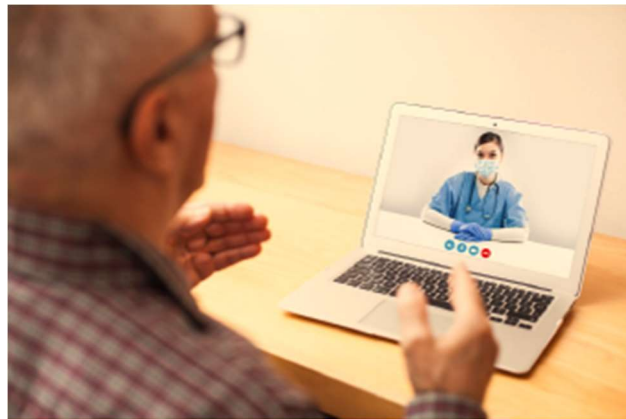


Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming

Digital Equity – Listening to your Community

What happens when a close-knit client group of people who recognized the importance of social interaction as an effective therapy for improving their mental and physical health and wellbeing are told they must physically distance themselves to remain healthy? This is exactly what happened to the Francophone seniors at the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming. The COVID-19 pandemic provincial-wide lockdown meant that CSC Temiskaming had to close its doors. Providers immediately transitioned to phones to meet the immediate needs of their clients but quickly realised that this would not be enough. CSC Temiskaming also serves a large geographic area and understood that shifting to a virtual platform could meet many of the needs of their now isolated population. Also, everything else had to be done online: appointments, groceries, banking.



The centre applied for and received a grant that allowed them to purchase devices (tablets) and internet access. Working with their community Telecom partner they were able to purchase devices and access at discounted prices. Then using the electronic medical record, they were able to identify the clients who would immediately benefit. They also developed a list of seniors who were interested in participating in virtual activities and events. Partnering with the local Francophone learning centres they were able to distribute devices and provide much-needed training and support. This training and support proved to be a critical success factor.

As the people who needed the devices and access started to get training on using them, program staff at CSC Temiskaming suggested starting up virtual activities. However the unequivocal response was a request to continue the training. Whether through one-on-one training or group training sessions, the passion for learning this new skill was ignited in this Francophone senior population. Now, as the province begins to slowly lift lockdown restrictions, the seniors continue to explore all the ways to use their devices.

"Having a tablet has changed my life!"

"I was able to open the presents with my grandchildren remotely on Christmas morning"

"Having a tablet saved me from depression";

"I learned to do a Google search";

The narrative of Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming digital literacy program is one of establishing strong partnerships with organizations that could readily provide particular services because it was their core business and the ability to listen to the community's needs and pivot their strategy to meet those needs.