

# BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



2020

## **Award: Demonstrating a Community Response to COVID-19**

Essex County Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic

### **Achievement: WE Health lending program**



As the pandemic took hold, Essex County Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (ECNPLC) initiated WE Health, an electronic device lending program that allowed its vulnerable populations including the elderly, and high-needs patients access to services online when it wasn't safe or possible for them to take advantage of in-person services.

At the start of the pandemic, several health and wellness programs were placed on hold to protect patients and staff from passing on the virus. The clinic initiated wellness checks, especially for those who were at higher risk of contracting the virus. ECNPLC providers quickly realized that the clinic needed to engage with patients virtually. However, access to care was compromised among the elderly and financially disadvantaged groups due to their inability to connect to virtual platforms.

Led by the Health Promoter, the team searched for opportunities to provide service to them and developed a lending program to ensure they could continue to receive care from their primary care provider virtually and attend wellness programs online.

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Patients at risk of isolation have a new innovative opportunity to maintain connection to their primary care provider and to the wellness programs that they rely on. Primary care providers can see their patients, and patients who are frail and at higher risk of contracting the virus are protected from it.

This program greatly reduces the impact of social isolation and has accommodated primary care services to meet the needs of the community by putting people first. This solution addresses the disruption and inaccessibility of services while maintaining measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Staff learned that the more they reduced barriers to care, the more they increased a sense of wellness for their patients.

Currently, all ECNPLC wellness programs, past and present, are being evaluated with an eye toward putting them online. The program will also branch out; the team has met with community partners who will be joining them with virtual programming, using their lending systems to strengthen relationships.

#### Key Facts:

- Essex County NPLC overcame barriers linked to biopsychosocial-economic and systemic issues during COVID-19 by establishing a lending program for virtual devices.
- Patients are now able to access their primary care providers, as well as physiotherapists, counselling, and community wellness programs, we as caregivers often refer to, online.
- Face-to-face connections, albeit remotely, have helped reduce anxiety and the impact of social isolation and have been important in maintaining wellness.
- ECNPLC has reached out to community partners who are interested in joining the lending program to extend their own services.

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