

A Tiny Chat Companion: Addressing the Digital Divide

Solutions to the digital divide can be broken down into two broad categories: those that help humans use technology, and those that deal with hardware. Hardware can be further broken down into two categories: connectivity (minutes, data, broadband) and access to a device. Here are the solutions discussed in the Tiny Chat.

Hardware (Connectivity)

- There are several examples of entities extending their wifi into adjacent parking lots for public use or offering other forms of public wifi.
 - Court parking lots (New Mexico),
 - Private business, like law firms and McDonalds parking lots
 - Library parking lots
 - Closed juvenile detention center parking lot (Apache, Arizona)
 - Mobile wifi buses (Sacramento, California & Topeka, Kansas)
- Public-private partnerships have been established to offer internet access in more places or at higher speeds.
 - [Chicago Connected](#)
 - [Hartford, Connecticut](#)
 - [Charlottesville, Virginia](#) (also see [Albemarle County Broadband Authority](#))
 - [San Diego, California](#)

Hardware (Access to a Device)

- NCSC, AT&T, and ABOTA have established a pilot project to provide devices to enable jury trials in New Jersey, Texas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Michigan.
- Placing kiosks (computers with webcams, scanners, etc.) in community locations, like a convention center ([Ada County, Idaho](#)).
- Courts can inform patrons of free and easy to use scanning and signature apps (see [Digital Signatures and Notaries and Service Tiny Chat](#)).
- Courts can secure funding to provide patrons with devices, such as children in child welfare hearings who need to be able to stay in contact with their attorneys. [See letter from HHS re: IV-B funding](#).

Humans (Tech Savvy)

- Offer secure drop boxes for pleadings either outside the courthouse or in a community location.
- Develop step-by-step manuals of online court processes with screenshots of any technology platforms involved.
- Work with advocates to help them understand your processes so they can help their clients (your patrons) and encourage patrons to consult with a trusted friend or advisor.

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- Court-staffed call centers to offers step-by-step assistance and even screen sharing.
- Kiosks with in-person help (law library in Lake County, Illinois).
- Live-chat and support on your website.
- Courthouse-based non-lawyer navigators (JusticeCorps in California & Illinois). AmeriCorps volunteers, and retiree docents can also assist.
- Guided interviews that help patrons complete court forms, and even better, integrate those with the e-filing system so that from start to finish a person can file without ever having to do more than answer simple questions.
- Process simplification. Are there elements of current processes, like requiring a scanned signature or digital notarization, that may pose digital divide issues, but could be done away with?

For more information about the digital divide generally, please see our first [Digital Divide Tiny Chat](#).

Additional Resources

- [Pew Research Center](#)
- [Benton Institute for Broadband and Society](#)
- [National Digital Inclusion Alliance – Free and Low Cost Internet Plans](#)
- CTIA – [blog post on options for staying connected during COVID-19](#)
- [Administration for Children & Families](#)

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