Ontario
Age-Friendly
Communities

Outreach Program

Elder Abuse
Prevention
Ontario

Connected Canadians
Canadiens Branchés

BARRIERS TO DIGITAL LITERACY FOR OLDER ADULTS:
Bridging the digital divide

📅🕐 **March 24th**
12 PM – 1 PM (ET)

Speakers:

Dr. Robertson
Research Coordinator,
Centre for Studies in Aging and Health

Ken Roy
General Manager, Connected Canadians

Provided with ASL

Ontario

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
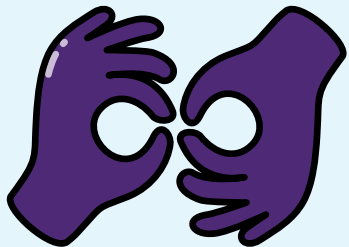
WEBINAR LOGISTICS

Communication

Microphones: All attendees will be muted during the webinar.

CHAT Box - Welcome to post comments during the session.

Q & A - Type your questions in Question/Answer Box and addressed after the presentation.

ASL

- **Image and name** (ASL Interpreter) on screen

- Speaker /Gallery view: Grid at top of right corner of screen - choose the layout you prefer on your screen

- Closed Captioning: Enable or Disable

WEBINAR LOGISTICS

Evaluation

Your feedback on knowledge gain from the session and suggestions for future topics is appreciated.

- Follow-up email with survey link

Recording

A recorded version of this webinar will be available on our EAPO and AFC websites.

Links and documents shared during the webinar will also be posted.

Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality

We appreciate there may be personal circumstances or issues which participants may wish to address. However, in keeping with our commitment to maintaining your privacy and confidentiality, today we will be answering general questions posed through the Q&A.

If someone wishes to discuss specific circumstances, we invite you to contact EAPO following this webinar to arrange for a confidential conversation so that we may further assist you.

Ontario Age-Friendly Community Outreach Program

- Provincial Knowledge Translation and Exchange program designed to support AFC development in Ontario

- Goals are to:
  1. **Strengthen community capacity** to implement, evaluate and sustain age-friendly activities
  2. **Increase collaboration** by connecting people, ideas and resources
 3. **Raise awareness** about AFC benefits, promising practices and planning principles

![Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario]

Vision

EAPO envisions an Ontario where ALL seniors are free from ageism and abuse, where human rights are advanced, protected and respected.

EAPO is mandated to support the implementation of Ontario's Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse.

Funded by the ON Government, under the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA)

