



SAFETY TRAINING FOR STUDENT INTERNS



FIELD EDUCATION TEAM



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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 medical issues, 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 safety concerns 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
- Knowledge of agency policies regarding emergency protocol
 - Such as: fire, tornado, earthquake, snow, violence, etc.
- Limit access to objects that may be used as weapons
 - Such as: paper weights, scissors, letter openers, etc.

BASIC RULES: WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

All the basics still apply, but working in the community has a different feel & safety requirements than 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 phone 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!

BASIC RULES: YOUR HEALTH

General Guidelines

- Monitor your health
- Cover coughs and sneezes with elbow or tissue
- Don't touch your face
- Disinfect often (your office, desk, car, etc.)
- Practice good hand hygiene

Pests (lice, bed bugs, fleas, ticks, etc.)

- Avoid head-to-head contact, including the sharing of clothing, hair ribbons, combs, or towels
- Avoid contact with soft surfaces, such as beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals
- Do not bring in and sit anything down that is cloth, such as a purse or bag

Respiratory Illness

- Avoid close contact, use social distancing
- Use a mask/facial covering

What if I become Infected?

- Distance yourself from others (work, school, internship, etc.) to prevent spread
- Inform your agency and instructor right away
- Seek medical attention

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 the 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 phone 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.

Complete Your Field Safety To Do List!!!

FIELD SAFETY TO DOS



Review: Field Safety Training Slides



Review: Student Emergency Event Guide
(Your Agency Supervisor will receive a similar guide)



Return: Practicum Waiver to the Social Work Office

Question or Concerns?

Come see us! 😊

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

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