



Outreach and Engagement and the Digital Divide and Technology: Success, Challenges Opportunities



Spring 2022

Sara Taylor

sarataylorr@aol.com

Vincent Sears

vincentsears@gmail.com

Welcome & Housekeeping

- Please stay muted unless you are speaking
- Turn on all cameras when possible
- Anyone requesting CEUs must be present the entire time and sign in and out.
- If applicable Evaluations are required for any CEUs
- Please be respectful of others
- Respect lived and professional experience
- Please do not share any personal information

OVERVIEW

Successful engagement of diverse families from low income and marginalized communities requires collaborative partnerships that include racial equity strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for communities of color including limited access to technology and the tools and educational resources to navigate complex systems and education. Educators and providers are facing challenges in meeting the complex needs related to technology which has created gaps and disparities in already burdened systems. This workshop will feature parent facilitator and trainer who will discuss success and challenges with this ongoing issue. Hear more about strategies and solutions being implemented to address this issue beyond the pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Understand the economics driving the Digital Divide and the Telecommunications Act of 1996
- ✓ Discuss consumers choice and Person-Centered Services: In person service versus virtual
- ✓ Identify new outreach and engagement strategies for our current environment and community needs
- ✓ Understand the realities of accessing technology and equipment for low-income households
- ✓ Discussion of adaptable practices for positives outcomes and changes



Outreach & Digital Divide Quotes

“Health and Human Service providers can not afford to become 100% virtual. Person centered and client choice must become a priority ”

Sara Taylor

“Nearly one-in-five teens can’t always finish their homework because of the digital divide”

PEW Research

“While the internet is often described as a great equalizer, access to the web never has been equal” Jim Kessler

Terms & Definitions

- **Engagement:** For social workers, engagement refers to the process through which clients become active and involved in their treatment.
- **Digital Divide:** The term "digital divide" refers to the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities
- **Greenlining:** The business practice of investing energy, products and services in low-income, minority and disabled communities to increase profits and expand the economic pie.

Digital Divide Examples

K-12

In K-12 settings, a digital divide is commonly seen when students have limited or no internet access at home. Students from low-income families can also struggle to have devices like laptops or tablets which are often necessary tools, especially as [STEAM education](#) becomes a wider focus in K-12 curricula. This causes a lot of problems for students at home as they can struggle with completing assignments and furthering their knowledge outside of classroom hours. This has only increased since the COVID-19 pandemic which has sent many students home to learn virtually.

College

In college, the digital divide looks similar to the way it exists in K-12 settings. Completing assignments, taking supplementary online classes, or even access to virtual tutoring becomes a daily challenge. An added issue is that limited access to reliable devices and high-speed internet negatively affects career-related prospects. Internships, mentorship programs, and networking are harder to manage when students face the digital divide.

Workplace

While the digital divide might not feel as obvious in traditional workplace settings, its effects start long before an individual takes a job. As with any of the significant [opportunity gaps](#), those who experience the digital divide in earlier life can feel the effects well into their career. It can limit their career options and opportunities for growth in certain industries. The digital divide often means the difference between an individual having the training and experience they need or missing the opportunity to hone their skills and further their education.

Digital Divide | Close the Gap Foundation



Telecommunication Act and Greenling

- Telecommunications Act of 1996 Purpose
- Greenlining
- Business and Economics
- Video -[A Turning Point: Digging into the digital divide and how it affects people of color disproportionately | wkyc.com](#)
- Provider Education and Understanding of Subsidies

DIGITAL DIVIDE SOLUTIONS

- Multiple Solutions
- Policy and Legislation
- Economic & Social Justice and Equity Lens
- Provider and Funder Flexibility
- Consumer/Client Lived experience



Multiple Solutions

In Rural Areas

- The issue is largely physical access beyond satellite and DSL
- This has the majority of the focus of current funding

In Urban Areas

- The issue is often financial
- Or other ability to do so
 - Such as familiarity with both the benefits and risks
 - Having the necessary devices and the skills to use them