Ontario
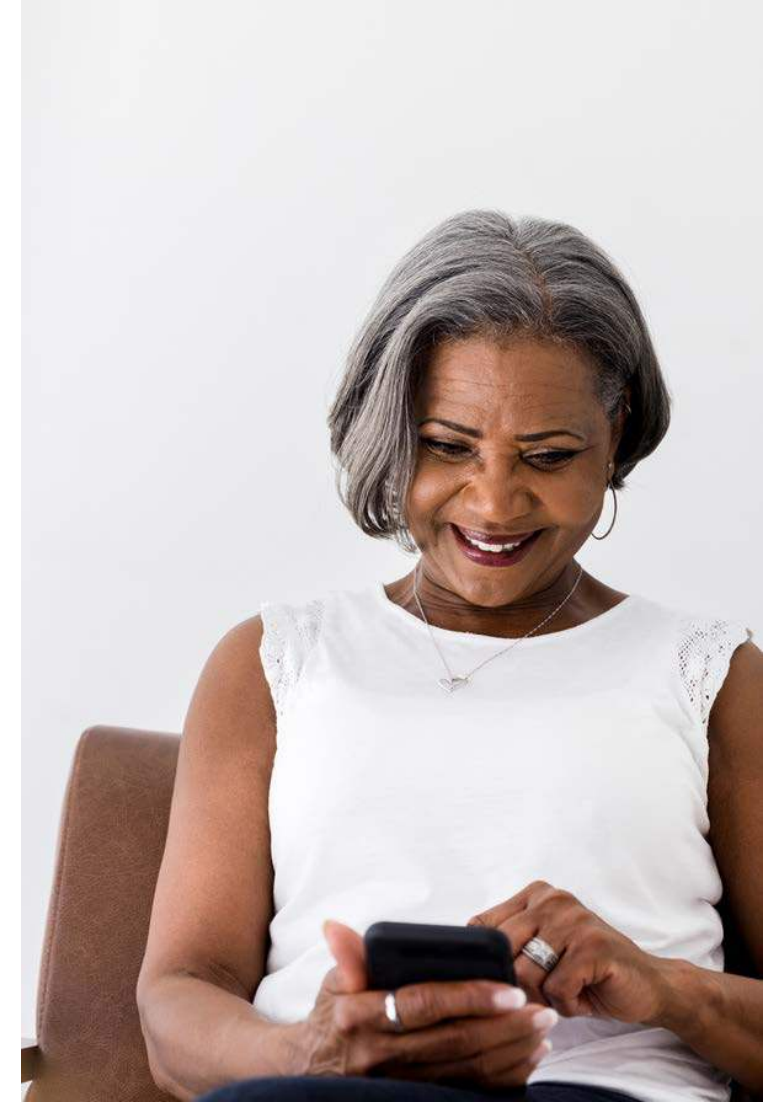
STOP ABUSE –

SIMPLY PUT, WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

RESTORE RESPECT

Speaker

Dr. Robertson

Research Coordinator, Centre for Studies in Aging and Health

Dr. Robertson completed her PhD in Health Quality in September 2024 and holds a master's degree in kinesiology. She has experience working on and leading national and international multi-disciplinary research projects, and currently instructs university level courses on Healthy Aging and research methods.

In her role, Madison provides support and coordination to research and evaluation activities in aging and health care services for the Centre for Studies in Aging and Health team.

Speaker

Ken Roy

General Manager, Connected Canadians

Ken oversees the Connected Canadians team, ensuring that their staff and volunteers are fully supported so that they can best provide digital literacy training and support to older Canadians. He also engages with Connected Canadians' partners, maintaining healthy relationships and ensuring the smooth delivery of workshops and other services designed to boost digital literacy.

Besides his leadership roles, Ken also volunteers his time to provide technology mentorship to Connected Canadians clients. He draws on more than 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry to deliver the highest level of service in any role he undertakes.
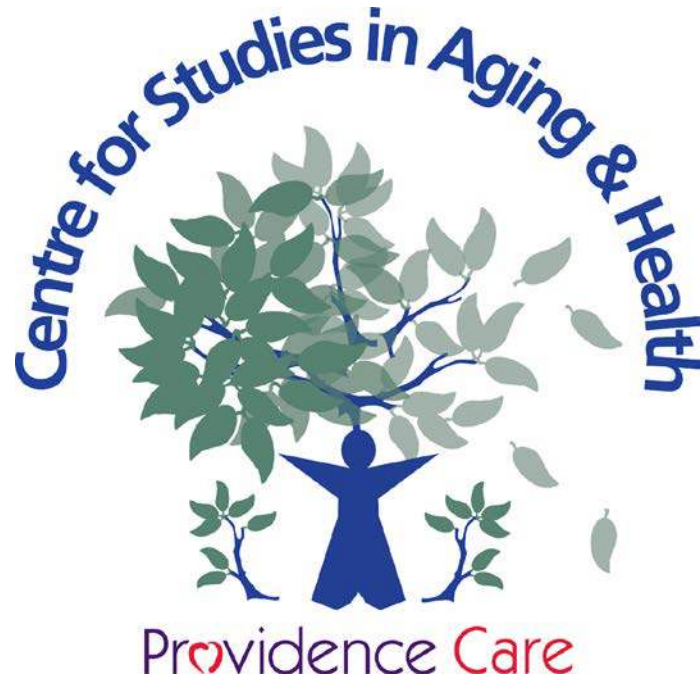
Barriers to digital literacy for older adults: Bridging the digital divide

Dr. Madison Robertson

Research Coordinator, CSAH

March 24th, 2025
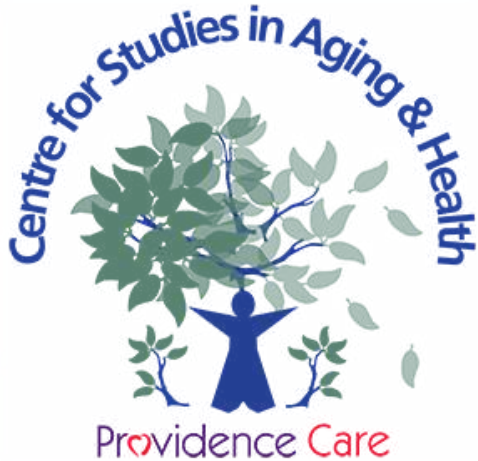
What we will discuss:

- What is Digital Literacy
- Why Digital Literacy Matters
- Key Barriers to Digital Literacy for Older Adults
- Strategies to Mitigate Digital Literacy Barriers
- Tools and Resources

What is Digital Literacy?

