

## The Spectrum of Outreach

### the range of options for reaching out

By JT (Jerry) Fest

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Outreach efforts may become confused due to the belief that 'outreach' describes a single type of activity. In fact, outreach may be a variety of options ranging from radio spots to rape counseling in squats. Efforts will be more effective if a program's focus is clear, so the following three 'tiers' of outreach are offered as guidelines.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Tier - **OUTREACH:**

This tier is focused on the provision of information and/or education with the goal of increasing knowledge and/or awareness. Recruitment into services or behavioral change may also be a goal. Methods range from media-based efforts (e.g., advertisements, brochures, posters) to direct mail/cold calls, to individual and group presentations in traditional locations (schools, community groups, etc.).

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier - **STREET OUTREACH:**

Similar to 1<sup>st</sup> tier Outreach in that the focus is still on information/education with the goal of increasing knowledge/awareness and/or recruitment/behavioral change, Street Outreach differs in that it is exclusively personnel-based and any media efforts are simply tools to support the face-to-face contacts. Individual and group presentations are in non-traditional locations. For example, presenting HIV information at a Job Corps center would be Outreach; presenting it to a group of youth at a skate park would be Street Outreach. Due to the non-traditional locations and the emphasis on interpersonal contact, Street Outreach personnel require skills and training that may not be necessary for an Outreach worker, such as responding to safety concerns and basic crisis intervention/de-escalation skills.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier - **STREETWORK:**

With Streetwork the focus shifts from the provision of information/education, to intervention and the provision of services. Recruitment into services and behavioral change may also be goals, but these are in addition to, or the result of, interventions or services that are provided directly. As with Street Outreach, Streetwork is personnel-based and generally performed in non-traditional locations, although the definition of non-traditional location includes locations that are non-traditional for the service provided. For example, Streetworkers may be called to a hospital -- a traditional location -- to provide crisis intervention, needs assessment, and referral for shelter -- services that are not generally provided in that location. Streetwork requires skills and training beyond that of even Street Outreach as the service provision aspect places Streetworkers in the position of dealing with people when they are emotional, volatile, in crisis, or facing issues. Safety concerns are increased, as is the need for clear confidentiality guidelines and defined boundaries. Of course, Streetworkers must also have the skills to be qualified to provide whatever services are being offered.

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Outreach will also be strongly influenced by the environment in which it is provided, generally defined as **rural** or **urban** (suburban environments will usually lend themselves either to a rural or urban method, depending on the area). While each of the three tiers may be applicable to any specific environment, a general rule is that the Outreach end is more conducive to rural while the Streetwork end is more conducive to urban.

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