

Safety Best Practices for Home Visitors

Due to the unique nature of home visiting, home visitors must do their best to protect their safety. Each home visiting agency will have its own specific safety policies and procedures that home visitors should follow. Here are some additional tips to maintain your safety at work:

Preparing for a Visit

- Thoroughly review intake information to screen for possible safety concerns, including a history of domestic violence or substance abuse.
- Before visiting a new family, drive by the home and locate safe spots in the neighborhood (police or fire stations, restaurants or shopping centers), as well as a safe parking location.
- Call the family and ask them to restrain pets and find out who will be in the home during the visit. Ask for information about how to identify and best reach their home.
- Schedule visits early in the day and/or during daylight, whenever possible. Keep an updated schedule easily available to supervisors.
- Organize your materials in advance. Bring materials in a clear, sealable plastic box or bag to avoid contamination at the home.
- Review emergency procedures with your supervisor so you know what to do in an emergency.

During a Visit

- Do not wear or bring valuables on a visit. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that allow you to move easily. Avoid wearing known gang colors. Avoid wearing necklaces or scarves that could potentially be grabbed.
- Carry or wear identification. Consider carrying a whistle or noisemaker.
- Carry your phone on your person. Keep it charged and programmed with emergency numbers (supervisor, police, child protection, roadside assistance, etc.).
- Set your phone to vibrate during visits. If you feel threatened you can pretend you feel it vibrate and use the call as an excuse to leave the home or send a message to your supervisor.
- Park in a well-lit, easily accessible location. Back into parking spaces, if possible.
- Pay attention to your environment as you walk to and from your visit. Do not make phone calls or get distracted. Note any strange noises or smells that may indicate fights or drug use.
- If strangers or animals are present outside a home, do not enter. Do not enter a home unless you see the participant from the doorway. Check for exits and any visible dangers (drug paraphernalia, strangers, weapons).
- Sit close to an exit, facing the door. If possible, sit in a hard-backed chair for easy exit.
- Do not touch or pet animals. Do not accept food or drink.
- Do not reveal too much personal information about yourself or your family.
- Use only your first name and do not share your personal contact information or interact with participants on social media.

After a Visit

- Check your car and the area around it before entering. Lock your doors immediately after entry.
- Make sure your car is in good condition and has enough gas. Keep a flash light, and first aid kit in your car. During winter, carry an ice scraper and lock de-icer.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after each visit.