

Maintaining Personal Safety

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidance to staff in keeping themselves safe on the job. Under all circumstances, staff is expected to place their own safety first and to follow their best judgment, referring to this protocol and using available supervisory support whenever possible.

Personal Safety Planning

New staff will receive information on maintaining personal safety during new staff orientation completed by the Family Services Specialist. Staff safety will be discussed at the first center staff meeting each program year.

Safety at the Office

Staff should not knowingly schedule an office visit which would place oneself or others at any substantial risk. Center staff will develop a safety plan to implement in a volatile situation.

Safety on home visits or during groups

Prior to a home visit or group, staff members should routinely assess the risk of harm to themselves and others. Staff should ask about safety factors (e.g. dogs, guns, any restraining orders, etc.) and may ask to meet the prospective participant in a public place. Staff may team for initial recruitment or home visits. Any concerns should be shared with a supervisor or other designee.

- Staff should be especially aware of any volatile family situations that would place them at risk of being caught in the middle, for instance, illegal activity, a custody dispute, spousal abuse or child abuse
- In situations which personal safety is an issue, staff may offer to do “home” visits in a public place if this will assure safety

Staff is urged in all circumstances to place their own safety first and to err on the side of caution. They are urged not to worry about being tactful or about protecting anyone but themselves in violent or frightening situations.

Tracking staff whereabouts

In order to know where staff is so that they may be contacted or helped in an emergency, each center will create a system of signing out and maintain emergency contact information on each staff at the center. **Staff is responsible for keeping this information updated.** The agency will make a cell phone available at each site for staff to take on home visits. Staff will keep the phone charged and maintained. The number will be available at the center to use for emergency contact.

General Guidelines

- A staff member going on a home visit must inform center staff of his or her destination and time of expected return.
- If a staff member is not going to be in the office at the start of the work day, he or she should notify staff the night before or call in to inform the center staff of his/her whereabouts and expected time of return.
- If a staff member will not be back at the scheduled time, he or she should notify the staff of the center as soon as possible.
- If the staff member has signed out indicating where he or she will be, is not back at the time indicated, and does not notify the center, attempts will be made to contact him/her. If not successful, staff will notify the Center Director or designated back up. A report will be made to the appropriate police agency if further efforts to contact the employee are unsuccessful. The management team member who is making this report is responsible for making sure that appropriate follow-up is completed or delegated.
- If a staff member has safety concerns prior to a visit, he or she should express these concerns to their supervisor as soon as they become apparent.
- A staff member with safety concerns may ask someone to accompany them if that will help assure safety; plan to meet at the center or other public place; or make other appropriate arrangements to provide necessary services.
- Staff members should immediately inform their supervisor or designee about crises/emergencies.
- Please note that all staff is expected to respond to immediate emergencies before consulting with the supervisor by contacting the appropriate authorities, and by doing whatever they can to prevent injury to self and others.