

Home Visitor Safety

How to Stay Safe While Conducting Home Visits

Developed in collaboration with
Arizona Early Intervention Program
Arizona Department of Health Services
Strong Families Arizona

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OBJECTIVES

- Convey the importance of Home Visitor Safety
- Identify steps for preparing for a safe home visit
- Identify steps for conducting a safe home visit
- Discuss determining and addressing special considerations in Home Visiting Safety
- Identify methods of communicating safety concerns to families



WHY IS HOME VISITOR SAFETY IMPORTANT?

- Your safety is a priority
- The work you do is valuable
- A safe environment will allow you to be safe and do your work effectively
- Your employer wants you to be safe
- Your family wants you to be safe



THE OSTRICH SYNDROME

It won't happen to me.....



PREPARING FOR A HOME VISIT



PREPARING FOR A HOME VISIT

With client:

- Confirm address
- Ask who will be present during the visit
- Ask about pets or other visitors that may be present
- Ask about any parking guidelines or recommendations
- Read and understand your employer policies and procedures

Additionally:

- Schedule appointments during daylight hours
- Review patient/client/family information on referral/intake form for safety concerns (domestic violence, substance use)
- Organize documents for visit(s) in folder or bag
- Make sure cell phone(s) are fully charged and bring charger
- Keep on-line calendar up to date with current appointments and itinerary (name, address, phone numbers) and ensure supervisor has access.
- If possible, drive by the home or meeting place prior to initial visit to locate safe parking and safe areas in neighborhood and exits



PREPARING FOR A HOME VISIT 2



Travel and Vehicle Safety:

- Assess traffic and weather conditions
- Arizona Department of Public Safety website
<http://www.az511.gov/traffic/index.jsp>
- Keep car in good working order
- Ensure gas tank and tires are filled, and tires have good tread.
- Ensure windshield is clean
- If available, carry an Emergency kit in car, with a flashlight.
- Know or have access to roadside assistance numbers and procedures
- If using personal vehicle share license plate number with employer



PREPARING FOR A HOME VISIT 3

Personal Appearance:

- Dress appropriately and comfortably according to dress code, including appropriate footwear
- Wear agency provided photo ID
- Leave excessive jewelry at home
- Avoid religious or political symbols
- Avoid strong perfumes or lotions
- Dress for weather concerns
- Consider wearing a t-shirt or uniform with agency logo
- Bring your smile and positive attitude

Carry a Go-Bag that contains:

- Drivers license and keys to the vehicle
- Cell phone(s) and charger(s)
- Emergency numbers/contact information
- Disinfectant wipes/hand sanitizer
- Whistle
- Latex gloves/facial mask (as needed), and disposable booties
- Socks
- Tissues
- First aid kit
- Water
- Small trash bag
- Minimal amount of cash
- Other optional – pepper spray, emergency snacks



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT

Arriving at the home:

- Arrive a little early for first visit
- Be aware of your surroundings, Observe activity in and around house
- Drive around the area before parking and getting out
- Note any signs posted
- Park your vehicle on the street where it cannot be blocked
- Park in the direction you are going after the appointment, if possible.
- Park so you can see the car from the house and near a street light if late afternoon, if possible.
- Do not park in a neighbor's driveway or assigned space
- Conceal personal belongings in the trunk before entering home



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 2



Animal Hazards

- Be cautious of all animals
- Do not touch any animals
- Look for animals restrained in the yard
- Look for a worn path around yard and food/water dishes, as they may indicate an animal
- If animals look dangerous or poses a threat request they be removed before entering the home



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 3

Trust your instincts!

Do not enter the yard or home if:

- A suspicious person is near the door
- There is loud yelling and sounds of fighting
- Unrestrained animals that sound and look vicious
- Violence is in progress
- Weapons are visible



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 4

Entering the home:

- Pause at door before knocking or ringing the bell
- Identify yourself and ask for client by name
- Do not enter the house if the person you are scheduled to visit with is not home – wait in the car
- Ask permission to enter and confirm “Is this still a good time to meet?”



