

# Marin County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Digital Literacy Grant Program



## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Marin County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) supported digital literacy efforts throughout the County. These efforts included **Marin County BHRS' Digital Literacy Grant Program**, which awarded seven community-based organizations one-time grants of up to \$50,000 to support innovation projects. Grantees integrated a digital component to enhance accessibility to wellness support for isolated disenfranchised or older adults between July-December 2023.

The Digital Literacy Grant Program **evaluation** included:

- **Monthly Grant Updates:** Grantees completed monthly updates that described their efforts and the impact of their digital component.
- **Grant Summary Report:** Grantees completed a report at the end of their program that summarized their efforts from July to December 2023.

## Digital Literacy Grant Program Evaluation



## DIGITAL LITERACY GRANT PROGRAM

### About the Grantees

Grantees initiated, planned, executed, and completed their programs between July-December 2023.



## Number of Sessions and Attendees

The grantees served 1,423 duplicated attendees and offered 739 sessions over 1,017 hours. Sessions included drop-in sessions, one-on-one sessions, and workshop sessions.

 <b>1,423 Attendees</b>			
<b>739 Total Sessions</b>	<b>169</b> Drop-In Sessions	<b>391</b> One-on-One Sessions	<b>179</b> Workshop Sessions
<b>1,017 Session Hours</b>	<b>18,075</b> Drop-In Minutes	<b>26,565</b> One-on-One Minutes	<b>16,380</b> Workshop Minutes

## Program Services

Grantees were asked how they used grant funds to increase digital literacy and access to mental health wellness supports. Grantees reported providing digital literacy sessions, developing a digital literacy app, distributing devices, and engaging participants.



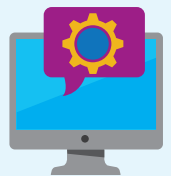
Digital Literacy Sessions

*“The technology training was accomplished through one-on-one training, Zoom drop-in technology help hours, and group training workshops on special topics, including computer basics, resources to connect online, and staying safe on technology which were offered both in person and on Zoom.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“We continued offering drop-in computer lab sessions and computer skills workshops to our students, many of whom are older adults. We also added mental health resources to our list of requests for the Department of Corrections to approve for use on our student laptops.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



Digital Literacy App

*“Thanks to this grant, [our organization]... was able to develop an app containing training videos to teach basic iPhone skills to older adults. In addition, we provided an accompanying handout for each video. The students watched the videos on the iPad while following along and practicing on their iPhone. In the app, each video could be paused, rewound 10 seconds, fast-forwarded 10 seconds, or restarted from the beginning— allowing students to learn at their own pace.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



#### Device Distribution

*“[Our organization partnered with a local resident program] in Marin City to provide a place-based approach to digital literacy skills for their older residents based on requests from the residents. To ensure residents had technology access and support, we purchased Chromebooks for residents to use during our sessions as well as a rolling locker to secure the Chromebooks in one of the manager’s offices so residents can check the Chromebooks in and out during the week. We hired an experienced contractor to assist in developing a curriculum specifically designed for older adults with little to no technology acumen.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“The custom iPads allow participants to use the app and watch the training videos at their own pace and in their own homes without requiring any prior knowledge of how to use an iPad or iPhone. We rolled out the app-based training to 20 participants, exceeding our original goal of 12!”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



#### Participant Engagement

*“By expanding the number of tech tutoring appointments, we were able to engage more clients to support their access to technology and have a positive impact on their feeling of social isolation. Clients reported a variety of benefits to their mental wellness in post-session satisfaction surveys, including connecting to their health care providers, connecting with family and friends, connecting with community, performing better at work, and increasing their independence. In addition, numerous clients reported that the connection with tech tutors during sessions was beneficial and that they appreciated their kindness and calm, supportive presence.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

## Cultural Competency and Stakeholder Involvement

Grantees were asked about their integration of cultural competency and stakeholder involvement. Many grantees reported tailoring resources to participants in their preferred language. Grantees also used participant feedback to improve services.



