
- Of those surveyed in 2020, 6% reported having a telehealth visit prior to March 2020, while 26% reported having a telehealth visit in the period from March to June 2020.
- Among adults age 50–80 who had a telehealth visit in the period from March to June 2020, 76% reported it was with a primary care provider, 32% with a specialty care provider, and 18% with a mental health provider.
- Respondents said that their most recent telehealth visit was conducted via video by phone (33%), video by tablet or computer (31%), or by phone with audio only (36%).

A Call to Action



- Publicize and clearly articulate the value of broadband to seniors.
- Prioritize social equity and inclusion.
- Expand access to low-cost offers.
- Develop content, communities and experience for older adults to increase utilization of broadband services.