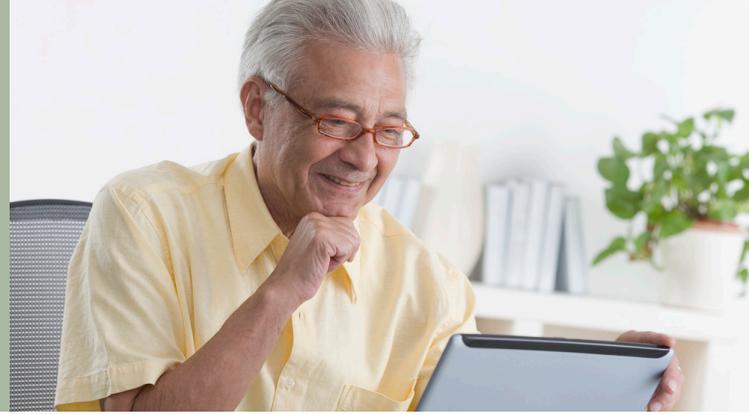


# HIGH SPEED INTERNET

## AND SENIOR CITIZENS



### OVERVIEW

High speed Internet can help senior citizens live independently, improve their quality of life, increase participation in economic and civic life and reduce costs of medical care. High speed broadband also enables elderly people to share their knowledge through new, influential media and to stay in touch with loved ones. These benefits can only be realized if high speed Internet is available and accessible to everyone.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES

Too many seniors are on the wrong side of the digital divide. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) National Broadband Plan noted that seniors lag dramatically in access and ability to use digital technologies. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, only 42 percent of those aged 65 and over have access to computer technologies. The FCC found that fully one-third of the Americans who do not subscribe to broadband at home are 65 or older. Many seniors need assistance in how to use digital technology.

### BENEFITS OF HIGH SPEED INTERNET TO SENIOR CITIZENS

- Broadband enables improvements in health care delivery. Home-based health monitoring over a broadband connection allows seniors to connect directly with their doctors and avoid unnecessary admission to long-term institutional care. A Veterans Administration telehealth pilot program, reduced hospital admissions by 19 percent and the number of bed days by 25 percent. The program cost an average of \$1,600 per patient per year, compared to an average cost of \$78,000 for nursing home care. Most important, telemedicine enables many patients to live independently at home.
- Access to high-speed connections allows seniors to interact with new government tools including on-line

presentations and chats that explain everything from changes in Medicare to tax policy. For example, online simulations proved critical in helping people evaluate the best Medicare Part D prescription drug plan for their individual circumstances, yet people without home broadband access were not able to take advantage of these online programs from the comfort of their home.

- High speed internet allows seniors to stay connected to family and friends. A high speed connection offers the opportunity to view the video of a graduation or birthday party or have a video chat with grandkids who live far away. For frail or home-bound seniors, high speed internet has become a lifeline to the outside world.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage programs to teach digital literacy, computer training and outreach, so that seniors do not lack the technical knowledge requisite for them to utilize the benefits of high-speed Internet.
- Policy makers must support initiatives to make high speed Internet not only accessible but also affordable for seniors.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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