

Scope of Services

Now that you have defined your target population, it is time for your Planning Team to discuss and decide what initial healthcare services the clinic will offer. It is essential to utilize the findings of the environmental scan to prepare a recommendation to the Planning Team regarding scope of service. It is also essential to have the input from either the medical champion on the Planning Team and/or the medical director. It is also important to take into account the resources and services currently available within your community. Many clinics start with a limited scope of service and expand as providers, budget and space allow. Ideally, the services offered at your clinic would align with the needs of your target population; however, this decision may be influenced by other factors.

A few of the most common of these influences are:

Volunteers:

The number and type of volunteer healthcare providers you are able to recruit may help determine what services you are able to offer. For example, if you have a volunteer ophthalmologist, you may be able to offer a high level of ophthalmic services in your clinic. On the other hand, be aware that resources do not necessarily equate with need.

Clinic operations budget:

You may be able to afford to hire a mid-level provider like a nurse practitioner or physician assistant. If this is the case, your clinic could offer a different array of services than if it depends solely upon volunteer providers. A key consideration in determining the scope of services is sustainability on an ongoing basis. You do not want to begin providing a specific type of services and then have to stop due to lack of resources.

Support services:

You must consider what types of support services will need to be available to ensure quality healthcare. For example, if you plan on seeing diabetics, you will

need to have access to ongoing laboratory testing and pharmaceutical support. Some clinics provide these services on-site, some have partnerships with outside organizations that provide these services off-site, and some have a combination of both.

Other community healthcare programs:

An important consideration in determining your scope of services will be the information gathered in the Environmental Scan. This assessment will tell you what other healthcare services are already available in the community. You then need to determine if more of the same services are needed, or if that would be redundant. You will also need to look at what gaps exist to determine if this is what your clinic should focus on providing.

Clinic facility:

The configuration and amount of space you have can have a big impact on the types of services you provide. For example, if you have a facility that is large enough for both medical and dental, you could consider offering both of these services. If you only have limited space, you will need to prioritize and determine what services would be most appropriate to provide within the given space.

When deciding upon your scope of services, it can be helpful to think of your services in categories, and determine what you will need to provide each category of services. For example, you might choose to provide only medical care. You then need to determine what specific services you will provide (e.g. primary and/or acute care) and then what support services you will need (e.g. lab, pharmacy, specialty care etc.). Going through this process will help you determine what resources you already have available to you and what resources you will need to acquire. This can be a structured way to help determine a realistic scope of services.

Examples of types of services offered in clinics include, but are not limited to:

Primary Care

Behavioral health services

Immunization

Acute non-emergency care	Pediatrics	Patient health education
Chronic Disease Treatment	Substance abuse counseling	Social services
Specialty care on or off site	Women's health	Alternative medicine
Dental services	General health exams	Vision Care
Ancillary Services – lab, X-ray, pharmacy	Special events (e.g. screening events, school physicals, etc.)	HIV-AIDS outreach and counseling

Common Pitfall:

From experience, ECHO has seen that many clinics begin operations assuming they will be serving the acute medical needs of their target population, only to learn very quickly that the majority of their patients are suffering from chronic health issues.

The most common illnesses treated in clinics:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Obesity
- Asthma

The planning team should take this into consideration, and make sure they have enough providers, support services, and extended services from the .get go.

Regardless of the initial services your clinic offers, it is important that your organization provides quality healthcare. There are many widely accepted protocols for providing certain types of care. Along with the medical director, it may be prudent to consider setting up your system of care based on these treatment protocols. Putting these protocols in place in the beginning, rather than after routines have been created, will be easier.

Websites that you might find helpful:

- National Guideline Clearinghouse – <http://www.guideline.gov/>
- UpToDate.com – Online service for clinicians with a small subscription rate
- Institute for Clinical Systems Improvements
– https://www.icsi.org/guidelines_more/
- ADA Center for Evidence Based Dentistry – <http://ebd.ada.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
– <https://www.samhsa.gov/>