



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, Oct. 3, 2022

Need Computer Help? City of San Diego Launches Digital Navigator Program

FREE ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT FOR SAN DIEGANS TO OBTAIN LOW-COST DEVICES, AFFORDABLE INTERNET SERVICE AND TO IMPROVE COMPUTER SKILLS

SAN DIEGO – To celebrate [National Digital Inclusion Week](#) and continue efforts to close the digital divide that leaves an estimated 53,000 San Diegans without internet access, today the City of San Diego formally launched a new Digital Navigator program and helpline to provide free, one-on-one computer and technology support to those in need.

San Diegans can call the toll-free Digital Navigator helpline at 1-800-350-6945 to get assistance accessing technology or to make an in-person appointment. Navigators also provide in-person assistance during select hours at various locations, including City [libraries and recreation centers](#).

Digital navigators can help San Diegans to:

- Obtain a low-cost computer or smartphone.
- Get basic tech support.
- Find and enroll in adult educational programs, workforce development or digital literacy classes.
- Sign up for affordable internet subscriptions.
- Use online programs to access education, work, telehealth, government services, housing assistance and more.

“The global pandemic made it clear how vital internet access is in our modern world as we saw many families struggle with online learning and remote work,” said Jonathan Behnke, Director of the Information Technology Department, which oversees the program. **“The Digital Navigator program is all about meeting people where they are at when it comes to accessing technology. We provide direct, one-on-one tech support and can help people access other resources, like how to acquire a low-cost computer.”**

The Digital Navigator program is a collaboration between the City, the [San Diego Futures Foundation](#), the [San Diego Housing Commission](#) and San Diego College of Continuing Education, the International Rescue

Committee, Sherman Heights Community Center and [Computers 2 Kids](#), which offers refurbished, low-cost computers through the program.

Digital navigators offer personalized support in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, Dari/Farsi, French, Hindi, Russian and Vietnamese. The program soft-launched in July and the helpline is currently available during the following hours:

- Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Helpline has extended hours on Tuesdays until 6 p.m.)
- Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“We’re already seeing a lot of success stories, from helping clients with job searches to signing them up for federal broadband discounts so they can get low-cost internet at home,” said Thomas Rhee, Executive Director of the San Diego Futures Foundation. “We know how daunting technology can be to some folks so we’ve created a judgment-free zone where anyone can get basic computer and tech help in a one-on-one setting.”

Drop-in assistance is available during select weekdays (hours vary) at the following locations: Central Library, Logan Heights Library, Park de la Cruz Community Center, San Ysidro Library, San Diego College of Continuing Education and Valencia Park/Malcolm X Library. To date, digital navigators have assisted over 700 individuals with about 400 total hours of tech support.

“We’re helping people by getting them past the technological challenges that frustrate them,” said Armando Haro, one of the newly hired digital navigators. “The digital divide is real and severe in some communities, so we’re here to act as a friendly guide to help them reach whatever goals they have.”

The Digital Navigator program is the latest effort to help close the digital divide under the City’s SD Access 4 All initiative. Through the initiative, the City has expanded public Wi-Fi at more than 400 locations citywide and purchased thousands of new laptops and mobile hotspots available for checkout from libraries. Mobile hotspots are easy to use and allow users to connect their laptop, tablet or other web-enabled devices to the internet.

The SD Access 4 All initiative led the City to be named one of only 32 U.S. cities and counties to earn the [Trailblazer designation](#) from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Earlier this year, the initiative won the [Public-Private Partnership Award](#) at the San Diego County Taxpayers Association’s Annual Golden Watchdog and Fleece Awards.

To learn more, visit sandiego.gov/sdaccess.

###