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 5

Inside the home:

- Be courteous and respect the client's home and their emotions
- Use non-threatening body language
- Speak your name clearly, your agency and why you are there in a calm manner
- Meet the client/family in a common open room, if possible
- Ask permission to sit on a hard chair – not the soft couch, if possible
- Sit as close to the door as possible with your back towards a wall, if possible
- Notice all exits- keep yourself between client and door
- Be aware of other people in the house
- Ask to reschedule if someone is not wearing clothing
- Ask the owner to restrain or remove any animals



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 6

Inside the home:

During the visit, important things to consider

- TV or other media – Is this a distraction to doing the visit?
- Using the bathroom or going to another part of the house – ask the clients permission
- If you need to go to another room – Let the client lead
- Take your belongings with you at all times, especially if you have to go out to the car
- Maintain professional boundaries regarding self-disclosure
- Use hand sanitizer before and after touching objects or baby/child
- Do not accept food or beverages



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 7

Inside the home:

Be aware of unusual sights and smells

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Drugs including drug paraphernalia
- Weapons and bullets

Leave the home immediately if there is:

- Evidence of substance use by client and/or other members of house
- Illegal drug making or paraphernalia
- Weapons visible
- Vicious animals
- Violent behavior
- If you feel unsafe
- If a raid occurs or police arrive follow law enforcement instructions



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 8

Call 9-1-1 in the case of:

- a fire
- a crime, especially in progress
- a car crash, especially if someone is injured
- a medical emergency, especially if symptoms require medical attention
- you feeling unsafe, and being in need of help.



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 9

When to Report to Department of Child Safety:

- If you suspect child abuse or neglect, after talking to your Supervisor- Call/Submit Report to DCS
- Witnessing a non-accidental injury
- If you have additional concerns for the child's safety

Training for Mandated Reports/Supports:

<https://pcaaz.org/for-mandated-reporters/>

**Report Child Abuse or Neglect
Arizona Child Abuse Hotline**

1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445)

<https://dcs.az.gov/report-child-abuse>



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY



CONDUCTING A HOME VISIT 10



Leaving the home

- Set next appointment and thank client
- Use common walkways
- Have your keys ready
- Observe your surroundings
- Do not linger
- Leave before dark, if possible
- Be alert – no talking or texting while walking
- Use hand wipes or sanitizer
- Remove any disposable PPE



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Health triggers in the home:

Do you have a health condition that could be triggered by things in or around the home?



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 2:

Hazardous Exposures:

Be aware of sources of lead & asbestos. Common exposures come from:

- Paint
- Dust & Soil
- Children's jewelry and toys
- Workplace and hobbies
- Cement roofing and siding shingles
- Textured paint, popcorn ceilings
- Construction, painting, remodeling, refinishing



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 3

Communicable Diseases:

Standard Precautions

- Hand washing
- Hand sanitizer- alcohol based >60%
- Consider wearing latex gloves and/or mask
- Avoid all contact with any sick clients/families if you are immunocompromised

Recommended Vaccines

- COVID vaccine series and Boosters
- Hepatitis B vaccine series
- Flu –Get 1 dose of influenza vaccine annually
- MMR vaccine
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Tdap – get Td boosters every 10 years



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 4

Head Lice:

- Frequent for pre-school children attending child care, day care workers, anyone working with small children
- Spread by direct contact with the hair of the infested person
- Spread by contact with clothing and personal items

Avoid head to head contact or touching clothing, bedding, hats

Treatment includes medicine that kills the lice and washing all clothing and bedding in hot water



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 5

Bed Bugs:

What are they?

- A small flat, parasitic insect that feeds on the blood of people and animals while they sleep

Where are they found?

- Infestations are in and around bedding, mattresses, headboards, carpet, furniture



Who is at risk?

