

YOUTH OUTREACH



Good engagement with young people **can be difficult**

Many young people have limited knowledge of what services exist, how to access them or the conventions of help-seeking behaviour. As a result, youth agencies need to be flexible and innovative in the way that they locate, promote and deliver their services. Outreach is a common engagement strategy employed by youth focused services to overcome some of these barriers. It is a proactive engagement approach focused on those young people who are least likely to access services but who are in the most need.

MODELS OF OUTREACH

Assertive street work

Actively looking to engage and offer appropriate information, brief intervention, and/or referral to people who may benefit from being connected with alcohol and/or drug treatment by attending public space locations (eg streets, malls, parks, shopping centres).

Clinical Outreach

Structured, planned work with AOD clients in another health or support service's venue, such as a hospital, health service, community centre, or youth service.

Detached/Mobile Outreach

Structured, planned work with AOD clients in their own homes, workplaces, or other agreed settings.

Assertive community outreach

Offering information, brief intervention, and/or referral to people who may benefit from being connected with alcohol and/or drug treatment by working from other health, social and accommodation service settings.

NB: "Assertive Outreach" refers to a specific style of outreach whereby agencies actively look to engage clients who are not necessarily seeking out a service. It also sometimes referred to as "case-finding".

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING OUTREACH

When conducting outreach, workers do not have the usual range of systems and equipment available, nor do they have full control over their environment. As a result, workers and agencies must develop appropriate policies and procedures to ensure safety and to maximise client outcomes. The following table contains some key considerations. NB: These considerations vary depending on the context in which the outreach occurs.

Resources

- vehicle / transport
- identifiable clothing / staff name badge
- personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves)
- first aid kits
- torches
- mobile phones
- water / food
- maps
- laptop / tablet / smartphone with mobile internet access
- information / referral resources
- health and hygiene materials
- harm reduction supplies
- sharps disposal kit

Policy and procedures

- minimum staffing levels
- personal safety procedures
- crisis response protocols
- documenting outreach activities
- client transport policies
- confidentiality procedures (e.g. transporting confidential client information, managing visible contact with young people in public space to avoid compromising client privacy)
- referral procedures
- agreements with relevant agencies (e.g. police, ambulance, local council etc.)
- end of shift 'check-in' procedures.

CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER RESOURCES OR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REQUIRED TO CONDUCT OUTREACH IN YOUR SERVICE CONTEXT?

The practice principles underpinning good youth outreach are the same as for other forms of youth practice. Outreach workers are encouraged to consider how this mode of delivery may affect things such as explaining privacy and confidentiality, conducting referrals, developing and managing caseplans, and exiting clients. Youth services also need to ensure that there is good communication between centre-based and outreach staff to avoid inconsistency in service delivery or the application of organisational policy or procedure.

“Outreach is a powerful connecting activity. A simple ‘hi’ and a sit and a yarn can see your greatest referral pathway develop, enabling young people to refer their friends, in a safe and informal way.”

- Youth AOD worker