Safety is as simple as ABC – Always Be Careful.” ~Author Unknown

Observing your surroundings and the people you are talking to – this is how we assess the safety of the children and the needs of their families.

But you can also use your skill as an observer to identify potential safety risks.

**PLAN FOR THE VISIT:**

* If possible, schedule visits during daytime hours.
* Carry a whistle on your keychain or carry a car alarm activator when in range of your vehicle.
* Notify your office of your destination; provide them with the name, address, telephone number, time of visit, & reason for the visit.
* Notify your family you are coming and remind them of the purpose of the visit.
* Obtain specific directions.
* Bring a well charged cell phone with preprogrammed crisis numbers.
* Do not leave valuables (laptops, wallet, backpacks, etc.) where they are visible in your car.
* Dress appropriately and professionally, wearing clothes and shoes that provide freedom of movement; avoid jewelry.
* Be aware of your personal needs, limitations, vulnerabilities, etc. (i.e. asthma), be aware of what may trigger them (i.e. cigarette smoke, toxins, mold), and be prepared.
* At the program/team level: Be aware of and share information about areas with known safety risks; discuss prevention and safety measures; discuss resources and trainings related to safety; collaborate to go out in teams to unsafe areas.

**TRAVELING TO THE SITE:**

* Visually check the area when you arrive - observe the premises for suspicious activity.
* Do not leave your car unless you can walk into the building safely. If you are feeling unsafe in the neighborhood, have a family member meet you at your car and then escort you back at end of visit.
* Listen to your body language, if you feel unsafe at any time, LEAVE.
* Knock and use doorbell. Do not walk into the house unannounced.
* Give your eyes a chance to adjust to light prior to entering the building.

**DURING THE VISIT:**

* Visually check other people who are present during visit (Is anyone under the influence?).
* Assess person’s emotional state.
* Always wait to be invited to sit. Position yourself during visits so you feel comfortable and safe.
* Be aware of all exits in the house. Avoid positioning yourself so that you become trapped if you needed to make quick exit.
* If there are dogs in house, ask the client to remove them (you can state you have allergies if you need to give a reason).
* Ask the client to turn the TV off, (for example saying, “I want to be able to hear you.”).
* Restate the goal of the visit and maintain a respectful and courteous attitude.
* Respect the individual’s personal space (maintain an appropriate distance).

**You should not remain in the home if any of the following conditions exist:**

* Client or parent is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.
* There is evidence of current active violent domestic dispute in the home.
* Actual violence is exhibited toward the worker.
* An actual threat is made against the worker.
* The client states the worker is not welcome in the home.
* Any sexual threats or advances are made toward the worker.

**When visiting a home in the community staff should leave immediately** if they feel there is an imminent danger to themselves or anyone in the home. After leaving the home staff should immediately call 911. If there are concerns about the safety of a child in the home, the local Department of Children and Families (DCF) should be notified. Staff should also contact their supervisor to discuss the situation and develop a plan of action. Upon return to the office, staff should ‘debrief’ with their supervisor regarding what was observed during the visit.

* As always Department of Developmental Services Autism Clinical Manager should be notified about the safety of a child in the home.