

Protocol for Community Engagement



March 24-26, 2009

KOTM Hosts "Excellence in First Nations Telemedicine"

Preparation & Planning

- Plan your visit by preparing an agenda – Community Engagement Agenda form is available.
- Contact the Community Health Director by phone to indicate the intent of your visit.
- Fax or email the agenda to the Health Director, it will give them a good idea on how they can help prepare for your visit.
- Phone the Health Director and go over the agenda so that they have a better understanding of your visit – verbally communicating with the HD strengthens a working relationship and this allows them to feel comfortable to suggest new ideas or delete items from your agenda.



Contacting Chief & Council

Next, contact the Chief or the Band Councilor with the Health Portfolio and let them know the intent of your visit and ask when it would be a good time to visit. The Chief usually has an idea if he/she will be there or they will appoint the Deputy Chief or Head Councilor to be present at the time of your visit. It is important to establish a good working relationship and friendship with a person that is in a prominent position in the community. An individual that is respected and is trusted by the community.



Contacting Community Telemedicine Coordinator

- Contact the Community Telemedicine Coordinator and let them know of your plans and the dates that have been suggested by the band council and health director. (However, there are some CTCs that would rather coordinate your visit and will have everything set up. All they need are the details of your visit and who you would like to meet.)
- Email and Fax over the agenda to the CTC.
- The CTC and the Health Director will contact all the people you want to see during your visit. (the health staff, band administrator, education director)



Contacting Community Members

- Never assume everyone knows about Telemedicine no matter how long your program has been in the community. Band Councils change, people move on to different positions and new ones arrive that have never heard of your program. Be prepared to do a brief presentation: it's good to have a powerpoint presentation on hand at all times.
- Prepare your presentation or handouts and make copies before you leave. There are times when the community's printer will not be available or working.



Accommodation & Community Transportation

- The health director or CTC will arrange your accommodations ahead of time. They will prefer you to stay at the nursing station apartment because you are more accessible to the staff and people in the community.
- Arrange with the CTC or health director for the health driver to pick you up at the airport.
- There will be times you will need to hire a driver or vehicle for the days you are in the community because the health van will be too busy transporting patients. The CTC will let you know if you need one.



Arrival in the Community

- Take a fruit basket or a box of donuts for the Chief and Council, you will win their hearts. Native people love receiving gifts as well as giving gifts. Do not refuse a gift when offered even if you think you don't deserve it. It's part of the culture.
- The medical van or the CTC will pick you up at the airport. The CTC will take you to meet the Health Director and they will go over the agenda with you. Expect to have your agenda changed, also remember that they are the ones in charge. The Health Director will inform you of the changes. They will also select a person to drive you around.
- Wait until the health director takes you to meet the Band Council. He/she will introduce you and explain the intent of your visit.



Meeting the Chief & Council

- Once the introductions are done, you will explain why you have come. It is customary to ask them for their permission for you to conduct your business in their community. It is the honorable and traditional way of approaching the Chief and Council. I have noticed that not many visitors feel comfortable in doing this but it goes a long way in respecting the protocol.
- You present your agenda with them and again, they will change it to how they want it or who is available. Most of the time, it is the Council who recommends which elders you are allowed to visit.
- It has been our experience that if you follow these protocols with the Band Council, they will treat you with respect and give you added support in the years to come.



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Community Welcome

- Once the presentation is over, the Chief will appoint a community member or one of the councilors to give you a community tour or introduce you to certain leaders in the community.
- Never assume each community is the same. Each community has different ways of doing their business.
- After the meeting with the Band Council and everything has been approved and finalized, the Health Director will hand over the agenda to the CTC and it is the CTC's responsibility to assist you with your visit.
- You are free to begin meeting people you came to meet.



Be ready for anything

- If you don't speak the native language, make sure you have an interpreter if you are going to do a presentation on the radio or visit elders. There are some CTCs who do not speak their language.
- There will be times when things will happen that you can't get anything done in the first day. A crisis might arise in the community. (You will just have to go with flow with the community). The community will appreciate it if you make yourself available to help out in the time of crisis.



Offer Your Support

- It is also a good practice to participate in any community events during your visit. The more involved you are with the community, the more trust and acceptance will be given to you. Be part of the community and offer your support.



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Presenters

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