While there is no universally agreed-upon definition, digital literacy is generally understood as an **individual's ability to find, understand, communicate, and use information effectively** through *digital devices and technologies*.

Examples of Digital Literacy

- **Operating Devices**
  - Using smart phone to video call a family member
- **Internet Navigation**
  - Online learning, reading news, accessing online courses
- **Email and Messaging**
  - Using messaging apps to stay in touch with friends
- **Accessing Healthcare**
  - Scheduling appointments or using telehealth services
- **Using Personal Monitoring Devices**
  - Using medical alert devices for an emergency

Why is Digital Literacy Important for Older Adults?

- Evolving digital landscape and aging population
- Individual Benefits:
  - Improves quality of life
  - Helps maintain independence
  - Keeps people connected
  - Decreases loneliness and isolation
  - Increases knowledge
  - Assists with health care access
  - Self management of health

Why is Digital Literacy Important for Older Adults?

- Promotes intergenerational equity
- Cost saving and contribution to the digital economy
- Supports aging in place
- Reduces unnecessary strain on healthcare systems
- Supports health system sustainability

Barriers to Digital Literacy

1. Health Barriers

2. Support Network Barriers

3. Barriers to Convenience and Ease of Use

4. Knowledge and Information Barriers

5. Perception Barriers

6. Resource Barriers

7. Barriers for Special Populations

Barriers to Digital Literacy

1. Health Barriers

   ▪ Poor motor skills, visual and hearing difficulties, and physical impairments make it challenging to engage with digital devices effectively

   ▪ Specific conditions such as arthritis, cataracts, and tremors further complicate the use of computers and the internet

   ▪ Cognitive impairments such as memory loss and forgetfulness add another layer of difficulty

Barriers to Digital Literacy

2. Support Network Barriers

- Many older adults lack sufficient social support from family, friends, or community services, which exacerbates their digital literacy challenges

- Dependence on younger family members for digital skills is not always reliable – reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and discouraging use

- Absence or discouragement of family or peers often hinders the adoption of digital tools

- Positive or negative attitudes within social networks can impact older adults' engagement with technology

Barriers to Digital Literacy

3. Barriers to Convenience and Ease of Use

   - Complex interfaces, small font sizes, poor sound quality, and multiple authentication requirements pose significant challenges

     - Many devices and technologies fail to accommodate age-related declines in vision, hearing, memory, and cognitive processing speed

   - Continuous updates and changes in digital devices and websites create additional hurdles for older adults

Barriers to Digital Literacy

4. Knowledge and Information Barriers

- There is a greater gap in computer proficiency and knowledge for older adults due to limited use throughout their lifetime

    - Reduces effective use of patient portals and other digital health platforms

- Many older adults are unaware of available digital technologies, services, and their benefits, which further limits their adoption of these technologies

Barriers to Digital Literacy

5. Perception Barriers

- Concerns about online security and privacy are significant deterrents

    - Fear of privacy breaches, reports of online scams, phishing attacks, and identity theft

- Older adults often experience anxiety and mistrust of technology

    - Constant monitoring, implications of being watched or recorded without consent

- Low self-efficacy, confidence, and motivation significantly impact older adults' engagement with digital technologies

Barriers to Digital Literacy

5. Perception Barriers

- Low educational levels and financial concerns can intensify digital fears

- Concerns related to social isolation, stigmatization, and threats to independence

- Fear that reliance on smart technologies could lead to reduced human interaction, limited physical activity, and increased loneliness

- Many older adults have indicated they prefer traditional methods of communication, such as letters and in-person consultations

  - Value personal connection and the comprehensiveness of physical interactions and activities

