**Why Make Such an Effort in Your Own and Surrounding Communities?**

As community members know more about you, your volunteers, and your clinic, they gain confidence in your care quality and become ever more likely to refer patients to you. More patients receive needed care—and everyone wins.

It's also part of your mission – to serve those that either have no health insurance or are underinsured. Simply put, we can't help if people don't know that we are part of the community.

Whom you know is always helpful and means absolutely everything. If city officials, community leaders, and social leaders have met you and have gained some idea of what you do, you will be much more likely to be included in city-wide events. Your request to be part of things like participating in a parade, setting up an information booth, or doing a fundraising event, is much more likely to be considered positively.

It also disabuses the notion that "this is a cookie and coffee feel good place" that should be nodded at or tolerated benevolently. Being entrenched in the community strengthens the truth: that we deliver professional medical care compassionately, competently, and respectfully to those who cannot afford to go anywhere else. We want the community to be proud of the extraordinary resource they have within their boundaries.

Also, testimonials from entities in your community are a significant addition to any grant you write. As opposed to a "lone wolf" existence, collaboration is highly regarded and has now become a "must" line item on many grant proposal forms. Nothing is incorrect or untoward about making these community connections—and what comes out of them is a patient with medical care and an overall improvement in the community's health.

Local fundraising depends on how you get your message out and how far it permeates the community. Connections, connections, connections.

Connections make it much easier to become a respected voice for the populations you serve on issues that arise in your community that affect your patients. For instance, your aggregate data when discussing food bank locations, transit stops and schedules, any issue regarding health in any way, and even perhaps the value of mail-in election ballots.

This effort is for one thing - your community needs to know they have a valuable resource in their community.

BUT this is also the beginning of advocacy for your patients and for equitable, respectfully delivered health care.

**Meeting City, Police, and Fire officials**If your clinic serves more than one city, do the same with all of the cities within your service area.

The community needs to know they have a valuable resource in your clinic. Evaluate your visibility and knowledge of your clinic's value by asking yourself, "Do these five groups have my clinic information and my contact information?"

* ALL medical facilities of any kind, including hospital emergency rooms/community outreach department, dental, ophthalmology, and everything else\* See Hospital section for additional information.
* City or township Council, police, fire and social work agencies
* Businesses, especially those that do not offer healthcare insurance to their employees\* See Businesses section for additional information.
* All schools in your area \*See Schools section for additional information.
* General community \* See General Community and Faith Communities sections for additional information.

**How Do I Do It? *and* What Should I Include?**

1. Schedule phone, virtual or in-person meetings and clinic walk-throughs for **police, fire, local elected officials** first. Make these as separate calls.  
     
   **Script outline** **(10 -15 min MAX)**
   1. Introduce yourself - name and title
   2. Why you are calling –
      1. To introduce yourself and the clinic.
         1. You are reaching out to the community to make sure everyone knows that you are a local free healthcare resource for those who have no health insurance for any reason or are underinsured (if your clinic accepts underinsured) or are Medicaid recipients with your clinic attempting to "fill in the coverage gaps." At this point give them your business card and information card.
         2. *Look carefully at that sentence above. If that does NOT describe your clinic, insert/delete language that is appropriate for YOU.*
      2. To describe residency requirements, whatever they are (geographic [ex. county, city, zip code], economic [ex. household income below a given level]) or say "open to anyone who needs healthcare and cannot afford the cost of a standard medical clinic."
      3. Describe all of the services you offer. IF you provide insurance application assistance, be sure to include that. The number of people you have helped obtain insurance always makes them smile AND the fact that you do try to transition your patients or potential patients to “traditional” care lets them know you see your clinic as part of the medical community. IF you have patients on Medicaid, explain why.
      4. Clearly explain the costs of your services including “free”.
      5. Explain when you are open and how patients access your services.
      6. Make sure you mention
         1. The number of patients and number of visits in the last year
         2. How many volunteers work with you
         3. Your funding source(s) - Everyone thinks we receive federal money and a lot of state money. It is enough to say that \_\_\_% of your operating funds are from fundraisers and donations, \_\_\_% from corporation and foundation grants and \_\_\_% from the state appropriation.
         4. How your clinic specifically benefits the community (fewer sick days, fewer ER visits, fewer medical crises, an overall healthier community and whatever other reasons make sense to you)
      7. Offer to email or bring in additional brochure(s), small (4" x 6" MAX) information cards (see the last page) and handouts they can have on hand or place in areas such as police cars, fire trucks, at the city hall information desk, or information boards.
      8. Make sure you mention that your clinic is willing to work with the city and other organizations during any crisis that the city declares is an emergency situation. (weather issues, fires and so on).The clinic is a medical clinic. You have access to certified and licensed medical personnel. Your clinic is a “safe” place. If possible for you, volunteer to be part of the Emergency Plan Operations committee. The clinic is a valuable but as yet untapped resource.
      9. *Invite them for a clinic walk-through*. You may suggest the city representative, police and fire come at the same time. Let them know that you will be calling the Police and Fire Chiefs. Have a couple of dates and times ready if they agree.
         1. **Discuss with your Clinic staff and Board** **if walk-throughs** should happen during clinic hours or idle hours. Are you confident it is OK with your patients? Are you sure you can maintain HIPAA during the visit? It is a good idea to have whose walking through meet the people who staff or volunteer, even for a moment.
      10. Before ending the conversation if you haven’t already, leave your business card and information card if nothing else. Remind the person if they have any questions or need more information cards, they can contact you.
2. Does your city or township Council meetings have a **"call to the audience"** during their sessions? IF they record their engagements (and now, during COVID, conduct virtual meetings), you will have a much wider audience. **Once a year** make a short (3 to 5 minute) presentation about the clinic. Often the Call to Audience has a specific time limit per person. Use the same information as above without the clinic walk-through, not forgetting to mention services are FREE or what the fees are. Make sure you announce the clinic's phone number, address, and directions and your own contact information at the end of the presentation. You never know who is listening or watching the meetings. If you have a past or present patient who would be willing to talk about her/his experience that is very helpful.  
     
