

## Digital Equity and the Social Determinants of Health

The pandemic has made all of our lives more challenging but, for those who cannot afford a cell phone, a device or internet access, basic services including health care are less available.

For the past year and a half, South Riverdale Community Health Centre has put out a call for donation of used devices (mobile phones) and chargers. The phones were given to clients who needed them to attend medical appointments, receive COVID test results, participate in group programs promoting social connection, and access information and support. “Clients need a way of connecting virtually to holistic health and social services to increase positive health outcomes,” says Jason Altenberg, SRCHC CEO.

“Digital health equity” is more than a local phone drive. It means that all people can access technology that allows them an opportunity to participate in society. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning and access to essential services.” (The Alliance for Healthier Communities) We learned a lot from our phone drive, but perhaps the biggest takeaway is the need for governments and funders to provide access and training so that phones, devices and free internet are available for all who need them. With our partners at the Alliance for Healthier Communities, we will call on government to provide the supports needed to help clients stay connected.

### Reference:

*Digital Equity Call to Action: Bridging the Digital Divide. The Alliance for Healthier Communities*

<https://www.allianceon.org/sites/default/files/14.6%20Digital%20Equity%20Strategy%20Call%20to%20Action%20Bridging%20the%20Digital%20Divide.pdf>  
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