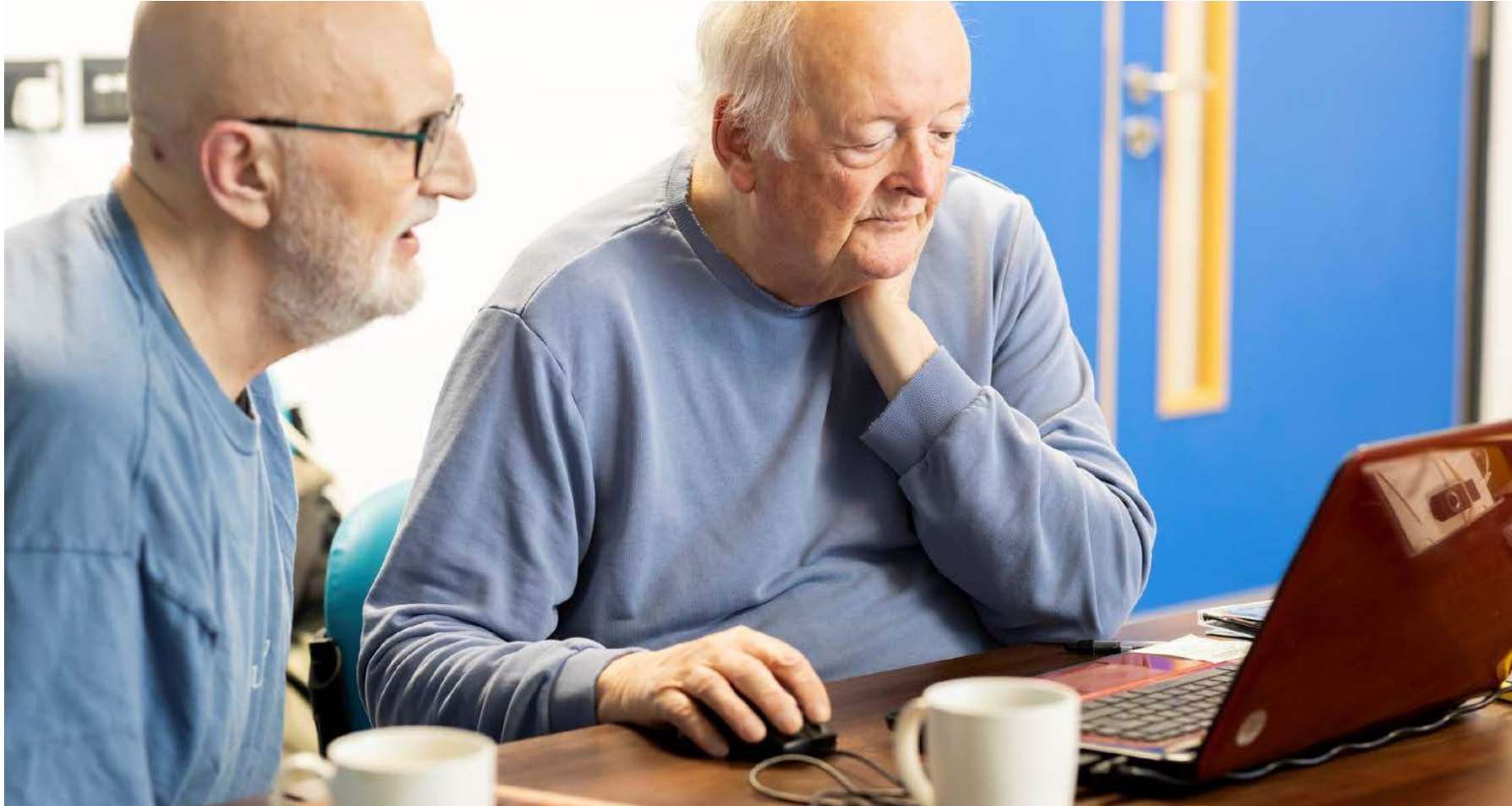# Barriers to Digital Literacy

6. Resource Barriers

   - Poor internet speed, insufficient storage space, and lack of necessary equipment like smartphones or computers limit digital technology use

   - Affordability of digital devices and internet services - high cost of devices, maintenance, and indirect costs (i.e., electricity consumption)

   - The absence of personalized training and ineffective teaching methods limit older adults' ability to learn and use digital technologies

     - Rigid and non-tailored instructional approaches can lead to frustration, disengagement, and a lack of confidence, making the learning process overwhelming

Barriers to Digital Literacy

7. Barriers for Special Populations

- Visually impaired older adults
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing older adults
- Older adults with chronic conditions
- Older adults with cancer and their caregivers
- Older adults with disabilities