- Anyone who comes in contact with an infected area.
- They are transported from place to place as people travel. They can live in luggage, clothes, bedding.
- Bites are red, swollen areas and may itch.
- Infested area must be treated with insecticide spraying.
- Wash clothing and sheets in hot water.
- Contact landlord or professional pest control company.



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 6

Arizona Weather Hazards:



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 7

Arizona Weather Hazards:

Dust Storms

- Plan ahead –get current weather reports
- Avoid driving into or through dust storms
- Pull over as soon as possible – completely exit the highway or pull off the paved portion
- Turn off all vehicle lights
- Take your foot off the brake and set emergency brake

Wildfires

- Do not drive through road blocked areas
- Evacuate as soon as possible
- Wear face mask to avoid inhaling smoke

Flash Floods

- Plan ahead – get current weather reports
- Do not drive through flooded areas such as roads and parking lots
- Pay attention to and do not go around barricades
- If you are trapped in rising water in a flooded area get out of the vehicle and call 911 for help

Extreme Heat/Winter Storms

- Drink plenty of water
- Bring extra water in the car
- Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, weather appropriate clothing
- Snow chains or 4 wheel drive



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS 8

Rural areas and Tribal Land

- Animals in the road
- Flash flooding
- Limited or no cell phone service
- Tumbleweeds
- Lack of services
 - gas stations
 - rest areas
 - food/convenience marts
 - police/fire limited

Urban areas

- Congested traffic
- One way streets
- Crashes or construction causing road detours or closures
- Extreme heat
- Flash flooding



IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HAZARDS



IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HAZARDS

If immediate hazards are identified in the home:

Clearly identify the issue and state what needs to be done.

Example: Cleaning supplies in reach of child

“Let’s find a safe place for them now.”

Example: Baby is put to sleep in an unsafe sleep environment

“Can I show you what a safe sleep environment looks like?”

Example: House is unclean-evidence of fleas, bedbugs or other pests

“Let me show you how to clean up and make a homemade cleaner.” and/or “Let’s talk about how to contact your landlord and your rights as a tenant.”

Example: House is extremely cluttered and mobility is limited

“ Can I help you clear away a shared space so the baby is safe?”



IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HAZARDS 2

Alcohol/Drug Use/Paraphernalia:

- Mirrors with razor blades, straws
- Pipes, water pipes, bongs, hookahs
- Plastic baggies, tin foil
- Regular cigarettes, electronic cigarettes
- Hypodermic needles, syringes, glass vials
- Burnt spoons, rolling papers
- Marijuana plants, baggies, joints
- Excessive amount of empty alcohol beverage containers



IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HAZARDS 3

Alcohol/Drug Use/Paraphernalia:

What should you do?

- Leave immediately if there is evidence of meth lab materials or any other drug use and/or alcohol use*
- Leave immediately if client or family is under the influence*
- Reschedule visit

* Each situation may be different. Client may be taking prescriptions for a medical reason or have a medical marijuana card.



IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING HAZARDS 4

Alcohol, Drug Use, Paraphernalia:

Red Flags – Signs that client or family member may be under the influence

- Lack of motor coordination
- Dilated or constricted pupils, red eyes
- Slurred speech, confused behavior
- Drowsiness or hyperactivity
- Substance odors

Red Flags – Signs in and around the home

- Strong odors in home
- Windows covered
- Rooms blocked off
- Bright grow lights
- Drug making materials and chemicals



FINAL TIPS – REMEMBER.....

Your personal health and safety is important and a priority

If you or anyone else's health and/or safety is at immediate risk:

- Leave the home
- Call 911 or the local crisis #

If children are in danger

- Call local law enforcement and Call your supervisor
- Discuss making a Department of Child Safety (DCS) Report with your supervisor
- Call/Make on-line Report to Department of Child Safety (DCS)



QUESTIONS?

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES!



THANK YOU

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