

HOME VISIT AND LONE WORKING POLICY

PURPOSE:

This policy highlights areas of potential risk and ways of minimizing this risk when visiting people in their own homes, and other settings as a lone worker. Personal safety must be the priority for everyone. This policy is a good practice guide to help manage potential risk.

BEFORE YOU GO:

- Only initiate contact with an individual with their full knowledge and permission.
- Call the patient prior to your scheduled shift so that people will have advance notice of your visit.
- You should be clear about why you are going and the limit of your helping relationship.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING RISK:

- Make the first contact by phone and ascertain as much information as possible during this contact. Find out if the person is likely to have other people in the house, and who they are.
- Visiting in pairs is best practice. If you do not have the luxury of taking a second person with you each time but there are any doubts in your mind, then let the office staff know so they can have someone meet you during your shift.
- Always carry an ID card if you have been given one. If not then take some form of identity linking you to Care at Home Delaware (a business card, brochure).
- Let someone know where you are going and when to expect you back.
- Keep your mobile on.
- Arrange a time to telephone the person you have told at the end of the visit. This can be done by sending a standard mobile text message after the visit.
- Try to be punctual. Delay or early arrival (even by a few minutes) can be upsetting to the person you are visiting. If you are unavoidably delayed, please call/text them or the Care at Home office staff and explain the reason for your delay and give an approximate time of arrival.

DURING HOME VISITS:

- Effective communication can greatly reduce the risk of aggressive, or potentially violent, situations developing.
- Be aware of tone of voice and body language, cultural issues and sensitivities.
- If necessary, ask the client to turn off the TV or radio as they can be a distraction. Ask the client how they would like to be addressed.
- Remind the client that everything they tell you will be treated in confidence.

PRECAUTIONS:

- While acknowledging that some visits cannot be planned and will happen spontaneously it is important to take care always take some basic precautions.

- Always try and park in a well-lit area and facing the way you need to leave. •
- Do not enter the property if you feel unsure or uncomfortable with the situation.
- Always be prepared to leave immediately. Do not take off your coat or unpack any papers until you feel comfortable in the situation.
- Ask for any dogs or other pets to be secured where appropriate (a dog could be used in conversation to defuse an aggressive person; it could also attack you if the owner were to become aggressive)
- As you enter, ask the person to lead the way so you are behind them, not the other way round.
- If possible, sit so you have a clear exit to the door and the client is not between you and it.
- If the person is confined to bed either regularly or temporarily then remember to knock & wait before entering the bedroom. Sit on a chair not on the bed and leave the door ajar.
- Find out if anyone else is in the property and what their relationship is to the client. If applicable, ask the client if they have given their permission for the third party to attend the meeting.
- Never give or accept money or gifts of any kind from the client.
- Some vulnerable people will be very eager to please a visitor and may feel obliged to give a gift and some may have poor memory so that they may not remember that the 'gift' they are offering is a valuable piece that their daughter is expecting to get in the future.
- Record visits in a notebook – date, times, people present, any concerns to pass on etc. This is especially important if you think there may be safeguarding issues present but is also good practice generally.
- Explain clearly when you are leaving and when you will return.

How to Stay Safe During Home Visits Tips

1. **Stay in touch.** Set up a call-in procedure with your office.
2. **Keep valuables out of sight.** Carry as little as possible. It is best to put valuables in the trunk before you leave on an appointment so as not to advertise what you have and where you put it.
3. **Know exactly where you are going.** If you have never been in a certain location, drive around the area first. This helps you familiarize yourself with alternative routes if you need them for safety. It also gives you advance knowledge of areas that could pose more risk than others.
4. **Keep a buffer zone.** It is best to leave at least a car length in between you and the car in front of you whenever you stop. This provides you with some space to maneuver in if you are in danger.
5. **Be strategic.** Drive with your doors locked. Park in a well-lit, visible area. It is best to back your car in for leaving in a quick and less-obstructed way.
6. **Dress professionally and functionally.** Make sure your clothes and shoes provide you with ease of movement.
7. **Set expectations.** Discuss mandated reporting requirements and program expectations during your initial contact with your client(s).
8. **Establish parameters.** Make it clear that you have a schedule to keep and are expected elsewhere later. This puts in some parameters ahead of time in case you must leave for any reason.
9. **Be aware of others.** Be mindful of others in the apartment/house for confidentiality and safety reasons.
10. **Ask about pets.** It is best to call ahead of time to see if there are any pets. Do you have allergies? Is the person's pet friendly or not?
11. **Be aware of signs of intoxication.** If someone is impaired such as with drugs or alcohol.
12. **Try to keep a clear path to the door.** Know your means of exit. You may leave from a way different than the way you came in.
13. **Guard your privacy.** Do not give out personal information. It should be a conscious decision if you have pictures in your office, certain bumper stickers on your car, as well as any other potential identifiers.
14. **Be mindful of your presence on social media.** Monitor your privacy settings on sites like Facebook. Also avoid sharing things that could provide others with information about you, your family, where you live, and so on.
15. **Listen to your internal warning signals.** Call the office and/or 911 if you do not feel safe.