Strategies to Mitigate Barriers to Digital Literacy

Strategies to Mitigate Barriers to Digital Literacy

1. **Collaborative Learning**
   - Encourage peer support and intergenerational mentoring programs
   - Leverage family members and "warm experts" (e.g., staff in care facilities)
   - Partner with non-peer groups to offer collaborative learning opportunities
   - Leverage university/student-led programs or care facility programs
   - Hold digital literacy sessions in accessible community centers

2. **Structured Content for Training Sessions**
   - Partner with community-based programs and library sessions
   - Incorporate gamification (i.e., activities with elements of game playing such as point scoring and competitions) and hands-on learning
   - Implement Digital Health Literacy programs and knowledge sessions

Strategies to Mitigate Barriers to Digital Literacy

3. Technology-Facilitated Self-Learning

- Promote user-friendly designs, step-by-step guides and observational learning through competency-based programming
- Support self-exploration, with assistance available when needed

4. Tailored Interventions

- Provide personalized, home-based training that caters to individual needs and abilities
- Adapt programs to accommodate physical limitations and learning paces
- Use digital literacy workshops with user-driven content

Strategies to Mitigate Barriers to Digital Literacy

5. Adaptive Tools

- Use simplified interfaces and devices that are easier to navigate
- Provide adaptive equipment like styluses or larger keyboards for those with motor skill challenges

6. Continuous Support

- Ensure ongoing engagement with follow-up sessions and refresher courses
- Establish help desks or online communities to offer continuous support
- Create a supportive learning environment to reduce anxiety and build confidence

Next Steps for Digital Literacy

- How to get started:

  - **Identify Your Needs** - What do you want to learn (i.e., Email, Social media, Video calls)?

  - **Choose a Learning Method** – Decide how you learn best (i.e., In-person classes, online tutorials, family support, self-paced learning)

  - **Find the Right Device & Tools** – Choose a technology device (i.e., Tablet vs. laptop) and accessibility settings

  - **Start with Basics & Build Confidence** - Short, practical sessions work best to start

  - **Get Support When Needed** – Consider attending refresher sessions and asking for help when needed

Next Steps for Digital Literacy

Scan the this **QR Code** to Visit our **Digital Literacy Page** where you will find further Information and resources

You can also reach out to local libraries, community centers, senior centers, organizations, or municipal governments for more information and resources in your area.

Feedback, comments, or questions?

Join the CSAH Distribution list - Centre for Studies in Aging and Health (list-manage.com)

References

Contact us

Madison Robertson, Research Coordinator, robertsm1@providencecare.ca

Acknowledgements

The Ontario Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Program is managed by the Centre for Studies in Aging and Health at Providence Care. We would like to thank Salman Khan for his valuable research contributions.

Connected Canadians
OVERVIEW

Connected Canadians

About Connected Canadians

Canada's leading Digital Inclusion Charity founded in 2018 that promotes **digital literacy skills** amongst **seniors** and older adults, by providing **free** technology **training and support**.
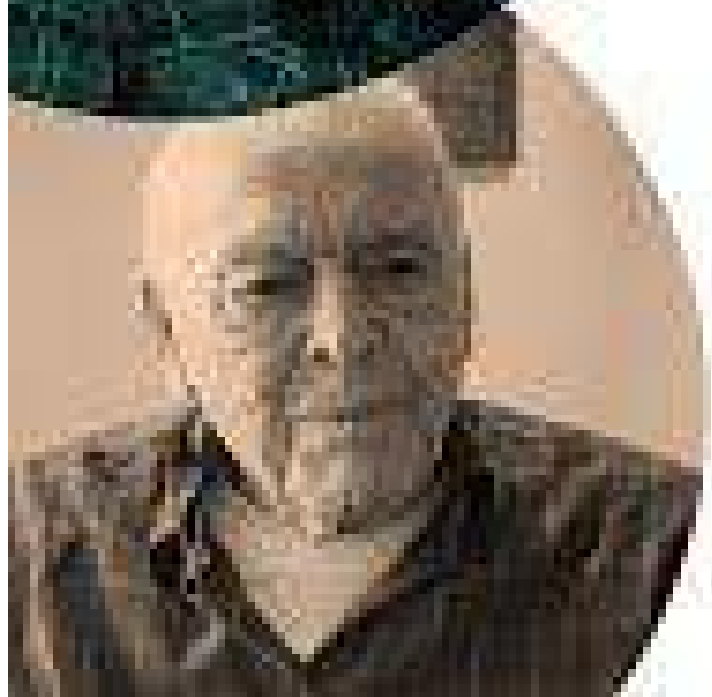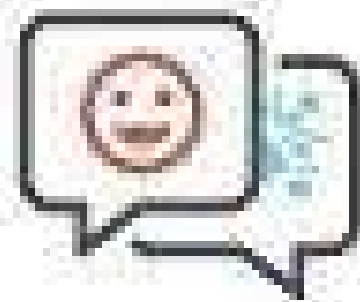
Connected Canadians
Canadiens Branchés