#### Translation

*“All handouts and training videos were made available in both Spanish and English, providing the ability to meet the diverse language needs. The Spanish translations were reviewed by an experienced bilingual instructor, ensuring accuracy and cultural relevance. Pre- and post-surveys were also translated into Spanish, allowing for effective data collection across cultural backgrounds.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“Recognizing the diverse learning styles and backgrounds, we provided resources and support in participants’ preferred language, tailored the program and evaluation process to individual needs and learning styles; and created a welcoming and accessible learning environment for participants from different backgrounds.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“In terms of cultural competency, we are responding to the need for technology tutoring sessions in Spanish by actively recruiting Spanish-speaking volunteer tutors. We can refer some Spanish-speaking clients to our Home Connect program where they can receive a free Samsung tablet and training in Spanish, but some clients need tutoring services for the devices that they already own. We will continue to actively recruit Spanish-speaking tech tutors to meet this need in our community more effectively.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“During the grant period we surveyed all the participants on their experience participating in one of our technology training sessions, which included questions about their race and ethnicity, their mental health, and their comfort level prior to the assistance and after. We have used these collective responses to inform the data provided for the outcomes and impact of the project. In addition, because our approach is so personal, we have heard first-hand from participants that they felt heard, understood, and more confident in their abilities to use technology for any purpose.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



#### Participant Feedback

*“Prior to this grant, technology tutoring clients were only able to schedule an appointment approximately once every 6 weeks. Many clients expressed the need for more frequent sessions in order to build upon what they were learning. This request was reinforced in surveys regarding technology needs in the population we serve. Throughout the grant period, we administered satisfaction surveys to clients to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to provide feedback anonymously.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

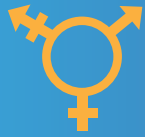
*“We were not able to get many stakeholders to participate in this evaluation outside of the participants themselves. As the class sizes were small, class feedback was incorporated immediately into the activities and learning. Participants were culturally diverse with different perspectives and their feedback was valuable to our understanding of the community and the challenges they faced.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

## About the Participants Served

### Demographics

The grantees primarily served White and Black/African American participants under 60 years old. A majority of the participants reported a disability, but did not report experiencing a mental health challenge.



**Gender** (n=1,938)  
**13%** Female  
**4%** Male  
**83%** Prefer Not to Answer



**Veteran** (n=1,358)  
**69%** Did Not Identify as a Veteran  
**13%** Identified as a Veteran  
**18%** Declined to Respond



**Age** (n=1,821)  
**52%** aged 0-59 years  
**15%** aged 60-64 years  
**7%** aged 65-69 years  
**13%** aged 70-74 years  
**5%** aged 75-79 years  
**5%** aged 80-84 years  
**3%** aged 85-89 years  
**1%** aged 90-94 years



**Disability** (n=274)  
**42%** Reported a Disability  
**37%** Did Not Report a Disability  
**18%** Preferred Not to Answer  
**3%** Unsure of a Disability



