

Expanding Medical Community Participation

Access to specialty providers is crucial to providing meaningful healthcare services to your patients. Since it is not possible for your clinic to provide all the medical services required by your patients, you will need to help them gain access to additional care. Therefore, before you are operational, you need to develop referral relationships with specialist and/or other medical services in your community.

The medical director will know many of their peers in the healthcare community. Use those and other relationships from members of your Planning Team to tell the story of the clinic in the community and encourage healthcare provider participation. The most effective method for recruiting healthcare providers remains an invitation from one professional to another. Peer-to-peer recruitment is much more effective than an offer coming from a lay member of your team; people respond to people they know.

Have your medical director make presentations at providers meetings like the local medical society, hospital groups, private practice group, and others. Visit the large medical practices in your community. Describe the need, scope of service offered by the clinic, and ask for volunteers to work at the clinic. You might approach a specialist and ask them to see an agreed upon number of clinic patients in their office for no charge or a deep discount. It is important to have a method for recording referrals and tracking the number of patients sent to each provider. Maintaining this process ensures specialists receiving your referrals are not overburdened, which increases the longevity of their participation.

The same process used to recruit medical specialists can be followed for recruiting dentists, nurses, pharmacists, chiropractors, mental health, and other licensed health care professionals. Whenever possible, recruit peer to peer, which means the clinic will need professionals from several disciplines.

Don't be afraid to tell your story. Talk about why you are so passionate about establishing the clinic, or why your faith is calling you to be involved. People respond to passionate individuals and often that passion becomes contagious, but

don't expect everyone to follow you blindly. Not everyone shares your call or feels they have a responsibility to be involved. Recognize people may choose to be involved as a donor or referral source for other donors, supplies, equipment etc. Always have collateral materials available to share. A brochure describing the clinic and including ways to donate can lead to important financial and in-kind support for the organization.