

GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING PERSONAL SAFETY WHEN MAKING HOME VISITS

- The areas where EHS specialists conduct home visits are diverse, so safety issues will vary. The following basic safety guidelines and precautions apply:
- **Use common sense and trust your judgment.**
- If you discover that a family member is ill with a communicable disease or contagious condition that could be spread, you should not enter the home. Reschedule the visit for a later date.
- Make sure your car is in good working condition.
- Determine a way to park, such as in the street, so you can drive away easily when you are leaving.
- Know where your car keys are and have them handy.
- Take only what you need into the house.
- Dogs: Do not go in the yard/house if you sense they may attack. Have parent accompany you into the home and escort you back to your car when the visit is over if they have a pet that concerns you.
- If at any time you feel frightened during the visit, assess the immediate situation and leave if you consider yourself in danger. Be observant of the environment and individual behaviors. Examples of situations that require leaving include violence in the home, drug use and drug dealing, and the presence of an intoxicated or out-of-control person. Know where the phone is located in the home. Note if there are objects around that are harmful such as rifles, hand guns, and knives. Avoid any kind of conflict. If you smell strange odors before entering or while in the house, LEAVE. In these situations, excuse yourself; explain to the parent that you can not stay, and that you will be contacting them soon to arrange another time for the Home Visit. Discuss the incident with your site supervisor.
- For a family known to have any of these factors, you must meet with your supervisor to determine an appropriate plan of services, there may be a need for an alternate home visit location (see *Home Visit Guidelines: Alternate Locations for Home Visits*).
- Carry a cell phone. Ask your supervisor for the center cell phone if needed. If there isn't phone service in the location of the home visit, discuss ways to maintain contact with your supervisor.
- Specialists must provide their supervisor with their weekly home visit schedule. The schedule must include; each families names, dates, time of visit, and expected time of return. In supervisor's absence, schedules will be made available to the center contact person. Staff will refer to this schedule and emergency information to confirm home visit location when needed.

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- Write the first name of the child or prenatal mother in the destination log when you are going on a home visit. If not returning to center at the end of the day, you must call center and report that you are ending your work day. This is recorded in the Documentation Log at the center by person answering.
- An additional safety measure is the recognizable EHS magnetic sign for staff and their vehicle. The sign identifies that EHS is a support program visiting the home and law enforcement are able to quickly identify the location of EHS staff.
- Again, use common sense and trust your judgments. Try to prevent dangerous situations from developing. Share your concerns with your supervisor and discuss your awareness of the conditions under which you are home visiting.
- The Mental Health Staffing meetings are an ongoing times to discuss your home visiting safety, and concerns.

Guidelines developed from the following resources:

1. Head Start Home Visit Handbook
2. Identify Safety Procedures When Making Home Visits – Family Services Guidelines.
3. Home Visiting, by Carol S. Klass