

Tips for Providing Outreach Allied Health Services

As the learning module demonstrates, delivering outreach services can be quite challenging. It involves significant planning and collaboration, good knowledge of the local community, and innovative ways of service delivery. Allied Health Professionals and their managers must also balance the demands of the community in which they reside, with the demands and needs of outlying communities.

Specific strategies that have been suggested to enhance outreach services include:

Planning

- Plan outreach services well in advance, and give the community plenty of notice about your visit. Work with nurses or other relevant staff in the community to get the most out of your visit.
- When planning, consider the community capacity and drivers (e.g. demographics, stakeholders, community resources, needs and priorities).
- Also consider the capacity of the health service to delivery outreach services (staffing, financial and physical resources, and management and administration support).
- Consider the resource requirements (e.g. time) for pre-outreach visit (planning, packing, making appointments), the outreach visit itself, and post outreach visit (report writing, programming, consultation). As a rule of thumb, for every day out you need another day in town to follow up and prepare for the next trip, but this may vary for different professions and services.
- Clearly establish timeframes for clinical contact and service delivery. Regular planned and scheduled outreach services can help communities make the most of the outreach services and help maintain their trust in the service.
- Where possible, coordinate your visits with other health professionals. However, be careful not to creating 'visiting overload' – where there are too many visiting health professionals and services at the one time.
- Coordinate and plan the outreach services with the local health site or agencies (hospital, community health centre). Local health workers are in the best position to know about the health needs and context of the community.

Service Delivery Models

- Consider how other service models can supplement and enhance outreach services (e.g. [Community Based Rehabilitation](#), [Allied Health Assistants](#), [Telehealth](#)).
- Utilise a Primary Health Care approach to service delivery. See the [Primary Health Care](#) page for more information.
- Aim to build community capacity (e.g. training others, building on existing programs).

Service Provision

- Take time to become familiar with the community. Build a relationship and trust with the community and your clients is critical.
- It can be useful to visit when there are local events on in town (e.g. rodeos, agricultural show). This will help you become part of the community (rather than just a visitor), engage in health promotion activities and make contact with people from outlying places.

- Collaborate and link with other health providers and agencies based in the community.
- Utilise existing infrastructure and supports within local communities.
- Establish shared responsibility for the service with the community, client/caregivers and key agencies within the community.
- For Aboriginal communities, investigate and follow appropriate protocols for visiting. Consider finding a cultural mentor.
- Consider the ways that you will be measuring the quality of outreach services (see Measuring What Counts below).
- Consider strategies for coping with the travel component of outreach.

Skills and Supports

- Ensure you travel safely (many organisations will have policy and procedure for visiting services). See the [Safety & Survival Skills](#) page for more information.
- Ensure you are aware of your clinical competencies and limitations so you can seek help when you need it, and seek further education when it is available. See the [Scope of Practice](#) page for more information.
- Engage in cross-cultural training if required and build your cultural safety and competence more broadly. See the [Cultural Safety](#) page for more information.
- Make links with other rural and remote Allied Health Professionals as well as experts in metropolitan areas. See the [Networking](#) and [Specialist Support](#) pages for more information.