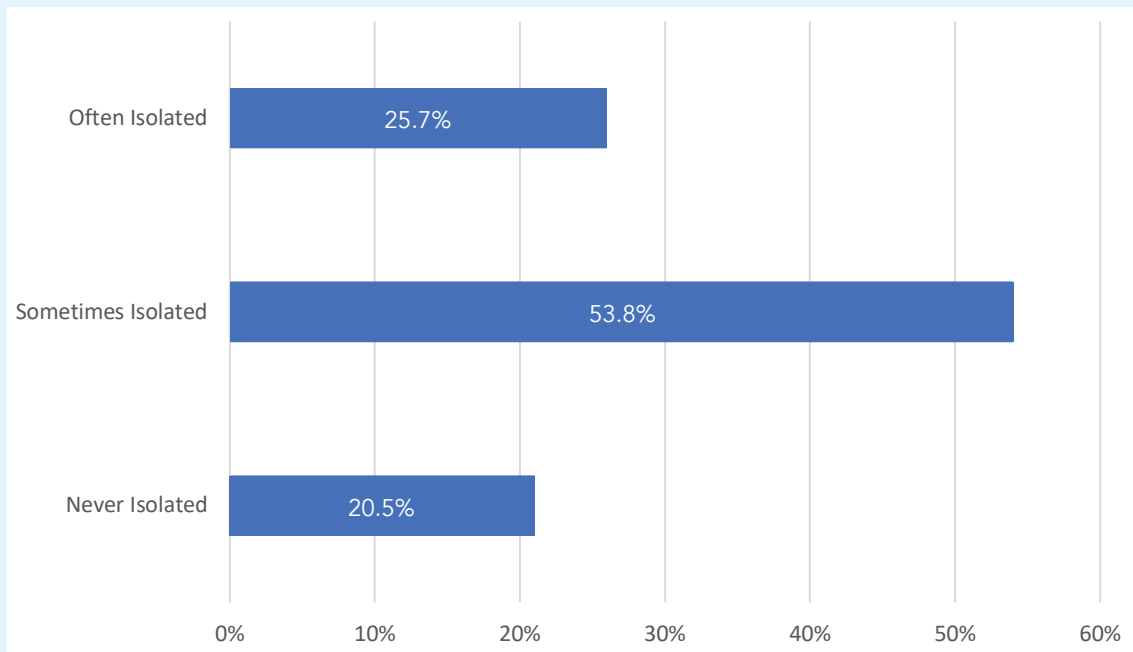
**Race** (n=1,923)  
**36%** White  
**35%** Black/African American  
**12%** Hispanic/Latino/a/x  
**7%** Prefer Not to Answer  
**4%** Self Identify  
**4%** Asian  
**1%** Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander  
**1%** American Indian/Native American/Native Alaskan



**Mental Health Challenge** (n=239)  
**48%** Have Not Experienced a Mental Health Challenge  
**24%** Diagnosed with a Mental Health Challenge  
**22%** Preferred Not to Answer  
**6%** Experienced a Mental Health Challenge but Not Diagnosed

## Feeling Isolated or Left Out

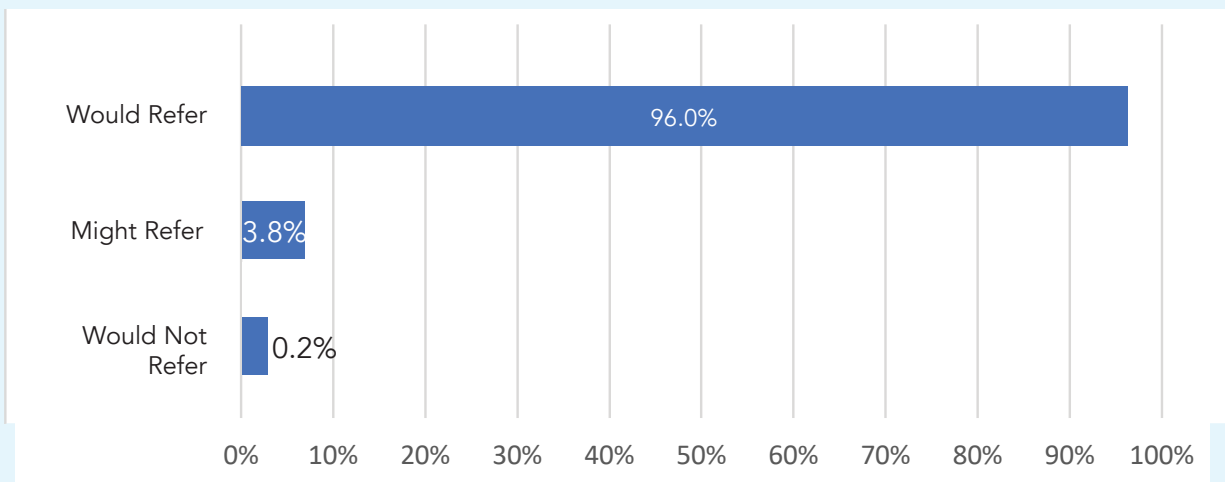
Most participants felt isolated because they felt others could do things on a computer, smartphone, or tablet. (n=346)



