



## Field Placement Safety Checklist

### Organizational Culture

- Does the agency have written safety policies? If so, obtain a copy and read them. Does the agency have a safety committee? Does this committee assess current safety measures and policies and identify gaps in protocols/procedures?
- Does the agency have an incident reporting system? Does the agency collect and track data about assaults, threats, and abuse towards staff?
- Learn the policies and reporting procedures related to sexual or other harassment in the workplace.

### Office Safety

- Determine how to safely enter and leave the building (entrances and exits), including after dark. Is a key or access code required to enter the building or employee workspaces? Are there security cameras inside or outside the building?
- Know the office procedures for checking in and out of the office.
- Learn what to do and where to go in case of a fire. Locate the closest fire extinguisher. Learn where emergency numbers are posted (police, fire department, and poison control). Is there an office alarm system or code words for staff to alert others to their need for assistance? Are personal or mobile safety devices available (personal alert systems or panic buttons) available?
- Know procedures for handling blood-related incidents (bloody noses, etc.).
- Know where safety equipment (first aid kits, latex gloves, defibrillator, PPE, etc.) is located.

### Home/Community Visits with Clients (if applicable)

- Know the agency's policy regarding notification to office staff of your whereabouts and contact information when conducting field home visits.
- Ensure that your car, or the agency's car, is ready for use (ample gas, in good working condition, maps or GPS available). Does your car have a health bag (latex gloves, masks, bandages, etc.)?
- Carry a charged cell phone and familiarize yourself with the limitations of cell phone service in the areas where you may be traveling. Know how to use any agency-provided cell phone.
- Know the agency policy regarding identification badges (can work for or against you in the community; be aware of the confidentiality issues, also). Carry some kind of agency identification card with you at all times.
- Find out the agency policies and practice regarding meeting clients away from their home (i.e. nearest park, at a restaurant, etc.).



- Dress for safety:** Wear comfortable clothes and flat shoes that are easy to walk in. Consider not wearing expensive jewelry, political buttons, slogans, etc.
- Before visiting a client in their home/neighborhood for the first time, find out who in the office can provide information about the safety of the specific neighborhood and/or the client's living situation (rural areas, presence of guard dogs, dangerous or criminal activities, weapons in the home, etc.).
- Before making a home visit where you may engage in higher-risk activities, determine a safety plan with your supervisor (i.e., removing a child from the home, notifying of a reduction in benefits, any civil commitment procedure, helping someone who is unsafe because of interpersonal violence move/access a shelter or safe house, delivering other potentially unwelcome information, etc.).
- Before making a home visit where there is potentially an increased risk due to a client's condition (active substance abuse, untreated mental illness, history of recent and/or frequent violence or threatening behavior, communicable disease), determine a safety plan with your supervisor.
- If you feel you are in a dangerous situation or place, leave and return to the office. Discuss your concerns with your supervisor.

### **Transporting Clients**

- Assess the client's level of agitation (if any), use of intoxicants, and the meaning of the appointment to the client.
- Ensure the vehicle's interior is free from potential weapons and that the vehicle is in good working condition (e.g., ample gas, working brakes, headlights/taillights).
- Is the vehicle equipped with proper safety equipment in case of an emergency (e.g., flares, battery cables, spare tire)?
- When transporting a child, engage the child safety locks in the vehicle and know the proper use and installation of a child safety seat that is appropriate for the child's age and size. If possible, utilize a "buddy system" to have a second colleague in the vehicle when transporting a client.

### **Post-Incident Reporting & Response**

- Learn how to report a personal injury that may occur in the office or the field. Learn the process for completing an incident report following an incident of client assault, threats, or abuse (verbal and physical) or vehicular accident.



- Develop a safety plan with your supervisor and the agency in response to the incident.

### **Safety Training**

- Does the agency provide an orientation or training to staff for risk reduction and safety promotion? Does the agency provide training related to verbal de-escalation techniques, effective strategies for clinical interventions with violent or potentially violent clients, non-violent self-defense, and the impact of secondary trauma?