   In many cities, you are allowed to bring a PowerPoint presentation–all the better! Include the same information as above. Be sure to include some photos in the PowerPoint. Once again, make the production relatively short: no more than ten slides. Your intent is not to conduct a college course but information sharing. IF you want to photograph patients and volunteers, you need a photo/video permission form.

You may also be allowed to leave a small stack of your information cards on a general information table. Ask.

During the year, don’t forget to go before Council to **publicize your upcoming fundraising event.** When, where, cost and if for a specific project what that is. If you have an event poster, bring it along. IF you have smaller posters (8” x 10” MAX) put them on the general information table if allowed.  
  
 **One more thing–why city contact can be especially beneficial to your clinic**Cities and townships have some, but not much, discretionary money. Many clinics receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBGs) funds from their counties. With awareness and knowledge of what you do, City Council will probably find it easier to consider your clinic for a portion of those funds. The next time you see someone from the Council, ask when "appropriations for the CDBG funds" are discussed. You need to be at the meeting discussing these funds – why they need to consider your clinic. How else are they going to know this potential allocation is something for them to consider?

**Just a Little Next Step**

Once you have worked with the script and done an initial reach out, of course, you can think of others in your community who need to know what your Clinic does and does so well. The following come to mind immediately:

**Hospitals**

Hospital outreach is the most forgotten but one of the most important, contacts.

Reach out to the *community relations* department. Use the script, but after that short conversation, ask the most efficient and helpful way to get information to the ER for both patients and triage staff and other departments. Of course, offer to bring the information cards anywhere. IF you can get your information cards into the *emergency unit* (their community bulletin board, every triage desk, on their cable in the waiting room as a continual feed) and your clinic information on the resource list in *their social work/insurance assistance department*…excellent!

Hospitals would love to decrease their non-emergency patient load, but they—and the patients—often have no idea of the area's low cost and local resource – your clinic.

Invite this contact, and anyone they think would benefit the Clinic for a tour.

Many Clinics have warm relationships with the hospital(s) in their area. Often the hospital has helped by processing lab tests at no cost, giving the Clinic medical supplies (not medications), and, in some cases, awards from their hospital Foundations. Remember, this is also good publicity for the hospital.

Once this contact is established and perhaps if you think all is going well doing this initial meeting, ask if they are the person they should go through to advertise for medical/pharmaceutical/med-tech/specialty medical services volunteers. I know this pamphlet is specific to clinic advocacy, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

**Federally Qualified Health Clinics**   
 often called Community Health Centers

These clinics are our partners. The Federal Government, commercial health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, and (often) fundraising efforts fund them. They are mandated to offer care through insurance and a sliding fee scale**.** These are full-service clinics, no different from traditional medical clinics except that they receive a yearly Federal appropriation and must have a sliding fee scale to offer patients care. These clinics are the closest the Federal government recognizes that many people have very little money to spend on healthcare. There are many FQHCs throughout the state (444 as of February 2021), both in the Upper and Lower Peninsula. Google [findaclinic.hrsa.gov](file:///C:\Users\Ann\Dropbox\FCOM\Advocacy\findaclinic.hrsa.gov) to find a clinic near your city or address. We have their website information on our website “Find A Clinic” page also. on our website.

Make appointments to meet their Clinic Manager and Executive Director. Definitely invite them to the clinic for a tour. FQHCs see many patients who use their sliding fee scale. I can imagine a great conversation on patients and who sees who and who needs referring to either your clinic or FQHC and vice versa. Discuss whom they see when it is clear the patient has next to none or very little money to pay for their care and how they make that decision. Your Clinic does not want to be put into a position when recommending an alternative clinic of giving incorrect advice.

**County Health Departments**

These are as important as the hospitals in your area. Many people automatically go to their county health departments for vaccines, classes, children’s health and the list goes on. They are a great source for all of the information brochures on almost any illness, condition, vaccines, water quality and ……so much more.

The next pamphlet will be on County and State outreach but the county health departments fit into that and this document because in so many cases it is the local “go to” for health services and information.

In just a word, follow the outline for contacting the administrator of your local county health. IF there is more than on free or charitable clinic in the county, make it a joint presentation.