## Program Satisfaction and Skills Learned

### Satisfaction with Sessions

Almost all participants would refer the sessions to a friend. (n=420)



## Comfort with Technology

Participants experienced a significant increase in their comfort with technology after the digital literacy sessions. Grantees reported a **160% increase in the percent of people who said they were somewhat or very comfortable in their use of technology.**

### Percent of Participants Somewhat or Very Comfortable in use of Technology:

Before the Session

**41-60%**

After the Session

**61-80%**

## Digital Literacy Skills Participants Learned

Grantees reported that participants learned the following skills.



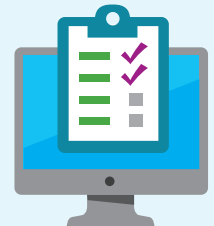
Using a cell phone



Connecting to the internet



Using the internet



Understanding the basics of using a computer



Connecting with apps



Using documents or photos



Utilizing email



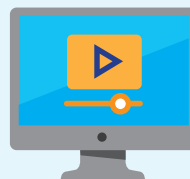
Using computer programs



Using a tablet



Video conferencing



Streaming services



Employment skills<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Employment skills refers to participants learning how to construct resumes, save documents online, as well as open and manage online job seeker.

## What Participants Most Wanted to Do with Their Digital Literacy

Grantees reported that participants wanted to do the following with their new digital literacy skills.



Connect with friends, family, and community access



Get help with general health concerns



Receive help with depression, loneliness, anxiety, or boredom



Find employment



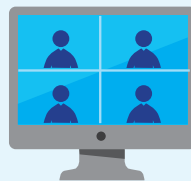
Get news, articles, blogs, or books



Learn new things



Do online research



Take online classes



Banking



Shopping

## Program Impact, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

### Program Impact

Grantees were asked to report any significant outcomes or results from the program. Grantees reported an increase in digital literacy skills, confidence with technology, and participation in services.



Increase in Digital Literacy Skills

*“100% of participants gained increased digital literacy skills to varying degrees. All participants were able to set up a Gmail account in order to access social media and video conferencing apps. They were most comfortable with using their phone and connecting and using the internet for searches. 100% of participants stated they wanted to use their new digital skills to connect with friends and family. The other top three reasons participants used their digital skills were for getting news/articles/blogs/books, learning new things/doing online research/taking online classes, and employment.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee





Increased Levels of Confidence with Technology

*“The older adults we served gained confidence, built skills and feel more comfortable with the technology, which they have shared is helping them feel more connected.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“The one-on-one sessions immediately became popular with Participants who appeared to be more relaxed after getting to know both Digital Literacy Coaches and Team. Participants soon started to request their own focused sessions.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“Overall, their feelings of being isolated or left out because of their lack of digital skills was removed as they became more confident in using their skills, even if it was just setting up a Gmail account and knowing how to connect to and use the internet for resources made them feel better and more confident.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“One specific participant, with both mental health and physical limitations, was adamant about NOT working on computers or anything that had to do with online, phone, etc. In fact, they had several anxiety attacks trying to prepare her resume. She also reported falling at the grocery store and did not know what to do. Good news! Through the Digital Literacy Program, and in this short time, she built enough confidence to tackle the computer and her cellphone. During this time and working in one-on-one sessions, she received support and completed her resume, uploaded documents, applied for jobs, and learned how to order groceries using her cellphone. She is still learning and appreciates the patience and training resources available to her through this program.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



