

Montgomery County Office of Broadband Programs

Confronting Barriers to
Mental Health and Addiction Services:
Equity, Isolation and the Digital Divide

Annual Spring Forum

May 6, 2021



Broadband Terminology

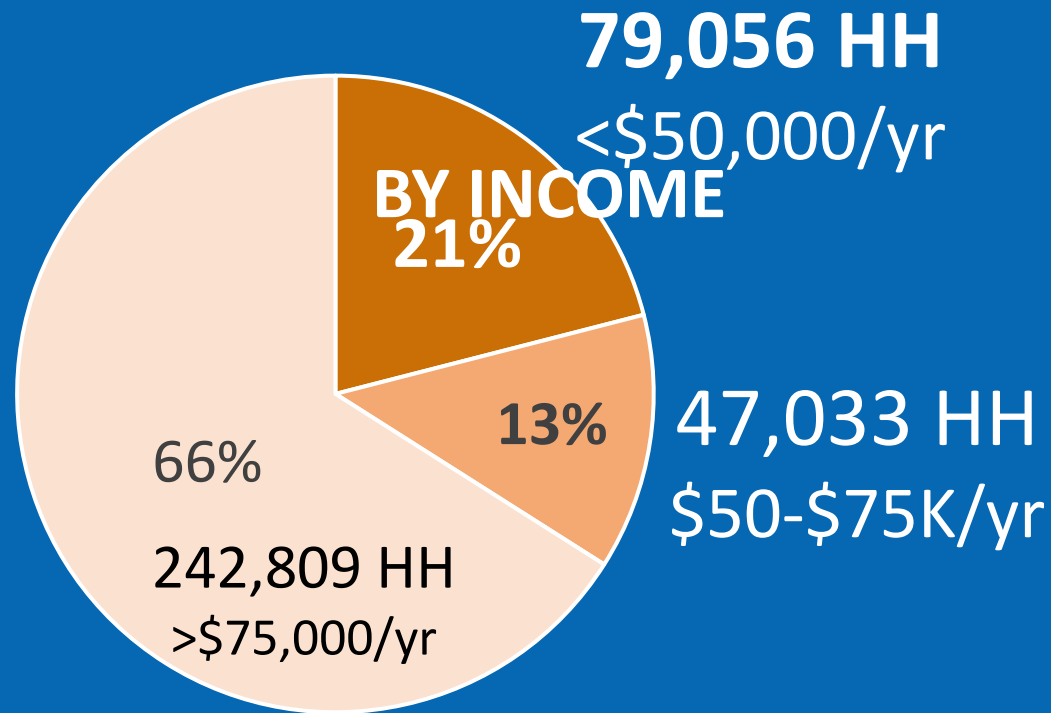
- **Broadband** is access to the Internet at minimum broadband speeds
- **Broadband Speed** or Megabits per Second (**Mbps**) measures the capacity to receive and transmit data for video conferencing, email, and surfing websites
- **Download** is the capacity to receive data & **Upload** is the capacity to send data
- Federal (FCC) **Minimum Broadband** is 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up; **Baseline** is 50/5 Mbps; and **Above Baseline** is 100/20 Mbps
- **MoCo Households** of 4 people or less need **7/7 Mbps day and 15/4 Mbps night**
MoCo Multigenerational Households of 7-11 people need **24/7 Mbps**
MoCo Home Businesses need **20/17 Mbps**

Broadband Digital Equity

- **Digital Equity** is state in which all families have access to broadband and devices, and the skills to use them, for daily living, to participate in civic life, and to fully participate in the digital economy.
- **Digital Literacy** is the skills training to reach Digital Equity
- **Digital Divide** is the gap to Digital Equity – the percentage and number of families who have not reach a state of digital equity
- **Montgomery County Office of Broadband Programs Digital Equity Goal** is a three-prong approach to help all families (1) get home access to the Internet, (2) have a device to use the Internet, and (3) have the skills to use the Internet and the device.

Montgomery County Household Data

368,898 Households (HH) (2019 Census ACS estimate)



BY RACE (Households)

- 49,420 Latino (13%)
- 58,263 Asian (16%)
- 73,442 African American (20%)
- 221,966 White (60%)

County Digital Equity Gap by Income

Of families with household income less than \$50,000:

- **28,325 (36%)** do not have wireline home broadband
- **21,041 (27%)** do not have a computer

Issue is more acute in 3 areas:

7 PUMAs in County (Public Use Microdata Areas)
% with No BB, % No Computer greater than County avg

- East Central – Wheaton, Aspen Hill & Glenmont: 42%, 34%
- East – Fairland, Calverton, White Oak, Burtonsville: 42%, 29%
- Southeast – Takoma Park, Silver Spring: 41%, 41%