Empowering Canadian Seniors: Our Client Stories

Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

- **Tech Helpline:** Canadians age 50+ can call us toll-free, email us, or reach us through our website and receive ongoing support based on volunteer availability
  - Helps seniors learn new digital skills in a relaxed and welcoming virtual environment, free of charge
  - Connected Canadians' supporting partners receive expedient support and coordination
  - In-person support is possible if we have a mentor located close by - must be in a public location (ie. common area, library, coffee shop, etc)

Connected Canadians

Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

- *Healthcare Staff:* During the pandemic, healthcare providers have become overwhelmed by having to help patients learn how to navigate video conferencing tools while also providing healthcare. Connected Canadians has partnered with multiple healthcare providers across the country to assist with this process, easing the load of healthcare workers and helping senior patients gain new digital skills.

- *Support for Families of Hospital Patients and Volunteers:*   due to quarantining procedures in health care institutions, elderly patients, and the senior volunteers who used to help them, are now more physically isolated than ever before. To ensure that those with family or friends in hospital have the skills they need to connect with their loved ones and healthcare providers, Connected Canadians has created a program to help families of patients get connected.

Across our 3 sites we made over 3000 virtual calls from April (2020) to the end of July. Connected Canadians helped us by working one-on-one with family members who were not comfortable with technology. It made our job easier and we were rewarded with some wonderful smiles.

~ Kim Durst-Mackenzie, Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator, Bruyère Continuing Care

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Programs & Offerings

DIGITAL LITERACY WORKSHOPS

- Group sessions with **6-100 seniors**; Held over Zoom other video conferencing tool, both smaller groups to encourage interaction or larger webinar format

- **Workshop topics include:** Online Shopping & Banking, Phishing Scams, Music & Technology, Google Maps & Google Places, and more! Connected Canadians has 22 different workshop topics developed.

- Workshops come with follow-up handouts to make sure that participants have useful resources to refer to after attending.

- Some workshops are held in-person at locations where we have facilitators located

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Programs & Offerings

CONNECTIONS THROUGH ART

- Connected Canadians has partnered with The National Gallery of Canada on a new initiative connecting seniors with one-on-one digital support to become comfortable navigating gallery.ca and other NGC platforms. Together we have developed a customized program that helps older adults stay connected through virtual art programming. We believe that everyone should be empowered to use technology and have access to explore art and the NGC offerings online.

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Programs & Offerings

EMPLOYER SPONSORED VOLUNTEERING

- During workday hours, employers can sponsor their employees as Connected Canadians volunteers

- Connected Canadians will also host workshops or gaming events to give volunteering opportunities

  to corporate employees

Programs & Offerings

DEVICE LENDING/DONATIONS

- As many seniors are now isolated both physically and socially, and many do not have technology tools available to them, Connected Canadians Technology Mentors are able to work with seniors remotely to configure devices to send to them to use in isolation.

- Working with multiple partners, we have been deploying devices to seniors in need across Canada. With this arrangement we've been distributing iPads that are pre-configured with required tools, along with Android devices with set-up guides, live support hours and staff training.

- Since 2020, we have distributed over 1000 devices across Canada to seniors in need

Connected Canadians

Seniors Can Connect!

Increasing Financial Literacy for Seniors

- Comprehensive workshop curriculum developed to help seniors with online banking

- Certified mentor training program for effective one-on-one training

- Comprehensive video and document resources on CC's site for ongoing learning

Programs & Offerings

ORGANIZATIONAL VOLUNTEER DIGITAL MENTOR TRAINING

- Customized senior-focused customer service training for partners' staff & volunteers to support seniors

- Connected Canadians has trained thousands of staff and volunteers across Canada, including trainees from Markham Public Library, Baycrest Hospital, Families Canada, and Rogers Communications!