Also, who sits on their Board of Directors? Contact their Board Chair to ask if you can do a short presentation at their next meeting. Same thing – a joint presentation if there are other free and charitable clinics in your county. AND….would you consider joining the Board? Don’t forget, you serve a population not often seen in traditional medical facilities AND you know how best to reach this population. It is NOT always through any online anything………………. We have a lot of very relevant information.

**Businesses**

An easy way to reach businesses is to attend a Chamber of Commerce meeting and talk about your clinic. Same "speech" as above and take only two handouts: your information card and your business card. Pass these out as you speak or put on their general information table if they prefer. Note they may have a specific time limit per business when they do their Round Robin introductions.

Please make sure you add that you are well aware that not every business can afford to offer healthcare insurance to their employees or to their whole families for many reasons. NOTE: Make sure they understand this is NOT a judgment of them in any way. Employee health insurance is expensive.

Your clinic can help deliver health care services AND assist employees by reviewing health insurance options for which they may well be eligible.

Also, you **may** be able to work with the Chamber to publicize your fundraisers to this whole new group. Many businesses see it as a profitable business to support a local non-profit. Why shouldn't it be your clinic?

**Schools**

Once again, find out if your Board of Education has a "call to audience" time on their agendas (See #2 – city/township meetings). If not, contact the Board President and introduce yourself using the script and bringing your business card and information card.

Just a note:

1. Anticipate questions.
2. Be prepared to share information about where children and people over 64 and can receive substantially discounted health care – a good choice is the Federally Qualified Health Center(s) in your area if your clinic does not work with people under age 18 or over 64. Bring the contact information for those FQHCs just in case they ask.

After you have answered questions, ask if you can drop off clinic information to each school. Once again, that will be the information cards and your business card. IF the Board allows this, it will be an ideal way for you to meet with individual principals, social workers, and interested parties—perhaps including a presentation at parents or staff in-service meetings. Once again, bring the information cards and your business card.

**General Community**

Contact your **local newspaper(s)** and talk to the reporter that covers your clinic area. Once again, use the same initial speech AND invite the person to visit the clinic. In preparation as before mentioned, you, the Board, and the clinic staff should decide if the visit should occur during the Clinic or during an idle time before you contact the press. In past monthly updates, I have mentioned clinics that received community-wide publicity using this technique - this could be your clinic!

If the paper is local, you may even have a chance to write a monthly article about your clinic, including special services you provide and your next fundraiser. Invite local press to ALL fundraising events. An idea: offer in-kind sponsorship in exchange for the coverage of the fundraiser.

Consider opening a dialogue with **local radio and TV** in the same manner.

I have not included social media. That is a different and beneficial vehicle but different from person to person. That will be one pamphlet in this series.

**General Community - Organized Social Groups**

Does your community have organized social groups? VFW, AM VETS, Elks, Moose, Masonic/Eastern Star, seniors club, Rotary, ethnic and cultural associations, and/or …….. Ask to make a presentation at one of their meetings. Once again, model the same initial speech, bringing the information cards and a business card for all the attendees.

**Faith Communities**

I can't emphasize this connection enough. Many faith communities are willing to help in so many ways and have done for many, many years. All of you know of food banks, clothing banks, temporary shelter for the population who finds themselves homeless, meals served regularly, and many more services. Once again, introduce yourself and your clinic and follow the script suggestions. I can guarantee they will welcome your information. Ask if your clinic’s information could be a permanent "ad" in their newsletter.

Often in the first visit, you may be asked what else they can do besides publicizing your clinic. A simple technique is a Wish List for clinic supplies. This supply list includes what the clinic would have to purchase if someone did not donate them. The most effective are the humblest. A rule of thumb: don't go crazy. You will want to include a list of ten items *maximum* with pertinent information such as where to drop them off, when, and how to receive a donation receipt for their tax records. Examples (I am NOT kidding) are toilet paper, copy paper, paper toweling, cleaning supplies (ex. disposable mop pads), tissues, disposable small paper cups (alternative to drinking from a fountain), and other items. Many clinics have heartwarming stories and photos.

**Community Boards in Local Businesses**

Do businesses have community bulletin boards (ex. restaurants, coffee shops, breakfast cafes) that announce happenings in your community? Make sure your info card and the fundraising poster are on every one of these boards.

**Quick Review of the Action Steps**

1. Write out a script for timing; it helps you remember what you are going to say. However, DO NOT read from the script, use it as a personal prompt.
2. Don't go over the scheduled time! If the person asks you to stay, that's different.
3. Gather your clinic information.
4. Create and print an information card and business cards.
5. Talk to your Board. Does someone want to come with you? What are their feelings on clinic visits?
6. Make the first phone call.

Example Information Card:



*Thanks to David Newman, Michigan Primary Care Association, Dan Martin, ED, FernCare Free Clinic, Rob Wittenberg's (past Michigan State Representative, 11th District) Advocacy for Non-Profits brochure, and Pharmacist Christine Rainey for their work on this and assistance. This is dedicated to David who passed suddenly in February, 2021.*

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