Policy and Legislature

- ▶ There is a need for funding that will be prioritized:
 - ▶ underserved communities
 - ▶ Cost-effective approaches for all aspects of connection
 - ▶ Long term benefits and flexibility as tech evolves
- ▶ There are short term subsidies in place for school children and libraries for income insecure individuals
 - ▶ The **Emergency Broadband Benefit Program** enrolls over one million households
 - ▶ Qualification requires enrollment in another existing assistance program such as SNAP, Medicaid, Lifeline or if a child relies on a reduced price school meals program

Economic & Social Justice and Equity Lens

- ▶ Cost is a significant barrier
- ▶ “ There are 9,883,443 unemployed individuals in the United States, of which at least 3,261,536 lack foundation digital skills”
 - ▶ Competition for an estimated 6,925,017 (75.2%) of job openings require these skills.

Statistics from <https://digitalinclusion.org>

Provider & funder flexibility

- ▶ Funding will need to be spread out among different providers. Not only to incorporate devices but also what type of technology is appropriate for the area and still cost effective to reach the most people.

Consumer/Client lived experiences

- ▶ Phones are not sufficient devices to apply for jobs or work remotely or do to school work with
- ▶ Support in skilling needs to be more accessible so that people can evolve their knowledge as the tech evolves in our lives.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT : REALITY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Uncertainty stemming from COVID-19 and the Realities of 2020

- Crisis Management Plans - [Leading Through Change During a Crisis - YouTube](#)
- Health and Safety Concerns
- Practice and Guidance from Funders
- Losses and Fears
- Rapid Changes
- Isolation from peers and teams
- Technology and Social Media
- Call for Equity & Racial Justice

ENGAGEMENT

What is Engagement?

Engagement is **defined** as the process through which a client begins to actively participate in their treatment.

Sara's Key Principles for Outreach & Engagement

1. The “PERSON Beyond Paper & Payment”
2. Relationship Building
3. Listen to understand
4. Understand the needs of the community
5. Communication and Follow Up
6. Creativity and Innovation
7. Person Centered, Trauma & Culturally Informed
8. Choices for in person versus telehealth



EVALUATE YOUR ATTITUDE

Self-Awareness and Self-Control

Acceptance

Avoiding self-pity and divisiveness

Sympathy and Empathy



CONSIDERATIONS /ADAPTABLE PRACTICES

- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Socio-economic background
- ▶ Rural/Suburban/Urban community
- ▶ Age and Family Dynamics
- ▶ Cognitive functioning
- ▶ Trauma from 2020 and different places of readiness
- ▶ Language and Values
- ▶ Past Experience of Clients/Consumers
- ▶ One model does not fit all



Case Study Breakout Room

- Sara Taylor –Outreach
- Vincent Sears – Digital Divide



RESOURCES

[Digital Divide In Rochester - The Children's Agenda \(thechildrensagenda.org\)](#)
[The Digital Divide in Healthcare: It's Not Just Access | HIMSS](#)

[17% of teens sometimes can't finish homework because of digital divide | Pew Research Center](#)

[COVID-19 Exposed the Digital Divide. Here's How We Can Close It. | Dell Technologies](#)

[On the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide - The Greenlining Institute](#)

<https://unsplash.com/> (photo credits)

<https://www.nextavenue.org/pandemic-importance-person-centered-care/>

<https://www.qualityinteractions.com/blog/cultural-competency-and-covid-19>

<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-training/tpp-and-paf-resources/cultural-competence/index.html>

<https://respectingchoices.org/covid-19-resources/>
[Leading Through Change During a Crisis – YouTube](#)

<https://www.biopharmadive.com/spons/patient-engagement-in-the-time-of-covid-19/578439/>

<https://nelsonnygaard.com/principles-for-equitable-public-outreach-engagement-during-covid-19-and-beyond/><https://www.healthcareitnews.com/video/patient-engagement-tech-yielding-positive-results-during-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.strategy-business.com/blog/Redefining-customer-experience-Connecting-in-the-time-of-COVID-19?gko=245c0>

[Digital Divide | Close the Gap Foundation](#)