



SAFETY TRAINING FOR STUDENT INTERNS



FIELD EDUCATION TEAM



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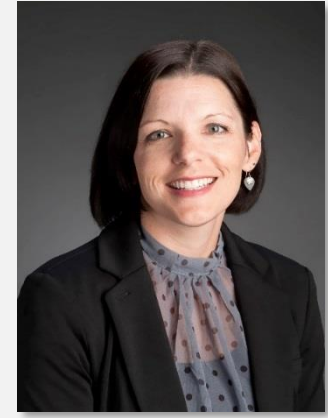
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LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN WELFARE

As social workers (and social work interns), we are often so focused on our clients that sometimes we neglect our own personal welfare.

- We are sometimes sent to work with clients in neighborhoods that make the evening news.
- We often work with individuals who are at their most vulnerable.

Unfortunately, there is no specific solution to providing social workers' guaranteed safety.

- However, there are essential safety measures you can take to protect yourself in your field placement.

PERSONAL SAFETY

BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

- While we should always work with our clients' strengths, it is important to balance our optimistic outlook with practicality.
- Social Workers work with individuals who may have impairments.
 - Issues ranging from mental illness, substance abuse, and/or intellectual disabilities may prevent individuals from being able to appropriately assess situations and may contribute to acting out or aggressive behaviors.
 - Even if the individuals are not impaired, they may be unhappy that the agency is involved in their lives. (Think Child Protective Services)
- Interns may also be working with these individuals.
- The risk of violence is real and can occur no matter the economic, social, gender, or racial make up of a community.
- It is a mistake to not be aware of your surroundings.



BASIC RULES

- **Be aware that clients may be highly emotional, impaired, and/or have poor impulse control.**
- Do not allow yourself to be cut off from an escape by clients.
 - Don't let a client get between you and the door.
- Keep your valuables safe (cell phones, keys, money, credit cards, etc.).
- Be aware of your social media accounts (phone numbers, email, etc.)
 - Do not put your personal information “out there” for everyone to see.

BASIC RULES: WORKING IN AN OFFICE

Assure you have access to the following:

- Alarm systems that can alert others to safety risk
- Open meeting spaces or having another staff member present when meeting a client that may become aggressive
- Secure entry and exit
- Well lit hallways
- Limit access to objects that may be used as weapons (paper weights, scissors, letter openers, etc.)

BASIC RULES: WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

All of the basics still apply, but working in the community with clients will have a different feel and safety requirements than working with clients in an office setting.

- Before you go, think through the following:
 - Schedule the visit during less “risky” times of day.
 - Watch for weather conditions.
 - Check to see if any events have happened in the community in the past 48 hours, such as a robbery.
 - Is there reduced cell reception?
 - Will identifying your agency increase risk? If so, remove any identifiers, such as your name badge.
 - Is the client known to engage in criminal/dangerous activities?
 - Is your vehicle in good repair? Is the gas tank full?
 - Do you know where you are going?
 - Avoid appearing lost or confused – always appear confident (even if you’re not).
 - Is there an increased risk of infection or pests, such as illness, lice, or bed bugs?
 - There are precautions you can take against these things – be prepared!

ALWAYS BE IN THE
K.N.O.W

- Know the Population
- Notify Supervisors of your location
- Observe and asses the situation
- Wear a Noise making devise

KNOW YOUR POPULATION

- Find out about the population your agency works with.
 - Discuss personal history, such as gang association and history of violence.
 - Do they have a history of alcohol or substance abuse?
 - Should you keep door open when meeting with them?
 - Should you meet in a public place?
- Many agencies have specific training related to the populations they serve.
 - For example: hospitals and nursing homes will have additional training on biomedical safety protocol that students will have to attend.
- Lastly, *if there is immediate danger or the availability of a weapon, remove yourself from the situation and alert the appropriate authorities **IMMEDIATELY!***

NOTIFY OTHERS OF YOUR LOCATION

If you travel outside of the office....

- Make sure your supervisor always knows where you are going and who you are going to see.
- When parking, do not park in a driveway. You may get blocked in.
 - Always park facing out and away in case you need to leave in a hurry.
- Keep your cell with you (on silent) and fully charged.

OBSERVE AND ASSESS THE SITUATION

- Interns should evaluate the risks and avoid exposing themselves to danger at all times.
- After completing an assessment of the situation, do not hesitate to follow your agency's procedure for reporting an incident.
- Ask yourself:
 - Are there people hanging around who are not normally there?
 - Are there any weapons present?
 - Are there animals present?

WEAR A NOISE MAKER

- Wear a whistle or other noise making device on your wrist or keychain.
- Make a lot of noise!
- Keep you phone & keys with you.
 - A portfolio is a good place to keep phone and keys (at your reach but out of sight).
- The best safety policy and procedure is the safety policy and procedure that's observed and used!



“Ever been mugged? I was, it was more than twenty years ago, and I'm still traumatized. It seems every day I watch women walking from a store to their car, eyes glued to their phone, purse dangling on their shoulder. **Wake up!!**”

“Put your phone away. **Stop looking like an easy score. Keep your head up, look around, watch what's going on.** The bad guys are looking for an easy target. Don't be one.”

- M. Bergan -



FINAL THOUGHTS

- Safety is #1 - If you are not safe, you cannot do your job.
- Always talk to your supervisor if you have any concerns about safety.
- Notify your Faculty Field Liaison as well so that they are aware of the situation.
- Your Faculty Field Liaison may also contact the Director of Field so the Field Education Team knows what is going on as well.

REFERENCES

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