

National Outreach Guidelines for Underserved Populations

Executive Summary

Introduction:

Outreach is a critical function of health centers serving people who are low-income, uninsured, and/or members of underserved populations such as migrant and seasonal farmworkers, people experiencing homelessness, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS. A strong outreach program offers the best opportunity for the most vulnerable populations to be connected to and engaged with true medical homes.

In 2000, Health Outreach Partners (HOP) developed its Farmworker Outreach Program Guidelines based on 30 years of experience providing direct outreach services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. In 2012, HOP collaborated with four national partner organizations and an Advisory Panel to develop the current National Outreach Guidelines for Underserved Populations.

The ten Guidelines presented here are grouped into three broad categories: Person-Focused Guidelines, Community-Focused Guidelines, and Program-Focused Guidelines. Under each Guideline, several possible strategies for implementation are suggested. The Guidelines and accompanying strategies are intended to provide direction for how to most effectively use outreach to increase access to and utilization of comprehensive primary health care services in underserved communities.

Person-Focused Guidelines: These guidelines focus on what Outreach Programs can do to ensure that individuals, families, and small groups found within underserved populations are fully supported in accessing and utilizing quality, culturally competent health care.

- ***Access to Care:*** The Outreach Program will connect underserved populations to the local health and social service delivery systems.
- ***Health Education:*** The Outreach Program will provide health education in outreach settings using effective teaching methods that respond to the cultural, educational, linguistic, literacy, health and educational needs of underserved populations.
- ***Outreach-Centered Case Management:*** The Outreach Program will conduct basic case management activities in outreach settings.
- ***Behavioral Health Support:*** The Outreach Program will have a key role in coordinating access to behavioral health services and providing basic mental health support for underserved populations.
- ***Clinical Outreach:*** The Outreach Program will coordinate and participate in clinical outreach to meet the basic health needs of underserved populations.
- ***Eligibility Assistance:*** The Outreach Program will assist members of underserved populations to enroll and maintain participation in health and social service safety net programs.

Community-Focused Guidelines: These guidelines focus on what Outreach Programs can do to promote healthy, supportive communities. They highlight the importance of having a visible outreach presence in the community, increasing awareness of the needs of underserved populations, advocating with and on behalf of underserved populations and building strong partnerships to strengthen services.

- ***Community-Based Outreach:*** The Outreach Program will establish a visible presence in the community, providing information, education, services and support where members of underserved populations live, work, spend time, and access services.
- ***Advocacy:*** The Outreach Program will advocate on behalf of underserved populations to ensure cultural competent, quality health care.
- ***Community Collaboration:*** The Outreach Program will work to build strong partnerships with and among health and social service organizations frequently accessed by underserved populations.

Program-Focused Guideline: This guideline concentrates on what Outreach Programs can do to ensure outreach efforts are efficient and effective. Outreach Programs can maximize their resources and their impact by integrating outreach efforts with the administrative and clinical priorities of the health center, conducting comprehensive planning processes, and documenting and evaluating outreach activities.

- ***Program Planning and Evaluation:*** The Outreach Program will consistently participate in outreach planning, document its activities and measure the outcomes of services provided.