

Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

Mobile Primary Health Care Teams



The challenge

People living in rural communities within Newfoundland and Labrador experience barriers accessing team-based primary care, due to transportation challenges and/or lack of a family doctor or care team.

The promising practice

Deploy mobile clinics to provide in-person team-based healthcare including chronic disease prevention and management, health system navigation, and mental health and addictions services (e.g., opioid dependency treatment and counselling).

The mobile health clinics operate one weekend a month from two communities (Baie Verte and New-Wes Valley) and provide services for people living in 40 small communities. The mobile clinics are staffed by nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and social workers. Patients call to book an appointment and can access the services whether they are attached to a primary care provider or not.

Example impacts

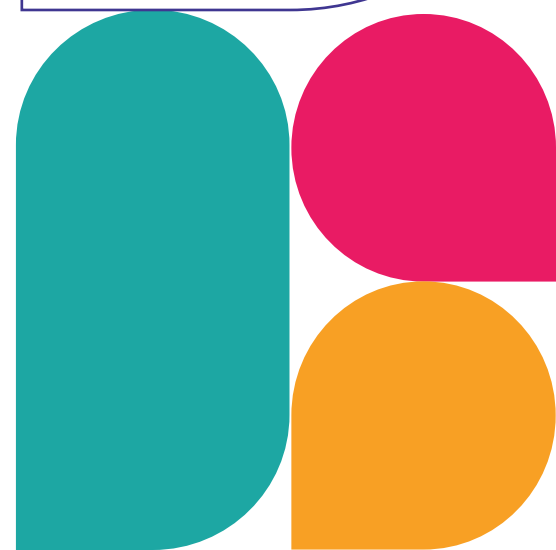
- Increased access to team-based primary care. Between November 2023 and November 2024:
 - 310 appointments were booked with a nurse practitioner.
 - 153 patients underwent a pap test.
- 95 percent of patients surveyed were highly satisfied with the mobile primary healthcare services and were clear on next steps following appointments.
- Providers who worked in the mobile clinics report high work satisfaction due to collaboration with the team and access to additional services for their patients.

Potential future impacts:

- Enhanced rates of chronic disease and cancer screening in rural communities.
- Integrate with family care teams to support growth of the mobile health clinic, and to provide long-term, comprehensive, team-based primary care in rural communities.

Beautiful Nurse Practitioner. Sent me for x-ray to find out my issues. Very concerned and polite. God love her.

– NLHS patient



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Keys to success

- **Funding** to renovate, operate, maintain and store (when weather may not allow for delivery of healthcare services) the mobile unit and to hire a dedicated mobile clinic team.
- **Flexibility** to adjust where the mobile team travels and what services are offered, in response to community service needs and availability of providers.
- **Building trust** between providers and communities to ensure continuity of care and provision of services needed.

Lessons learned

- Offer mental health services such as single session counselling, particularly during weekend clinics. This helps avoid having to direct patients to the emergency department for these services.
- Promotion only via social media does not reach everyone. Share and communicate details of the clinics directly with community partners and distribute posters in the community to raise awareness.
- Monitor service utilization and experience in accessing care; modify service delivery in response to community need.

How can I learn more?

Contact the organization.

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Why was this summary created?

Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS), participated in Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program.

SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care. This promising practice summary was co-produced with NLHS to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.

