### PERSONAL SAFETY FOR THE DCF PROFESSIONAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFICE PROCEDURE</th>
<th>IN THE CAR</th>
<th>IN THE COMMUNITY</th>
<th>APPROACHING THE HOME</th>
<th>IN THE HOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make fellow staff aware of your day’s schedule.</td>
<td>Ensure the vehicle you will be taking is in good working order, and has enough gasoline to get you to and from your destination.</td>
<td>Work with a partner if/when possible.</td>
<td>Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in any given situation, leave. If you think you are being followed, go to the closest public space. If a car continues to follow you, turn and drive/walk in the opposite direction.</td>
<td>Make note of entrances/exits to the home. Sit as close to an entrance/exit as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep address/family file updated.</td>
<td>When approaching, be sure to look under the car. Before entering your car check the back seat.</td>
<td>Be alert and observant; pay attention to your immediate surroundings; walk confidently and purposefully.</td>
<td>Pause at the door before knocking, to listen for loud fighting (or other disturbances). Do Not Enter a home if you suspect unsafe conditions exist.</td>
<td>Pause at the door before knocking, to listen for loud fighting (or other disturbances). Do Not Enter a home if you suspect unsafe conditions exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the visit is in an unfamiliar location, ask a staff member who may be familiar with the location to brief you regarding any known risks or possible hazards.</td>
<td>Keep your car doors locked. If necessary, keep windows only partially open above the ear while driving.</td>
<td>Arrange your schedule so you can make visits to new or questionable areas early in the day. You’ll be less likely to encounter illegal activities or loitering during daylight hours.</td>
<td>If an unfamiliar person answers the door, find out who the individual is. If there are people present that you feel are a threat, reschedule the visit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain precise driving instructions and review directions prior to leaving the office.</td>
<td>Keep valuables out of sight.</td>
<td>Wear shoes and clothing that make it easy to move quickly; avoid carrying a purse when possible; carry a minimal amount of money and keep your drivers license and keys on your person (not in your purse or briefcase).</td>
<td>If you decide it’s safe to enter, don’t let your guard down. Stay alert to signs of violence or unwanted advances from any family members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any incident or circumstances that make staff feel uncomfortable should be discussed with your supervisor. Examples include: visiting a home with unsecured weapons, unsecured pets, threatening family members and neighborhoods with known illegal activity.</td>
<td>Avoid hazards that can flatten your tires or otherwise immobilize your car. If possible, try to park where you can see the car while you’re inside the home. Park in the direction you want to go when you leave.</td>
<td>Lock your purse or briefcase in the trunk of the car BEFORE you leave the office. If you must use an elevator, use an empty one if possible. Always stand next to the door and control panel. If you have a problem, push all of the buttons so the elevator stops on all the floor. Press the appropriate floor number yourself, don’t ask someone else to. If someone suspicious gets on while you’re already on the elevator, get off as soon as possible.</td>
<td>Do not go into a dark room, basement or attic first. Follow, never lead, even if you’ve been in the home before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make sure your cell phone is charged and accessible.</td>
<td>If possible, try to park where you can see the car while you’re inside the home. Park in the direction you want to go when you leave.</td>
<td>Choose a parking space that is well lit or offers a safe walking route. Do not park in the driveway to lessen the chance of being blocked in. Lock car.</td>
<td>If the pet is a nuisance, ask the family to put it in another room for the duration of your visit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the family ahead of the visit so they can be watching for you to arrive. Advise the family to have any weapons/firearms put away prior to your arrival.</td>
<td>Be aware of traffic in and out of the home while you are there.</td>
<td>Make yourself known to area businesses and institutions, as well as management and security personnel in public housing and other high-rise buildings.</td>
<td>Be aware of traffic in and out of the home while you are there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be wary of dead end streets.</td>
<td>Call your supervisor/office at scheduled check-in time.</td>
<td>Pay attention to signs like “No Trespassing”, “Beware of Dog”, etc., as they may be an indicator of the resident’s attitude toward strangers.</td>
<td>If you see a firearm, or see someone is armed, leave as soon as possible. Ask the family/individual to put the firearm in another room for the duration of your visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid carrying a purse when possible; carry a minimal amount of money and keep your drivers license and keys on your person (not in your purse or briefcase).</td>
<td></td>
<td>If you feel unsafe because of a heated family argument, leave as soon as possible.</td>
<td>If you feel unsafe because of a heated family argument, leave as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Desktop Safety Guide

February, 2015

Rutgers
School of Social Work
Institute For Families
DEALING WITH HOSTILE/ANGRY PERSONS

People may become angry because of difficulty in finding help for their situations, emotional pain or discomfort or fear and anxiety about the reason for your visit. *The following tips can help prevent escalation of an angry individual:*

- Respond to the person in a calm and firm manner. A lower volume of voice can help the individual calm down.
- Help the individual define their anger and verbally acknowledge it. “I understand you are angry about this”.
- Reinforce the positive long-term benefits of your assistance, your commitment to their best interest and your role as their ally.
- Encourage the individual to sit down.
- Practice ahead of time what you’d say or do in these types of situations.

ACTIVE THREAT RESPONSE

**RUN/ESCAPE**

- IF POSSIBLE

**HIDE**

- IF ESCAPE IS NOT POSSIBLE

**FIGHT**

- ONLY AS A LAST RESORT

**REMEMBER:**

Run and Escape from the Situation if Possible, If Not

Your Hiding Place Should:

- Be out of the shooter’s view
- Provide protection if shots are fired or dangerous objects are thrown in your direction
- Not trap or restrict your movements or options

Deflect:

- Put something in between you and the threat
- Throw a heavy object at them or in their path to prevent them from advancing toward you

When Help Arrives:

- Remain calm and follow instructions
- Keep your hands in view at all times – make no sudden movements
- Avoid pointing and yelling
- Know that help for the injured is on the way

Desktop Safety Guide