



**Why mobile medical units
help protect your market.**

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Mobile medical clinics are customized vehicles which typically travel to urban and rural communities to provide healthcare services for underserved populations. Their goal is to deliver primary care for people who don't have a healthcare home, or who cannot or will not seek preventive care. Many of these mobile units operate for pediatric medical and dental care at schools, bloodmobiles, mobile dental clinics, offer mammograms or function as mobile laboratories.



Many mobile clinics are used to provide high quality health services to vulnerable populations, allowing accessible primary care for low-income residents who do not have easy access to necessary health care services. Mobile clinics attend to some of the most problematic and basic issues facing these communities by providing:

- asthma testing
- restorative dental care
- mammography
- prenatal care
- audiology
- community health fairs
- dental sealants
- migrant worker care
- prenatal screening
- behavioral health
- disease management
- occupational health
- preventive screenings
- cardiology
- immunizations
- pediatric care
- primary care screenings
- primary care services
- physicals
- blood collection & donation
- simulation training

Mobile medical units serve many distinct population groups, from inner-city nursing homes to rural Native American locations.

They are also widely used to provide additional health services at the workplace and at school districts, from offering mammograms in office parking lots, to dental screenings and health screenings to students. Mobile clinics typically perform regularly scheduled rounds and will publish dates and times they will be at certain locations to perform specific healthcare procedures at community centers, senior centers, malls and shopping centers.

Increasing and Protecting Market Share

By offering these services, healthcare providers like hospitals, health departments, federally-qualified health centers (FQHCs), universities and dentists help protect their particular market in several ways, including mobile branding.

As they travel through the community these mobile health centers achieve intangible benefits to their organization with increased visibility, awareness and name recognition.



An effectively branded mobile unit is essentially a traveling billboard for the healthcare provider. The operator also gathers referrals to their facilities, build patient loyalty, and

establish a medical or dental home so patients establish continuity-of-care.

This is particularly the case when a patient requires medical treatment that is beyond the scope of the mobile unit's capability. In these cases, which can be frequent, the mobile staff member will refer the patient to staff within their home hospital or healthcare facility.



Driving patient referrals can be the largest cost benefit to utilizing mobile medical as part of a health organizations total service offering. The economic benefits to the organization can be significant in driving business. The mobile unit can bring more patients and more income to a healthcare organization than many other marketing initiatives would. When organizations incorporate mobile clinics into their overall marketing plan



there is a proven, trackable and tangible ROI (return on investment) that most other marketing initiatives cannot demonstrate.

Hospitals and other healthcare providers use mobile clinics to increase access to their services. By incorporating mobile medical clinics into their service portfolio providers have a valuable

source of referrals to doctor and services within their medical centers. By referring patients from the mobile clinics to doctors within their system the patient receives continuity of care in the same way the health system's emergency room, clinics or individual practitioner's office provide.

Immediate referrals can be made while the patient is in the mobile unit and electronic health records (EHR) are transferred directly to the home facility. This further ensures important continuity of care for the patient and helps secure additional revenue for the facility.

Mobile medical clinics are used and deployed by:

- Cancer centers
- The U. S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
- World Health Organization
- U. S. National Institutes of Health
- For profit and non-profit organizations
- State and federal agencies
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- The American Red Cross & other blood collection agencies
- Hospitals
- Universities
- Charitable organizations
- Community hospitals
- Local health departments

Depending on the specific specialty of the mobile clinic, they may be staffed by doctors, physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, or other care professionals.

Many of the organizations operating mobile health clinics are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). They must qualify for funding under Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (PHS), qualify for enhanced reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, and provide other benefits to underserved areas or populations.

There are many types of mobile units serving a variety of community needs, including:

Mobile Dental Clinics

Providing on-going, scheduled care to many of the same target populations mentioned for mobile medical clinics, mobile dental units typically provide regularly scheduled visits to the communities they serve in order to conduct oral health screenings and full restorative care.



Many mobile patients are referred to hometown dentists who benefit as much as the patients. Regular follow-up visits improve oral health in schools, and have been known to virtually erase dental caries in whole school districts.

Mobile Mammography

Women age 40 and over should have routine mammogram screenings for breast cancer. Mobile mammography units have state-of-the-art equipment and infrastructure with dedicated teams to provide cost-effective mammography



screenings to women at their place of work and to those in rural, urban and other low-income communities.

Mobile mammography helps lower the barriers to breast cancer screenings for medically under-served women and as a convenient incentive to those at work.



These units are fully equipped with current technology and specific imaging equipment that use a low-dose radiology for cost-effective screenings.

