

Health Opportunity Partnership Empowerment

The **Institute for H.O.P.E.™** is a catalyst of change for our health, neighborhoods, economy and future.

Research tells us that about 80% of a person's health depends on factors beyond medical care. One of those factors is access to reliable internet. Here's how the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ and others in the community are helping bridge the digital divide.

In the early 1990s, Gary Murphy suffered a devastating head injury that left his brain swollen and kept him in the hospital for four months.

He couldn't walk. He couldn't talk. He couldn't live life as it was meant to be lived.

Thirty years later – standing tall, and in a booming baritone – Murphy recited a simple poem he wrote to express his gratitude to MetroHealth.

“When the odds are all against you and there's nowhere else to turn, there's help around the corner – of this I'm sure you'll learn,” Murphy belted.

But for Murphy and so many others, the “help” he speaks of is not just world-class medical care.

Murphy recited the poem at a recent graduation ceremony for a digital literacy program supported by MetroHealth's **Institute for H.O.P.E.™** at Scranton Castle, a Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority housing complex near the health system's main campus. The 66-year-old is among 350 households in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood to receive subsidized internet through an innovative partnership between MetroHealth, AT&T, DigitalC and Dollar Bank.

Digital connectivity plays a major role in an individual's ability to succeed. A reliable internet connection is necessary to access social service resources, health care portals, online coursework and job applications.

“No one wants to feel alone in their lives,” Murphy said about the value of his digital literacy training and web connectivity. “When you have the ability to reach out to others, that enables them to feel better about themselves.”

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Those lacking internet connectivity are:

- 2.9x more likely to misuse alcohol
 - 2.4x more likely to experience social isolation
 - 2.4x more likely to experience heart failure
 - 2.2x times more likely to experience transportation issues
 - 1.6x more likely to have financial resource strain
 - 1.6x more likely to be diagnosed with depression
- Source: MetroHealth social needs screening data

Report to the Community

January through March 2021

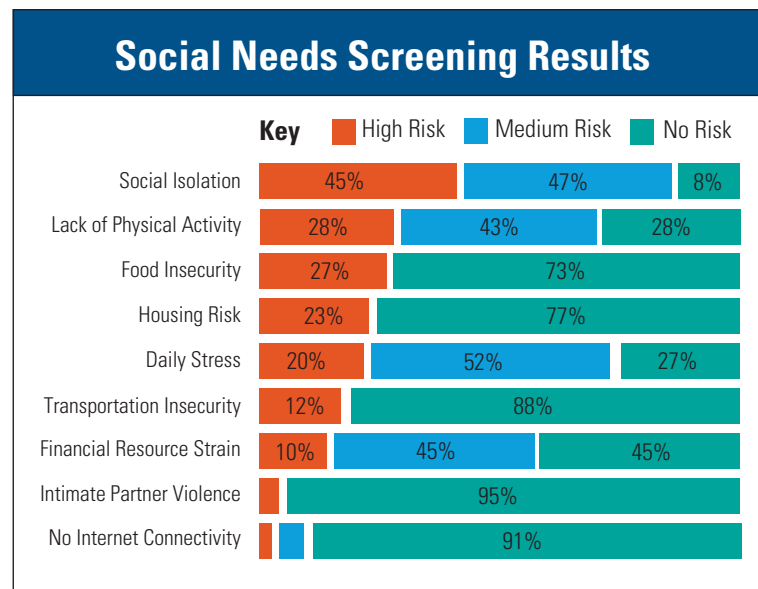
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MetroHealth President and CEO Dr. Akram Boutros made a bold commitment to address the digital divide in Clark-Fulton in 2019 – well before the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the digital disparities in Greater Cleveland. At the time, Dr. Boutros said, “With internet access, patients can see their doctors without leaving home, get prescriptions filled, schedule tests and share health information so caregivers can address issues before they become critical – and expensive – emergencies.”

As of Spring 2021, the **Institute for H.O.P.E.™** had screened nearly 26,000 individuals for digital connectivity – more than 700 of which reported they had limited or no access to reliable internet. Results of the screenings revealed that those without internet connectivity were more likely to experience financial strain, social isolation and transportation challenges.

“This work has always been important, but the pandemic only added to the urgency of ensuring our community has access to reliable internet,” said Susan Fuehrer, President, **Institute for H.O.P.E.™** “The digital divide is a community-wide challenge that requires community-wide solutions. The only way we can build a healthier Cleveland is through teamwork and collaboration. Our work with DigitalC is one way we’re doing that.”

From January 1, 2021 – March 31, 2021, we screened 10,961 patients for social determinants of health, bringing our total to 43,070. With these responses, we’re able to better assess the needs of our patients and connect them with the services that they need to improve their overall health.



Unite Ohio at a glance:

In 2020, MetroHealth partnered with Unite Us to build Unite Ohio – a coordinated care network of health and social care providers.

January 1 - March 31, 2021

72 Community Organizations in the network

409 registered users to make referrals

991 referrals created

625 unique individuals served