Increase in Participation for Existing Services

*“The last six months saw some of the largest attendance numbers in our computer lab and workshops yet. Students were better informed about the programs offered in the lab, and we had many repeat students who returned for multiple sessions of workshops to continue learning more. We are seeing fewer instances of certain technical issues, as a result of student skills improving (solving problems on their own), and many students are now able to independently perform research for their classroom assignments and personal projects.”*

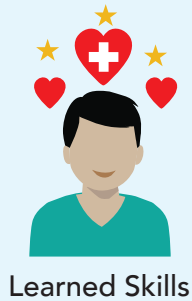
- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“During the 121-day period between August 1, 2023 and November 30, 2023, the ... Program hosted 132 one-hour appointments. In the 121 days prior to the expansion (April 2, 2023 to July 31, 2023), the program hosted 78 one-hour appointments. Therefore, we were able to increase our tech tutoring appointments by 69% during the grant period. We intend to continue expanding our program now that we have established a strong foundation for scaling up through a volunteer training curriculum and a streamlined system for appointment scheduling and confirmation.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

## Program Impact on Participants' Mental Wellness

The grantees reported that participants improved their mental wellness by learning new skills, connecting with others, and reducing isolation.



*"So helpful, like life-saving help, when drowning in ignorance and going down deeper in complicated technology. I want to learn so much and have. Thank you so much from my heart."*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*"Individuals were excited to meet and see others who were also interested in learning more about digital literacy. This helped create synergy and encouraged engagement as well as sharing individual needs."*

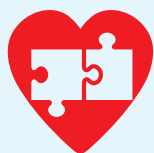
- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*"Prior to the training, most students were comfortable with limited texting but did not feel comfortable using facetime or Zoom. After the training, they reported much more confidence in using video conferencing tools and increased texting skills. A student remarked "the Iphone does so much more than simple texting and learning what to use and how to go about it is great. Voice texting is fun, easy and a short-cut worth learning!"*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*"We continue to receive positive feedback about our training sessions and the one-on-one training we are providing. The overwhelming feeling is that there is a big need for older adults to receive help with the technology, so they are not being left behind and missing out on things."*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



Connected  
with Others

*"The work is definitely impacting participants mental wellness enabling them to connect to both family members and groups via Zoom, such as book clubs and exercise class, and other online resources and apps, such as podcasts."*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*"Many of the members who we have helped this month are isolated in their homes and rarely leave. A member who we helped set up and access Zoom was able to finally participate in her book club and then a information program from the country about transportation in the same week, not only feeling connected to her friends in the book club, but also learning about other transportation resources to be able to get out of her home and feel more connected."*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*"The culture within the computer lab is growing more and more collaborative, and students are forming new connections and friendships through their time in the lab. Many students have reported a sense of independence now that they know how to perform certain tasks on a computer. Others have reported feeling busier, and that their mental health improves when they have something productive to do, which the workshops and drop-in sessions provide."*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“The individuals impacted by the Digital Literacy Program shared joy, eagerness, and a compelling sense satisfaction. Seniors felt that they were not ‘forgotten’ and appreciated the time, workshops, connecting with others both young and old.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



*“We believe that this work alleviated the feelings of isolation and loneliness from our participants as well as increased their confidence levels and reduced their fear of technology...”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

Reduced  
Feelings of  
Isolation

*“Several participants reported feeling less anxiety over their coursework after taking workshops. One student said that he feels like he is genuinely cared about when we offer these workshops. Two students said that our computer lab and workshops make them look forward to the future.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

## Program Challenges

Grantees reported challenges with participant recruitment despite numerous outreach efforts. Recruiting and retaining staff and volunteers to support the programs was also a challenge. The short implementation timeline and difficulty collecting participant surveys were additional challenges.

