

EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START

HOME SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT RESPONSE AND HOME VISITING GUIDELINES POLICY

Policy Number: AD1513	Effective Date: 6/1/15	Policy Council Approval Date: 5/26/15
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Performance Objective: Early Head Start and Head Start will provide a workplace culture and encourage work practices that prioritize staff safety at all times.

Operational Procedures: Staff will be trained within their first 90 days and annually on safe home visiting practices and will follow guidelines in order to ensure their well-being while making home visits for the program. Based on the results of the “Home Safety Risk Assessment”, a safety plan will be developed between staff and supervisor depending on the available information.

If the Home Safety Risk Assessment results reveal:

High/extreme risk The supervisor and employee should consider no home visits or alternate arrangements for the visits. **A contact note will be written regarding the safety plan and attached to the “Home Safety Risk Assessment”.**

Medium/significant risk The supervisor and employee should consider;

- a) Two staff visit the participant until further assessments demonstrate otherwise
- b) Home visits only being conducted during business hours
- c) Staff is required to check in and out with supervisor or co-worker before and after visits

A contact note will be written regarding the safety plan and attached to the “Home Safety Risk Assessment”.

Low Risk Staff may visit participant with no restrictions, but should always conduct a “Mini Risk Assessment” at each home visit. Staff should be provided protective equipment as needed, such as dog repellent, bull horn, etc.

General Home Visit Safety Guidelines:

When conducting first time home visits, employees must take the following steps:

For new participants and/or applicants

- a. The first contact with participants/applicants must be made during regular office hours unless it is being made at the office or other public area
- b. Employees may choose to consult local police departments, use the online resource: case.net, and/or consult other professionals working with the participant/applicant in order to obtain background information
- c. At enrollment participants and/or parents must sign any applicable Standards of Conduct forms agreeing to safety provisions required by the program

For all home visits:

The Home Visitor should always perform a “Mini Risk Assessment” before and during a home visit.

A “Mini Risk Assessment” should consider:

- a. Who is currently in the home?
- b. Are program Standards of Conduct being adhered to by participant and others in the home?
- c. Do individuals in the home appear to be mentally unwell, agitated or distressed?

Prior to and upon arrival for home visit

- Ensure you have your employee ID with you at all times.
- Ensure you have a charged and functional cell phone. Keep your keys and mobile phone on you.
- Park on the street in a well-lit area where you cannot be blocked in or obstructed
- Do not enter the home if you can hear people arguing at the premises, if you see people using alcohol or drugs at the premises, there are visible weapons, or if you feel threatened.
- If you become concerned for your safety or are threatened with physical harm upon arrival for a participant visit you should:
 - Leave immediately
 - Drive to a safe location and then contact your supervisor, or if urgent, the police
 - If necessary, proceed to the nearest police station.
- Be cautious when entering the home
- If an unfamiliar person opens the door, make sure the participant is home and that you feel safe before entering (it may be necessary to abandon the visit if you have any concerns)
- Conduct “Mini Risk Assessment”
- Be aware of the house layout and exit routes

During a home visit:

Never attempt to physically stop violent behavior or get involved in arguments

- If there is an identified safety risk due to aggression leave immediately
- Take note of all possible hazards and report them when you return to the office
- If a medical emergency arises while you are on a home visit, call 911 and wait for help if it is safe to do so.

If an incident occurs:

- If there is concern for the welfare of yourself, the participant or others, immediately contact the police and/or ambulance and your supervisor, once the threat is no longer imminent.
- Follow agency policy regarding need for medical treatment for yourself
- Contact local mental health crisis line for participant or others, if needed
- Offer the services of the mental health consultant to participant or family involved, when appropriate
- Ensure that any such incident is reported to management within 24 hours

If a co-worker or staff member receives a call from an employee at risk:

- Check/Obtain the address, ask the nature of the crisis and ask what is needed
- If necessary notify police and then supervisor

After a Home Visit

- Request debriefing, support and/or ongoing mental health counseling, if needed
- Report any incidents, concerns, or significant observations to your supervisor
- Document any incidents, concerns, or significant observations on a contact note
- Consider call to Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline, if indicated