County Digital Equity Gap by Race/Ethnicity

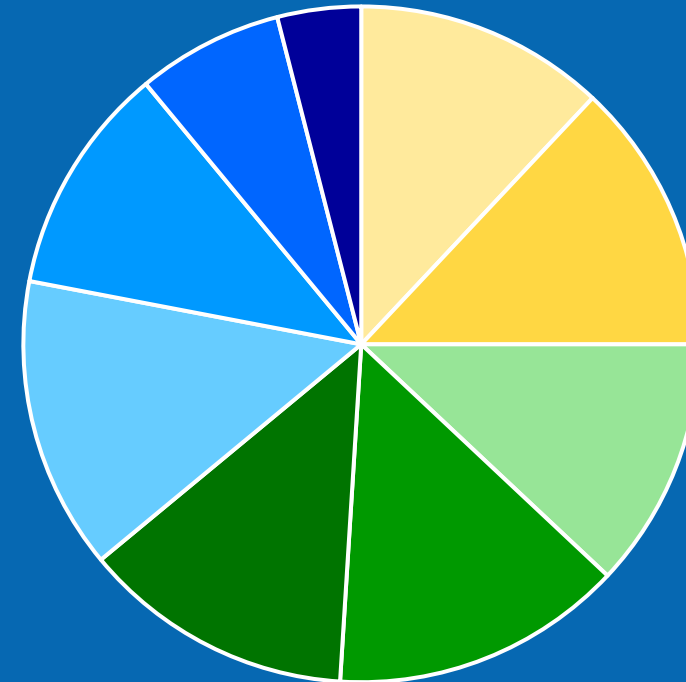
- Families **without home broadband**
 - **25%** of Hispanic families (12,493)
 - **22%** of African American families (16,438)
 - 13% of White and Asian families (28,634, and 7,702)
- Families **without a computer***
 - **20%** of Hispanic families (9,661)
 - 13% of African American families (9,545)
 - 7% of White and Asian families (16,150 and 4,085)
- Issue is more acute in 4 of 7 County PUMAs
Latinos (L) and Blacks (B) without home broadband:
 - West Central – Germantown & Montgomery Village: **31% of Latinos**
 - East Central – Wheaton, Aspen Hill & Glenmont: **31% of African American, 27% of Latinos**
 - Southeast – Takoma Park, Silver Spring: **30% of African American, 26% of Latinos**
 - Central – Rockville, Gaithersburg, N. Potomac: **30% of Latinos**

**No Computer means no tablet or cell phone either*

Montgomery County Population Data

Montgomery County Population By Age (2019)

- **Under 19**
262,672 (25%)
- **Age 20 to 49**
409,768 (39%)
- **Over 50**
378,248 (36%)
- **Over 60**
231,151 (22%)



Age 0-9 10-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80+

County Digital Equity Gap by Age

- **By age, population without home broadband:**
 - 13,802 under 18 (6% of those under 18)
 - 8,475 over 65 (5% of those over 65)
 - 12,368 over 25 without a high school diploma (9% of over 25)
- **By age, population without a computer:**
 - 2,158 under 18 (1%)
 - 6,791 over 65 (4%)
 - 6,278 over 25 without a high school diploma (10%)
- Issue of 8,475 older adults without broadband is more acute in 3 of the County's 7 PUMAs
- Percentage of people over 65 without home broadband (County average is 5% of people over 65)
 - **16%** in Fairland, Calverton, White Oak, Burtonsville
 - **18%** in Wheaton, Aspen Hill and Glenmont
 - **19%** in Takoma Park and Silver Spring

Reasons for Lack of Broadband

- Some families want broadband but have financial or physical access barriers to getting it
- Some families choose not to get broadband because:
 - They use a cell phone for broadband service
 - They don't know how to use Internet or device
 - They don't see the value of getting broadband
 - *6% of \$150,000+/year Households do not have home broadband (21,922)*
- Some low-income families may choose not to order broadband

Broadband Programs for Low Income Households

Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) (Starts Wednesday May 12, 2021)

\$50 discount off monthly broadband service available to:

- Low-income families
- People enrolled in provider low-income, low-cost programs & Pell Grant recipients
- People with Covid-related income loss
 - Federal government is defining this as ability to show termination or layoff notice, or unemployment payments
- *Lasts til funding runs out (maybe Sept '21)*



Low-Cost Programs (\$10-\$35/mo)

- **Comcast & RCN** (\$10 for 5/50Mbps advertised)
- **Verizon FiOS** (\$35 for 200/200 Mbps advertised)

Qualify by being enrolled in:	Cm	RCN	Vz
Medicaid, SNAP, Housing	✓	✓	✓
School Lunch, Head Start, WIC, TANF, SSI, LIHEAP	✓	✓	
Pell Grants		✓	
Survivors Benefits			✓
Less than 135% of poverty rate (\$29,322 for family of 3)			✓
Current Lifeline subscriber			✓

- **Wireless carriers also offering plans**
- **No expiration date**

Montgomery County Digital Equity Goal

10 By 10

10,000 More Families with Home Broadband

10,000 More Families with a Computer*

(EBB includes \$100 discount on computer but T-Mobile is only carrier offering a device; County is working on E-Rate and Maryland funding to offer computers to library patrons)

Montgomery County Digital Equity Strategies

1. **Partner with non-profits who interact with low-income families, or who need their clients to have home broadband, to promote awareness and enrollment in home broadband, device, and training programs**
2. **Partner with commercial providers and state and federal government to enable County to certify enrollment in existing income-restricted County programs (e.g., medical, housing) as proof of eligibility for income-restricted low-cost home broadband programs.**
3. **Go Big. Now is the time to rededicate ourselves to close the digital divide.**
4. **Focus on families that want broadband and computers first. Focus on people who need to be persuaded to use the Internet later.**
5. **Promote personal stories. How connectivity improves lives!**

Montgomery County Resources

- www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OBP
(Office of Broadband Programs)
- Low-Cost Home Internet Programs for Low-Income Families
<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/obp/low-cost-internet.html>
- Digital Equity Map – coming soon (montgomerycounty.gov/DigitalEquityMap)
 - Filters will allow you to find Census Block Groups, for example:
 - Most older adults
 - Most households without home broadband

Questions?

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