*“Through community engagement and individual feedback, the term ‘Digital Literacy’ put many seniors off, many of whom did not understand the concept. In addition, many seniors expressed frustration and a lack of confidence.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



*“Outreach has been one of the biggest challenges: Approximately 125, door to door flyers were passed around the community complex, the course was featured on .. [a] monthly newsletter, outreach during community events was done, and at this moment it is unclear why students are not signing up for class.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

Participant  
Recruitment  
Challenges

*“Attendance for workshops was low this month. In response, we created flyers to advertise our October workshops and sent out a mailer to all students with news and updates about the lab, encouraging folks to attend open lab sessions and workshops if they haven’t been in a while.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



*“It was more difficult to obtain mentors and mentees than expected, with mentors being slightly more difficult (even with a stipend being offered). Part of the delay with launching the program was due to this challenge and was also due to the ultimate limitations of the partnership we decided to rely on when securing mentors.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



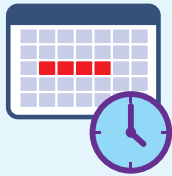
### Staff and Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Challenges

*“... we have faced challenges recruiting Spanish-speaking volunteer tech tutors. We are collaborating with our Human Resources team to target our recruitment efforts more effectively to the Spanish-speaking population in Marin. Given that the volunteer tech tutor position is unpaid, recruitment of volunteers has generally been challenging. We are currently expanding our recruitment efforts to high school programs in hopes that we can identify and deliver tutoring appointments in Spanish.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“Staffing transitions have been a challenge, and we are working through them.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



### Timeline Challenges

*“The challenge in implementing this grant was the very tight time frame from award of grant in mid-June to implementing the grant as of July 1st, including the challenge to obtain data from participants for Country grant report.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“We faced some challenges in developing the app and recruiting students and completing the project with a very aggressive time schedule.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



### Difficulty Collecting Participant Surveys

*“... We also did not collect feedback forms after our 5 workshops this month, as they were in-class workshops and part of the course material. Unfortunately, this left us lacking in our reporting.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“We also found that program participants were reticent when it came to completing the post-service survey. It seemed clear that many were put off by the specificity of some of the questions, which seemed to indicate that people were consciously drawn to participating in our programs to improve their technology competency rather than potentially improving their mental health as a result of feeling more connected because of technology...”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

## Lessons Learned

Grantees reported that one-on-one sessions benefited participants and that the pace was noted as being comfortable. In addition, grantees reported how important it was to get community engagement early on in the program and to collect survey feedback.



Sessions  
Benefited  
Participants

*“The students liked the pace of the videos and the clear, easy to follow instruction. We learned that self-paced training could be successful by keeping the videos short, informal, and accessible. The most common feedback was the desire for more training.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“In addition, we learned that 1 on 1 interactions were enhanced with a focus on building trust and community first and understanding that intergenerational learning can happen for both mentor and mentee, and we can take that approach forward in other programs.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



Community  
Engagement

*“Throughout the project we experienced an extremely positive response from the community that there is an enormous pent-up demand for help with technology among older adults in Marin. Even among our members who have had technology help available, but haven’t taken advantage of it, they have expressed a huge need for this help. We believe there will continue to be a demand for technology help and will continue and expand the technology training we conducted under this project.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee

*“We assumed that having a location and training onsite in a large, underserved community with high needs and provide monetary incentives would provide us with enough participants for the success of the program. Due to the short grant period and implementation model, we chose, we were not able to do our due diligence in a needs assessment for the community. The lesson we learned was that we need to slow down and do a community needs assessment, asking community stakeholders for their input prior to developing a program based on a lot of assumptions. In the future, we will take the time needed to develop the right partnership that are aligned with our goals and values, gather community input, and develop a program with community voice at the center.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee



Survey  
Feedback

*“Collecting evaluations after each workshop was a great way to keep a pulse on students’ feelings about the computer skills curriculum we’re offering. I plan to use this feedback to shape our future offerings, and I plan to continue collecting these evaluations in future semesters for ongoing feedback.”*

- Marin County BHRS Grantee