

Overview of the selected intervention in Alberta

Mobile outreach primary healthcare services (pop-up) for hard-to-reach vulnerable populations through community coalitions

Rationale: North Lethbridge, Alberta has a high concentration of vulnerable population groups including recent immigrants, Aboriginal, seniors and homeless persons who share social vulnerabilities such as low income, limited transport or personal mobility, low health literacy. There are few primary medical clinics and no hospitals located in the North Lethbridge area. Each service provider tends to only target one demographic or need, resulting in an overall service delivery that is fragmented and dispersed. Furthermore, these vulnerable populations do not easily engage with or reach available primary health care services and/or activities; the services may be viewed as unwelcoming and uninviting due to language barriers, financial considerations, transportation restrictions, cultural differences and health beliefs.

Many of these populations access and participate in social and cultural events at regular intervals and locations. There is willingness among local health and social services providers and proximal primary care practices to engage vulnerable populations and meet their needs by attending these events and offering mobile outreach services (pop-up). The coalition of existing community service providers will take a collaborative and holistic approach to identifying and collectively addressing the health care needs of these populations.

Targeted population: The population living in North Lethbridge, including (but not limited to): recent immigrant, Aboriginal, seniors, homeless persons. The population of North Lethbridge is 26,751 (2015). The attendance at any event may be up to 200 or more attendees.

Intervention: Mobile outreach by a variety of primary health and social service providers at existing locations accessible to residents of North Lethbridge, as pop-up services catering to the needs of attendees. The service providers may be different at each event, and services may include vaccinations, dental care, mental health services, physician care, health education, service wayfinding, language and literacy services, and a wide variety of other services provided by community partners and organisations. Training and education will be provided to service providers to ensure care is culturally appropriate and welcoming. After initial outreach to and engagement of target population, the mobile pop-up will begin to provide services at regular intervals and locations. Transportation services are offered to facilitate access to the mobile pop-up service. Service users are encouraged and supported to establish enduring relationships with primary healthcare and social service providers. The primary health and social service providers will establish collaborative relationships amongst themselves and make appropriate referrals so that service users are able to access timely and appropriate primary medical care and social services.

Local partners: The local health service organizations which includes the South Zone of Alberta Health Services, municipal government, a coalition of community agencies that serve diverse populations (seniors centre, education groups, youth-serving organizations, family serving organizations), primary care practices, and community members.

Links with primary healthcare: Primary healthcare leadership is provided by Alberta Health Services South Zone. They are starting with those who are most engaged and interested in this work, including three physicians who have expressed interest, although not located in North Lethbridge.