

# Hours of Operation

Initially, your hours of operation might rely entirely on paid or unpaid staff availability. Many startup clinics rely on unpaid staff to open and operate the clinic, and attend to accounting, clerical, and leadership functions. If most of your volunteers and providers are employed full-time, evening hours may be the most appropriate for your clinic operations.

It is better to start with a modest clinic schedule (twice a week for instance) that you can easily maintain, rather than promise clinic sessions that will strain your available resources. Most clinics allow three to four hour blocks of time for clinical operations, with clinic sessions during the day, evenings, or even weekends. Starting slow will give you the opportunity to work out any operational issues and make improvements in the process, without the pressure of holding clinic hours on a daily basis. Part of being a credible clinic is the ability for your community to count on you being open for services in a consistent manner.

Carefully consider these two factors:

## 1) Clinic location

- Borrowed space that must accommodate other building purposes
- Proximity to target population
- Availability of public transportation at time of clinic operation (evening and weekend schedules are often reduced)
- Safety of patients and staff when walking to and from clinic during evening hours

## 2) Pre- and post- clinic operations

- Need for eligibility screening, set up, clean-up procedures, medical waste removal, securing files, etc.
- Need for clinic to be open when providers are not present so patients can drop in to pick up copies of their file, for staff to return phone calls, complete clerical tasks, data collection, accounting, or other tasks

As clinics grow in ability and capacity, hours of operation can expand. Careful tracking of clinic utilization, patient and service data will be valuable in demonstrating need and readiness for growth. Your community will be grateful for an organization that can deliver needed services in a consistent and well-planned manner.