Mobile Labs

Mobile laboratories provide a variety of on-site testing services, traveling to places where outbreaks can occur. In their off-time, these units can provide community organizations with preventive educational courses for families and children in communities that are unable to maintain state-of-the art instruction. Depending on the specific goal, a mobile health lab may be outfitted with equipment and technology to:

Provide sophisticated testing for avian flu or other potentially deadly outbreaks

House expensive laboratory equipment that can be shared across many cities or counties where outbreaks can occur

Offer computer education classes in a variety of subjects

Conduct literacy education programs

Provide community access to current biotechnology education

Mobile labs also provide specific health services, such as:

- Anthropometry assessments (study of the measurements and proportions of the human body)
- Blood chemistry measurements
- Fitness assessments like mask-fitting and pulmonary function testing
- Make repairs to highly customized equipment like prosthetics right at the patient's home
- Mental health screenings
- Nutritional analysis, often including macro and micro nutrient analysis, obesity and diabetes prevention programs

Mobile laboratories have been recognized by the U. S. National Institutes of Health for improving knowledge and understanding in biotechnology and medicine.

Blood Mobiles

A mobile blood donation center is a vehicle equipped with everything necessary for safe, secure and comfortable blood donation procedures. These custom vehicles travel to public and private locations such as malls, libraries, colleges, churches, business communities, high schools and other public places. The mobile units are equipped



with all of the technology necessary for drawing blood samples performed by professional phlebotomists (technicians who draw



blood from an individual for clinical or medical testing, transfusions, donations, or research). Non-profit organizations like Blood Systems, Inc. and the American Red Cross operate every weekday conducting hundreds of blood drives

across the United States. Nearly 80 percent of blood donations are made during mobile drives at work sites and other community centers.

Benefits & ROI of Incorporating Mobile Clinics into Your Organization

Mobile medical clinics have repeatedly proven to show good patient outcomes and provide positive returns on investment for the provider organizations.

There are over than 2,000 mobile clinics in the U.S. providing up to 6.5 million visits annually. Some hospitals invest in mobile clinics for re-allocating a portion of their emphasis on emergency room visits to provide preventative care for managing chronic illness. This ability to expand coverage provides the opportunity for hospitals, health systems and insurers to offer improved care to underserved populations at lower costs.

Furthermore, the Mobile Health Map, a collaborative research community whose goal is to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of mobile clinics, states that mobile medical clinics are improving access to care. “Mobile clinics mainly serve the uninsured (60%) and the publicly insured (31%), and generally operate in low-income communities.”

“There are lot of mobile clinics right now, many more than people might imagine,” said Caterina Hill, research associate at Harvard Medical School and co-investigator at Mobile Health Map.



According to Hill, “There are more than 2,000 mobile clinics in the U.S. Some hospitals are investing in these clinics on wheels because they're shifting their focus from the ER to managing chronic illness and preventative care.

“We've estimated that an average visit to a mobile clinic costs the funder \$155, but saves 12 times that in terms of long-term benefits and avoided emergency department visits”.

Focusing on patient outcomes, quality of service and cost of operation, the Mobile Health Map states: “The average return on Investment for mobile health is 12:1. That means for every \$1 spent, \$12 are saved”. The mobile Health Map's formulas for calculating the ROI and avoidable ER visits of a Mobile Health Clinic are shown in the following tables:

Basic Algorithm*

$$\frac{\text{ER Cost Avoided + Value of Quality Life Years Saved}}{\text{Cost of Mobile Clinic}} = \text{RETURN ON INVESTMENT}$$

$(\$1,719,295 + \$18,219,022) \div \$565,700 = \35

* All data based on 2008 Family Van Data and values as calculated in accompanying Algorithm worksheet.

Calculating Avoidable ER Visits

$$\text{Total Visits} * \text{Percentage of visits expected to otherwise have resulted in an ER visit} = \text{No. of mobile health visits that prevent an ER visit (E)}$$

Conclusion

Mobile clinics play a critical role in providing high-quality, low-cost care to vulnerable populations. In the current environment, which is placing a renewed emphasis on increased accountability among state, federal and local communities to provide adequate health management to the overall population, more mobile clinic manufacturers are partnering with

hospitals, health systems and insurers to work toward improving healthcare and lowering costs.

About the Author

LifeLineMobile, Inc. manufactures some of the most rugged and patient-friendly mobile medical units for healthcare and laboratory services.

The company builds custom, high-quality, and unique mobile units that can be used for a variety of services, including primary care screening, cardiology, prenatal screening, blood collection

and donation, wellness screening, sportsphysicals, asthma testing, audiology, school-based dental programs, occupational health, vision screening, laboratory research, dental sealants, migrant worker health care, mammography, faith-based health outreach, community health, bone densitometry, and more.

The company was formerly known as Lifeline Shelter Systems Inc. and changed its name to LifeLine Mobile[®] in February, 2006. LifeLine Mobile was founded in 1987, and is based in Columbus, Ohio.

Sources:

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[Marketplace.org](#)

[Mobile Health Map](#)

[National Diagnostic Services](#)

[National Library of Medicine](#)

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[The American Journal of Managed Care](#)