

# Home Visitor Safety

## How to Stay Safe While Conducting Home Visits

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

(Revised 08/2018)





# 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

- Review your employers emergency procedures with your supervisor.
- Review any pertinent information to screen for possible safety concerns (domestic violence, substance abuse, etc.).
- Drive by the home prior to initial visit to locate safe parking locations, safe spots in the neighborhood (parks, libraries, shopping centers, police/fire station, etc.), and exits out of the neighborhood.
- Ask the family who will be at the home during visits and how to best reach their home.
  - Ask about pets or other visitors that will be present
- Keep your schedule/calendar up to date and easily available to your supervisor and/or other staff.
- Schedule appointments during daylight hours, whenever possible.
- Organize materials in advance using a folder or bag.
- Make sure cell phone(s) are fully charged and programmed with emergency numbers.





# Be Familiar with Your Surroundings



*“Before anything else,  
preparation is the key  
to success.”*

*- Alexander Graham  
Bell*

# Approaching the Home



- Arrive a little early for your initial visit
- Be aware of your surroundings:
  - Drive around the area before parking and getting out
  - Observe activity in and around house
  - Note any signs posted
- Avoid being distracted while in your car or as you walk to/from your visit.
- Park your vehicle on street where it cannot be blocked or in a visitor space.
- Park in the direction you are going after the appointment
- Park so you can see the car from the house and near a street light if late afternoon

# During a Home Visit

- Do not enter house if person you scheduled visit with is not home – wait in your car or indicate you will call to reschedule.
- Do not wear or bring valuables with you.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothing according to your employers dress code, that allow you to easily move.
  - Consider wearing a t-shirt or uniform with your agency logo
- Carry or wear identification (work ID badge).
- Be culturally sensitive
- Ask permission to enter the home and confirm time....“Is this still a good time to meet?”
- Check for exits and any visible dangers (drug paraphernalia, strangers, animals, weapons)
- Sit close to an exit, facing the door.
- When possible, sit in a hard chair rather than upholstered furniture.
- And lastly...bring your smile and positive attitude



# Leaving a Home Visit

- Set next appointment and thank family
- Use common walkways
- Have car keys ready
- Observe surroundings
- Do not linger
- Leave before dark
- Be alert – no talking or texting while walking

# How do I conduct the visit?



# Alternative locations

- When the home setting is of concern, have a conversation with the family, team members and your supervisor and plan for an alternative meeting location (such as the public library, play place at the mall, park, daycare, other environments natural to the child and family).
- This discussion must include conversations of FAPE (free and appropriate public education) and transportation related to FAPE.

# Additional Tips

- Always remain alert and observant
- Call ahead to confirm visit
- Stay hydrated, bring water
- Take only items necessary to do your job
- Do not accept food or beverages
- Limit the amount of personal information you share
- Conceal personal items or equipment in the trunk of your car before leaving the office
- Understand and follow your employers protocol before conducting home visits



# Useful items to have available

- Cell phone charger
- Emergency numbers
- Small amount of money
- Disinfectant wipes/hand sanitizer
- Latex gloves/facial mask
- First aid kit
- Kleenex
- Small trash bag

# Animal Safety

- Be cautious of all animals
- Do not touch or pet any animals
- Ask the family to restrain pets before meeting for a visit
- Do not proceed if a threatening animal appears



shutterstock - 303101030

# Bed Bugs

## Bed Bugs

- A small flat, parasitic insect that feeds on the blood of people and animals while they sleep
- Infestations are in and around bedding, mattresses, headboards, carpet, furniture
- Anyone who comes in contact with an infected area can transport bed bugs. They can live in luggage, clothes, bedding.



Remember...bring only necessary items into a home.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/faqs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/bedbugs/faqs.html)

# Weather Safety

- Plan ahead, get current weather reports
- Avoid driving into or through dust storms
- Do not drive through road blocked areas
- Do not drive through flooded areas such as roads and parking lots



## Resources

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/heat/index.shtml>

[https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter\\_weather/](https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/)

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/>

<http://www.az511.gov/traffic/index.jsp>

# Special Considerations

## Rural areas

- Animals in the road
- Flash flooding
- Limited or no cell phone service
- Tumbleweeds
- Lack of services – gas stations, convenience marts, police/fire limited
- Unpaved roads
- Extreme heat

## Urban areas

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

# Substance Abuse and Paraphernalia

## What should you do?

- Leave immediately if there is evidence of a meth lab and contact local law enforcement
- Leave immediately if client or family is under the influence
- Reschedule visit



# Substance Abuse and Paraphernalia

**\*Red Flags – Signs that an individual 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
- Little traffic around home
- Windows covered
- Trash not put out
- Rooms blocked off
- Bright grow lights
- Drug making materials and chemicals

# Substance Abuse and Paraphernalia

## Examples of Paraphernalia:

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



# Trust Your Instincts

- Leave immediately if you feel unsafe or in danger
- Do not enter the yard or home if:
  - Anyone is showing signs of aggression
  - There are unrestrained animals that sound and look vicious
  - Violence is in progress
  - Any individual is under influence of alcohol and/or drugs
  - Evidence of drug sales or manufacture
  - Weapons are visible
  - You are threatened
  - Any individual states that you are not welcome



# In an emergency

- Call 9-1-1
- If you suspect child abuse or neglect, call Child Safety
- Call your supervisor
- Follow your employers incident reporting procedures



**Arizona's Statewide Toll-Free Child Abuse Hotline**

Phone: 1-888-SOS-CHILD

Phone: 1-888-767-2445



# Staying Healthy

- Reschedule visits if you or the family is sick
- Stay up to date on immunizations and annual physicals
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before/after each home visit

# Final Tips...Remember

- Your personal health and safety is important and a priority
- For questions or concerns, talk to your supervisor

