



Stony Brook

School of Social Welfare

Office of Practicum Education

Safety Tips in Placement For Students

Safety is a topic that must be addressed and continuously incorporated into the supervision and practice process.. Safety has various aspects: self-care, emotional and physical safety, safety in the work with clients, and safety during home and community visits. Safety discussions and agency protocols should begin during orientation and continue throughout the year.

Consider:

Self-Care

- Create a self-care plan (exercise, nutrition, socialization, boundaries, etc.).
- Discuss concerns about work at the end of the day with the assigned Instructor and/or task supervisor.
- Learn agency safety training information.

COVID-19 Management

It is important for students to be aware of the agency's protocols for management of any type of emergency that could occur while the student is working remotely with a client. Students should process these questions with the agency:

- What do I do if I'm symptomatic?
- Who do I contact if concerned about my health?
- Who do I contact if someone violates agency policy around COVID-19 safety protocols?
- How are agencies informing students of safety measures>

Home Visit Safety:

- First, be aware of the agency's policies around preparing for and conducting home visits and ask for guidance when needed.
- Be aware that violence during visits is not a common occurrence but it is important to remain prepared even if the client doesn't have a history of violence.
- Engage clients with respect and compassion.
- Walk confidently into the home.
- Stay calm and remain professional at all times. Deep breaths help before entering a home.
- Prepare before leaving the office and be aware of all safety concerns there are about the clients.
- Respect the client's space and property.
- Show concern about the client and the client's situation.
- Get to know the police officers in the neighborhoods frequented.
- Keep a detailed calendar with addresses, names and phone numbers and file numbers at the office. Keep a copy in the car and leave a copy with the Instructor.
- Prepare the client for arrival time and ask who will be home at the time of the visit; this

includes pets. Prior to home visits ask if there are any weapons in the home.

- Always check the surrounding area, drive around the neighborhood to know how to get out quickly if needed, observe the atmosphere of people in close vicinity to where the visit is, make sure there is enough gas and the car is facing the direction to exit.
- Avoid wearing jewelry or expensive items to any visit. This can be seen in a variety of ways and avoiding this is a good idea.
- Look at the size, number and kinds of shoes sitting by the door or around the apartment to get a sense of who is in the house.
- When knocking on the door, stand to the side of the door and have the agency ID readily available. Listen for yelling and fighting while at the door.
- Consider keeping hand sanitizer, wipes, antibacterial soap/lotion handy.
- If a safety issue arises, find something to agree about with a client, instead of escalating a situation and then leave.
- Always wait to be invited to sit and sit in a straight-backed chair close to an exit. Remain alert and observant at all times.
- Be mindful that entering a clients home can be an anxiety provoking event. There may be an agenda during a visit and deadlines that need to be met but be mindful that no one knows the client's story better than the client. The best way to help clients feel comfortable and respected is to give them time to speak.
- Set firm limits in a compassionate, respectful manner without judgment. Use specific behavioral language.
- If verbal redirection does not work, move to limit reactions in a firm but flexible manner, offering choices when possible.
- Following a visit do a debriefing with the Instructor and all involved staff.

De-escalation Techniques - Suggestions to offer students:

- Use observational data to recognize the signs of escalation (client posture, eye contact, facial expressions, physical gestures, muscle tone, voice and speech patterns, etc.).
- Call for backup assistance (supervisor or another clinician) when possible for direct assistance or to simply stand back and observe discreetly.
- Choose the safest possible location to talk to the client. Consider moving other clients out of the waiting area, step just outside the front door. Get assistance as needed.
- Use personal own body language (keeping a relaxed and empathetic stance, reasonable distance, lowered voice with slow speech, friendly and confident) to cue the client's body language toward calming down and self-control.
- Identify what the client's immediate goal is at the time.
- Express a desire to help without making promises that can't be kept.
- Avoid questions, statements, or information that may imply the client is to blame.

Community Safety - Help students think about these things:

- Know the agency's policies and procedures for safety in the community.
- Make sure the car has gas, is well maintained and has a local map available.
- Park cars facing the exit direction.
- Drive around the community prior to parking, taking note of key places - grocery stores, community centers and people.
- Carry a charged cell phone and store emergency numbers.
- Always leave a destination/daily planner in the office with contact numbers attached.
- Carry an emergency health bag in the car (latex gloves, first aid kit).

Agency Safety - Students should know:

- The safety related policies and procedures for the agency.

- The policies and reporting procedures related to sexual harassment at the agency.
- How to enter and leave the building safely (including before/after business hours).
- The check-in and check-out procedures.
- Any internal code for signaling the need for help.
- If it is acceptable to work with clients with the doors open.
- If staff and students ever physically hold a client, under what conditions, and what training is required.
- Procedures for handling blood related incidents.
- Where the nearest fire extinguisher, stairway, and exit is located.
- What to do and where to go in case of a fire, loss of electricity, natural disasters, including hurricane or tornado.
- What to do if another staff person or intern creates an unsafe or uncomfortable environment.
- Where emergency numbers are posted (police, fire department, poison control).
- The process for reporting injury at the agency.
- How to de-escalate angry clients.
- The agency policy in regards to clients who are under the influence of alcohol or substances.
- How to safely arrange office furniture.
- How to use building security.
- How to use the phone to access help.
- How to and use supervision in regard to safety issues.
- What to do and how to document when clients make threats towards others.
- Who to contact at the agency when there is an incident or threat.
- When to inform the Instructor of an incident.
- What the procedure is if there is a suspicion that someone has a weapon.
- Where to store personal items.

Safety Checklist

		Date
1.	Received and reviewed the Agency Program Manual.	
2.	Received and reviewed all safety protocols for the agency.	
3.	Reviewed agency policy on dealing with difficult situations.	
4.	Reviewed agency de-escalation techniques to use with clients.	
	a. Reviewed SBU SSW Safety Tips on De-Escalating Techniques with the agency.	
5.	Reviewed agency policy and procedures for remaining safe in the community.	
	a. Reviewed SBU SSW Safety Tips on Community Safety with the agency.	
6.	Reviewed agency policy and procedures on how to remain safe during home visits.	
	a. Reviewed SBU SSW Safety Tips on Home Visit Safety with the agency.	
7.	Reviewed agency policy and procedures on safety within the agency.	
	a. Reviewed SBU SSW Safety Tips on Agency Safety with the agency.	
8.	Reviewed agency policy and procedures regarding COVID-19.	

****Students should review this checklist with the Instructor during the first supervision.***