



Safety of Community Workers

Date approved:

Date Revised:

Date to be Reviewed:

PURPOSE: To ensure the health and well-being of staff and patients/clients/students and to minimize risk exposure.

POLICY: Any staff working in the field including, but not limited to outreach workers, educators, recruiters, health promoters, volunteers, drivers, etc. will observe safety procedures at all times.

PROCEDURE A: General Safety Precautions

1. Be trustworthy and professional.
 - a. Wear a name tag.
 - b. Wear a branded shirt or vest as much as possible
 - c. Dress appropriately: comfortably and professionally
 - d. Consider placing an organizational car magnet on your vehicle
2. Have your license, MEP ID, fully charged phone, and keys on you at all times
3. Be visible in the community.
4. Keep an open line of communication by:
 - a. Notifying your supervisor, family member, or friend where you are going, what route you are taking, and your estimated time of return.
 - b. Informing your supervisor, family member, or friend if you expect to return late.
 - c. Notifying your supervisor, family member, or friend when you have returned.
 - d. Develop a code word or phrase to use with your supervisor, family member, and friend if you are in trouble and need their assistance when you call them.

5. Absolutely do not distribute the personal phone numbers of your colleagues without their permission.
6. Carry a cell phone and program your speed dial to contact:
 - a. Your "In Case of Emergency contact" (ICE contact)
 - b. Your supervisor and/or alternative agency contact
 - c. 911 (or other local emergency number)
 - d. Local law enforcement
7. Memorize those emergency phone numbers
8. If you are a female employee, consider having a male record your outgoing message on your voicemail.
9. Always use seatbelts while driving.
10. Prepare your car with an all-weather emergency kit, including food, water, warm extra clothes and a flashlight. Make sure your car is in good working condition and that you have sufficient gas for the day.
11. Lock your vehicle at all times and keep your computer and other confidential work documents in the trunk of your car when not in use.
12. Consider carrying mace or pepper spray
13. Carry your GPS as well as county and/or city maps and study your route before leaving your house or your office.
14. Use the Buddy System when possible.
15. Know the population that you work with: be knowledgeable and respectful of cultural norms.
16. Pay attention to your own behavior as well as the behavior of those around you: be aware of non-verbal communication.
17. Be aware of your surroundings all the times.
18. To minimize risk, do not carry large amounts of money or other valuables. In the event that you are under threat of robbery, do not resist. Let them have what they want and leave the area as soon as possible. Be sure to notify your supervisor and local law officials
19. Be aware of dangerous animals (i.e. dogs) that can attack without warning.

20. Use common sense and pay attention to your instincts—if you perceive that something is not right...it probably is not. Leave the area.
21. If, at any time while working in the community, you identify imminent danger to yourself or to another person, call 911 and leave the area.
22. If you become aware of dangerous activities, excuse yourself and calmly leave the area. When it is safe, call your supervisor.
23. Take advantage of professional development opportunities related to safety such as self-defense courses, defensive driving, drug id, and safety trainings.
24. If you do a home visit, follow the protocol for “*Safety of Community Workers at Home Visits.*”
25. If you transport a patient/client/student, follow the “*Safety of Community Workers While Transporting Patients/Clients/Students*” protocol.
26. If you encounter emergencies or road blocks during your field work, follow the protocol for “*Safety of Community Workers during Emergencies and Road Blocks.*”

PROCEDURE B: Safety of Community Workers During Home Visits

1. Pre-schedule home visits and call to verify the individual will be present prior to leaving home
2. No home visits after dark unless pre-scheduled and accompanied by someone else.
3. At all possible times, park the car in a well-lit unobstructed area. Be aware of farm vehicle routes. Park the car in the direction you will be leaving to allow for a quick exit if necessary.
4. Whenever possible, notify farm employer or manager upon visiting worker housing.
5. Politely knock on the door and announce who you are, where you work, and why you are there.
6. Trust your instincts: Assess your feelings and thoughts as well as what the client may be thinking and feeling and leave if your instincts tell you to leave.
7. Never enter a house if there is yelling, screaming, smell of drug usage, breaking glass etc. coming from the home or if you notice fire arms.

8. When possible, conduct your business at the doorstep.
9. When you enter a home position yourself near the exit and have your keys and cell phone on you at all times.
10. Avoid sitting on upholstered couches or furniture as they may harbor infestations.
11. If you notice drugs or drug paraphernalia, do not confront suspected drug activity. Provide an unassociated reason for leaving and leave.
12. Be respectful.
13. Be aware of cultural norms and non-verbal communication, especially those related to interacting with the opposite gender.
14. Set behavioral limits through your dress, attitude, and language. Identify how and when communication should occur.
15. Avoid providing personal information—such as address and personal phone number. Provide your work contact information for follow-up.
16. If you feel threatened at any time during a home visit, excuse yourself, immediately leave the area, and notify your supervisor.
17. Report incidents that occur not only to your supervisor but also by completing an “Incident Report.”

PROCEDURE C: Safety of Community Workers When Transporting Patients and/or Students

1. Comply with “*Safety of Community Workers Protocol.*”
2. Often while working in the community, staff may encounter clients in desperate need of transportation. Although it is very tempting to help, be aware that, in addition to the inherent risk of driving, transporting patients adds additional risk. Therefore, before you offer to transport patients, be sure to ask yourself:
 - a. Is this a medical emergency? (if yes, call 911 or local emergency #)
 - b. Is this a function in my job description?
 - c. Do I need to call my supervisor for authorization?
3. If this is part of your job or if you obtained authorization to transport patients be sure to:
 - a. Carry a valid driver license, car registration and insurance.
 - b. Make sure that you have enough gas, that your car is in good working condition, and all car lights work.
 - c. Know and obey your state driving laws.
 - d. Know your rights and those of your patients.
 - e. Always use seatbelts and demand that your passengers use them.
 - f. Comply with car seat requirements.
 - g. Carry an all-weather emergency kit, including food and water.
 - h. Always notify someone where you are going, with whom, and the expected time of arrival.
 - i. Carry a fully charged cell phone with pre-programmed emergency numbers.
 - j. In the event of an accident or if you encounter road blocks with physical or human barriers, follow the protocol “*Safety of Community Workers during Emergencies and Road Blocks.*”

Supervisor Approval _____
Date _____

