

# Mayor Adams, Department for the Aging Distribute 1,000 Free Computer Tablets to Older New Yorkers and Connect Them With City Services

April 19, 2022

*Distribution Aims to Close Digital Divide for Older Adults Who Do Not Have Internet Service or Digital Equipment*

*Tablets Will Connect Older Adults to Additional City Services*

**NEW YORK** – New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez today announced the distribution of 1,000 free Wi-Fi equipped computer tablets to older New Yorkers in an effort to bridge the digital divide and help connect them with city services. This tablet distribution was held today at Borinquen Court in the Bronx and is part of an initial 10,000-tablet distribution initiative that DFTA began last October.

“Having access to the internet and so many of the services our city offers is not a luxury, but a necessity, and today’s delivery of 1,000 tablets to older New Yorkers will finally help make it a reality for our seniors,” said **Mayor Adams**. “These tablets will help close the digital divide, deliver crucial services to New Yorkers, and limit social isolation by allowing our seniors to stay connected and engaged with their friends and family. Age should not stand in the way of staying in contact with loved ones or connecting with key services, and so I applaud the Department for the Aging in working to keep the quality of life a priority for our older adults.”

“I applaud DFTA on their efforts to combat the digital divide among older adults through the distribution of 10,000 tablets,” said **Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom**. “The last two years especially have shown the importance of ensuring older adults across New York City have access and knowledge on how to

utilize the many ways technology can help everyone stay connected to their friends, family, and global community. I look forward to continuing these efforts and helping to close the technology gap among our older adults.”

“The last two years have shown us how important it is to be digitally connected. For older New Yorkers, being in touch with family and friends online and having access to virtual services was a game changer. It helped counter the impact of social isolation and empowered them with new skills. That said, there is a deep digital divide among our older adult population because many cannot afford to buy a computer device nor pay for internet service. This initiative finally helps connect the disconnected,” said **DFTA Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez**. “We are excited to provide them with this crucial technological equipment and internet service to help them stay engaged, active, and informed about the services offered by the city and the Department for the Aging.”

The tablet distribution is a continuation of the Department for the Aging’s long-term efforts to keep older New Yorkers connected, engaged, and help them limit social isolation through virtual programming and online services. The program provides free Wi-Fi equipped tablets to older New Yorkers who do not have an internet-enabled electronic device and reside within a [Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity \(TRIE\) neighborhood](#). To date, 9,000 tablets have been distributed by DFTA’s network of providers. The remaining 1,000 will provide the agency with the opportunity to reach older adults who are not connected to DFTA services or programs.

Each tablet comes with free internet service through December 31st, provided by T-Mobile, and is preloaded with applications, including Zoom, Gmail, and the NYC COVID Safe app. Older adults will also be provided with free training on their new tablets at local senior centers, and learn how to connect to DFTA virtual programs. During the distribution event, DFTA is referring tablet recipients to the nearest senior center that offers the training.

In addition to keeping older adults engaged and digitally connected, the initiative also achieves one of the goals outlined in DFTA’s Community Care Plan — a five-year plan to expand aging support services and help older adults age in their homes and avoid institutionalization. The Community Care Plan builds upon the success and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the expansion of virtual services that kept many older adults active and engaged while mitigating social isolation.

“The pandemic has left a lot of New Yorkers feeling alone — this is especially true for older New Yorkers without the ability to connect safely using programs like Zoom or social media,” said **New York State Senator José M. Serrano**. “Many thanks to Mayor Adams, Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, and the Department for the Aging for providing these important tools to help older adults stay connected to friends and family.”

“It is imperative that we close the digital divide among our city’s older adults and empower them with the tools necessary to stay connected to family and friends. Today’s distribution is an important first step in helping older adults stave off isolation and stay connected to loved ones with dignity and independence,” said **New York City Councilmember Crystal Hudson, chair, Committee on Aging**. “As chair of the Aging Committee, I look forward to working with the Adams administration to ensure we’re also investing in digital literacy and technology programs that will teach our older neighbors how to use tablets, computers, and phones safely and effectively.”

“Aging New Yorkers often face barriers to accessing critical services and programs,” said **New York State Assemblymember Amanda Septimo**. “Our seniors should have the means to reach the information and programs available to them. Connectivity is more important now than ever, and technology is making it possible for elder New Yorkers to interact with information, their community, and the world in new and safe ways. With the right technology, food, shelter, health access, and other needed services are all at their fingertips. As virtual programming becomes more commonplace, and as digital connectivity brings once-distant resources closer to home, I’m so glad the city and Department for the Aging (DFTA) are working to get this equipment in the hands of seniors.”

When the pandemic caused the physical closure of older adult centers, older adult center services transitioned to virtual programming and over-the-phone services. These virtual programs included fitness classes, art workshops, and social events that were attended by about 40,000 individuals. Providing older New Yorkers with the technological equipment they need will build on the success of virtual programming and help make it available to even more older adults.

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