- CCis also developing a Cyber Safety Training and Certification for trainees to support victims of scams online

Connected Canadians

Rogers and Connected Canadians

- In 2022, CC developed custom training for Rogers' senior-facing technicians

- First major Canadian telecom committed to tailored senior customer service

- 2,000 training licenses provided for Ignite service technicians trained with customized materials

- 85% of Rogers technicians in Chartwell homes trained as of early 2024

Programs & Offerings

Our Trained Mentors

Our Digital Mentors go through a rigorous onboarding process to ensure you have the best possible experience!

- Preliminary virtual interview with our volunteer lead

- Vulnerable Sector Check completed within the last 2 years

- Two professional reference checks

- Government issued photo ID

- 5+ hours of virtual onboarding modules with quizzes

- Mentors **pass** an Evaluation "Test Drive" session with one of our Evaluators

Connected Canadians

Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

What can CC help with? Anything technology-related as long as clients are receiving support with learning to build independence and skills!

Examples:

- Help with learning how to use Email, Zoom, Whatsapp, or other digital tools
- Help with learning to fix a printer error
- Help with learning to manage or transfer digital files
- Help with learning to stay safe online / recognizing phishing scams
- Help with learning new skills to build a website
- Help with learning online banking tasks and skills
- Advice on buying new technology

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Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

What will CC Mentors NOT help with? Activities that would normally be contracted to paid professionals

Examples:

- Build and design a website for our clients
- Create a digital legal document for our clients
- Edit photos and videos for our clients
- Buy new technology for our clients
- File taxes or insurance claims for our clients online
- Issues with hardware

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Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

Clients' personal information is important to us

When clients reach out to Connected Canadians, we request some pieces of personal information:

- Phone number
- Emergency contact number
- Email
- Address
- Year of birth
- How clients heard about us
- Consent to receive communications from CC

Connected Canadians

Programs & Offerings

1:1 SUPPORT SESSIONS

Clients' personal information is important to us

- This information is important for us to be able to best support clients

- This personal information is stored securely and only accessible by our core team

- Contact information will be provided only to trained and vetted mentors once they've agreed to work with clients (address is only provided for in-person sessions)

- Client information can be removed from our client database upon request at any time

Connected Canadians

Programs & Offerings

Connected Canadians' Waiver Process

Connected Canadians - Individual Clickthrough Liability Waiver - V 1.1

Programs & Offerings

Connected Canadians' Waiver Process

- CC has a one-time waiver to obtain informed, documented consent from clients regarding specific online activities they wish to engage in with us, while also minimizing the sensitive information shared

- Clients must complete the waiver prior to any sessions with Connected Canadians

Connected Canadians

Connected Canadians' Secondary Mandate

- Some of Connected Canadians' Mentors are newcomers to Canada who benefit greatly from meaningful interactions with older Canadians

- These interactions lead to greater cultural awareness and conversational opportunities

- Through their experience with Connected Canadians, mentors are later able to gain meaningful employment here in Canada

- Our seniors feel a sense of pride and connection in helping to welcome newcomers into the community

Connected Canadians

Funding Model & Vision

- Connected Canadians is able to offer our **free-of-charge** support services for **seniors** through **partnerships** with various organizations across Canada and **government** and **community foundation grants**.

- We have a team of **paid mentors** who work during the day, and we have onboarded over **575 volunteers. Volunteers** typically mentor during evenings/weekends to help support senior clients across Canada.

- We believe that **all** people should be **empowered to use technology safely and effectively**, to **engage with loved ones** and **enhance quality of life**. By **2030**, we want **all** Canadian seniors to have access to **free technology training** and **support**.

Connected Canadians

Next Steps

Sign-up / Registration

- Individuals can sign up for assistance on our website at

  www.connectedcanadians.ca/programs or via leaving a voicemail at

  1-877-304-5813

- In peak times it may take between 24-48 hours for someone to reach out to

  you with next steps

Connected Canadians

Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario

Tax Talk
Series

EAPO is pleased to co-host this webinar series with the Ontario Ministry of Finance

Introduction to Ontario's Estate Administration Tax

Mar. 26, 1 PM - 2 PM | Register : https://eapon.ca/Tax_Talk_Mar26

![Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario logo]

Join us...to help make a
safer Ontario for all
older adults.

Contact EAPO:

1-416-916-6728
Toll-Free: 1-833-916-6728

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