

**GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING
SAFETY AND MINIMIZING RISK IN FIELD**

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1. Review written agency policies that address any potential work situations that entail risk including home visits; services in isolated or high crime areas; services at night or on weekends; services to clients with infectious disease as well as any required immunizations; working around special equipment or chemical; fires and other disasters; politically-sensitive services; etc. This

list is not exhaustive, and the agency is responsible for determining its own sources and levels of risks and taking reasonable precautions with these risks.

2. The agency should train all interns in the above policies and document that this has been completed.
3. Remember that according to the School-Agency agreement, students have both the right and responsibility to refuse any assignment that they deem too dangerous to pursue at the time. The Director of Field is available for consultation and problem-solving on such issues.
4. Do not have students seeing clients alone in the building. Be sure other personnel are nearby. Examine your office arrangements: Is your desk positioned so that you are "boxed in" and cannot get to the exit easily? Do you have sharp or other potentially dangerous objects lying around? If so, remove them and rearrange your furniture for the "worst scenario."
5. Familiarize students with your agency environment, especially all entrances and exits, evacuation routes, potentially dangerous areas. Health care settings should provide proof of orientation to the environment, particularly infection control policies.
6. Supervision should be provided consistently for at least one hour per week to ensure that students understand their tasks and the field instructor understands what the student is doing. Students should not be expected to fully represent the agency in making critical decisions about patient disposition with physical and legal implications, such as involuntary hospitalization, threats of suicide or homicide. If the field instructor is not available in such situations, there must be a written and understood protocol for notifying another worker or a psychiatrist on call or for getting the patient to an emergency facility that can meet their needs.
7. Students must be trained on confidentiality policies. Students **SHOULD NOT** be taking any identifying information on clients out of the agency, unless required for outreach centers and only with clear guidance on protection of records. Students should not complete agency paperwork outside of the agency.

PRECAUTIONS TO FOLLOW IN MAKING HOME VISITS

1. If students are required to make home visits, they must be trained on written policies and personally provided with an orientation to the neighborhoods they will be visiting. **Students must be accompanied by either the field instructor or another staff member for all home visits at all times.**
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3. Review the agency's written policies regarding home visits (as well as all other safety issues). A staff member familiar with the area should personally orient students.
2. Be familiar with the environment: entrances, exits, places to avoid. Beware of "looking lost", and project an image of knowing where you are going and what you are doing, even if you don't.

3. Observe how clients are dressed. Are they wearing coats, jackets, or other clothing that can conceal a weapon?
4. Park your car a few spaces down from the house as opposed to directly in front. If you have to exit quickly, do not give a pursuer the opportunity to catch up too soon. If it is unsafe to jump into your car, run to the nearest spot where there are people, activity and hopefully security.
5. Always be sure that you have enough gas in your car to get to and from where you are visiting.
6. Visit at high activity times, like 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. or 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. Also choose to visit at times when people known to be violent are out of the home.
7. Be aware of your own clothing that may misrepresent you. (Flashy jewelry, provocative clothing, "salesperson" look, etc.)
8. Ask clients to walk around their neighborhood or sit on their porch with you from time to time, so that others can see that you are there with the client's permission.
9. Answer questions about who you are and what you are doing, without violating confidentiality. The purpose is to demonstrate to neighbors that you are not a threat, being intrusive, or are unwelcomed.
10. Always let staff know where you are going and when you will be back.
11. Call clients to let them know to expect you at a certain time. Ask them to contact the agency if you are late.
12. When at the door of a home, listen before you knock. If sounds of any threatening situation are going on, leave immediately. Stand to one side of the door when you knock, not directly in front. Do not accept invitations such as "Is that you? Just come on in." Identify yourself and ask the occupant to come to the door to let you in.
13. Once inside, be alert and observant of your environment. Are there dangerous weapons lying about? Are there drugs being used in the house? Is someone drunk and physically acting out? In such cases, tell your primary client that you cannot remain and to reschedule or have them see you at the agency. Regardless, get out of the home.
14. If a client escalates, do not get physical when the interaction is verbal. See the tips below.

IF YOU ARE IN AN ESCALATION:

DIVERT --Switch attention to another subject, ask for a glass of water, change seats. Separate agitators.

DIFFUSE --Use soft voice, agree, focus on how the person feels she/he has been treated. Assure the person they are safe.

DELAY --Ask to postpone, get back-up, practice "strength in numbers".

LEAVE -- Get out any way you can. While none of us like to think of the possibility that any of the aforementioned will happen to us, it is much better to be safe than sorry. If students and/or the Field Instructors have questions or need further guidance on specific issues, they should contact their field liaison or the Office of Field Education immediately.