

Head Start/Early Head Start Policies and Procedures

Home Visitation Safety

Policy and Procedure

Policy: To ensure the safety of all SETA Head Start and Early Head Start staff who provide services to the families in their homes. To promote SETA staffs knowledge and competence in matters of home visitation safety.

Procedures:

- ❖ Complete Home visitor Safety Plan, leave a copy for the supervisor or designee and keep one with you at all times.
- ❖ Be aware of the areas in the neighborhood where help could be obtained if an emergency arises.
- ❖ Leave a schedule of visits for the day with the supervisor and include another designee person who will be at the office during the day. Include beginning and ending times for each visit. If major changes are made inform the office of the changes.
- ❖ Always have your picture identification / name badge with you at all times. A clip-on is best instead of necklace.
- ❖ Schedule home visits early in the day whenever possible.
- ❖ When accommodating parents and scheduling visits after normal business hours after (6:00 PM), staff is expected to inform someone of the scheduled meeting and make contact with that person upon completion of the visit. Staff must receive permission from immediate supervisor when scheduling any home visit after normal business hours. However, every effort should be made to schedule all visits between 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.
- ❖ If home visit presents significant safety risk consider alternative sites for visiting with the family or take along a coworker or arrange joint visits with staff from other agencies (i.e. SCOE, ALTA or CPS).

Head Start/Early Head Start Policies and Procedures

- ❖ Maintain your car and have a safety kit with camera, jumper cables, fire extinguisher, first aid kit and a flashlight.
- ❖ Check your gas tank in advance.
- ❖ Carry a personal or work cell phone with you, if possible. If using personal cell phone or agency cell phone that has not been assigned to particular staff member, the cell phone number should be recorded with the supervisor prior to leaving the office. Cell phones shall be set to vibrate and shall not be answered during a visit, unless it is an emergency.
- ❖ Take precaution around pets– ask the family in advance about pets by phone and ask them to secure the pets before arrival.
- ❖ Do not enter the yard/home when there threats are present: Questionable people, Violence is in progress, unsecured vicious animals, parent/others are intoxicated and there is no quick escape.
- ❖ Limit valuables, credit cards or money on your person when visiting homes of the families. Leave valuables at home or place in the trunk of your car before leaving the office. Do not attempt to place valuable items in the trunk of your parked car for a visit. Take only items necessary for home visit.
- ❖ Lock your car at all times. Check around, inside and under your vehicle before entering it. Carry vehicle keys in your hand for accessibility as well as a means of protecting yourself. Do not linger to make phone calls or notes, leave immediately.
- ❖ Enter a home only after an adult gives you permission to do so.
- ❖ Carefully consider your safety before entering a home, listen to your instincts and feelings.
- ❖ Be aware of smells associated with substance use. Where there is suspicion of weapons, illicit drugs, or alcohol present, the home visit is not to be made.
- ❖ Take whatever immediate steps are necessary for personal safety. If you believe your safety is threatened, remove yourself immediately from the situation. Call 911 if it is needed. After when things are settled and you are

Head Start/Early Head Start Policies and Procedures

- ❖ in position to do so inform your supervisor immediately. Document in your records what happened in the situation.
- ❖ If you anticipate crisis situations and practice sound listening and deescalating skills, you will be able to diffuse most crisis and deliver services without jeopardizing your safety or that of your clients.
- ❖ Dress appropriate; maintain appropriate appearance and grooming in order to project an image of a clean and neat professional. Keep jewelry to a minimum and wear comfortable shoes with low or no heels.
- ❖ Know the physical layout of the place you are visiting. Keep the door in sight during the visit. Identify locations where other people may be present and possible escape routes.
- ❖ Be aware of all occupants in the home at time of visit. Be aware of the possibility of other persons in the home and inquire about anyone else who appears to be in another room.
- ❖ Limit the amount of personal information shared with families.
- ❖ Set the tone for the professional relationship by clearly defining interpersonal boundaries between you and family being visited. Spend a few moments thinking about the kinds of boundaries you would set up for both yourself and for your clients. Observation and conversation with peers and supervisors help home visitors define ways to best maintain boundaries. Talk with your supervisor about how best to maintain such boundaries.
- ❖ When you arrive at the home visit site do not wait in your car. If you need to wait for next home visit, use the closest Head Start Early Learning Center facility or Public Library. Call your supervisor and inform about this change.
- ❖ One of the best and easiest methods of preventing the spread of communicable disease is to wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Use a common sense approach if you feel there is a health hazard present. Take universal precaution by washing hands before/after visit. Use the hand washing tips as a guide to keeping your hands clean.
- ❖ When you are experiencing stress or feel that home visits are impacting

Head Start/Early Head Start Policies and Procedures

- ❖ your personal and professional life, seek help from your peers and supervisors. Understand and utilize your agencies Employee Assistance Program; take time to reflect and assess quality of life and report critical incidences.
- ❖ As a part of new employee orientation, all new employees will review this policy.