

University of Kentucky
College of Social Work
Safety in Practicum Student Checklist

Safety at the Practicum Agency

- Know the safety related policies and procedures for your practicum agency
- Know the policies and reporting procedures related to sexual harassment
- Know how to enter and leave the building safely (including after dark)
- Know the check-in and check-out procedures
- Know any internal code asking for help (i.e., Dr. Armstrong is needed in room)
- Know if it is acceptable to work with clients with the doors open
- Know if staff or students ever physically hold a client, and under what conditions (i.e., an angry six year old trying to kick another child violently; a teenager trying to leave the facility)
- Know procedures for handling blood related incidents (bloody noses, etc.)
- Know the location of the fire extinguisher nearest you, and the nearest stairway
- Know what to do and where to go in case of a fire (or fire drill), or tornado
- Know what to do if another staff person makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Know where emergency numbers are posted (police, fire department, poison control)
- Know the process for reporting injury at the placement agency
- Know how to deescalate angry clients and if the agency has a specific protocol
- Know the agency policy in regards to clients who are inebriated or high (do they have to leave, what if they won't leave, are they encouraged to stay)
- Know how to safely position yourself in the office (access to the door)
- Know how to use the building security
- Know how to use the phone to access help
- Know how to use supervision in regard to safety issues
- Know what to do when clients make threats towards you or others (or themselves)
- Know how to document incidents or threats
- Know who to contact at the placement site when there is an incident or threat
- Know when to inform Field Instructor, Practicum Instructor and Field Director
- Know what the procedure is if there is a suspicion that someone has a weapon
- Know where to store personal items (purse, laptop, etc.)

Safety in the Community

- Know the agency's policies and procedures for safety in the community
- Generally, there is safety in numbers, go with another person when at all possible
- Is your car ready? (enough gas, well maintained and local map and/or GPS available)
- Drive through the community prior to stopping (note where there is a nearby phone, a grocery store, a community center; look for danger signals, who is outside, are there large groups gathering; what are the colors that are being worn if gang activity)
- Park your car facing out, where you can't get blocked in, so you can leave quickly if necessary
- Carry a CHARGED cell phone (some agencies also use hand held alarms) and know how to use it to call emergency numbers
- Know the agency's policy about leaving if you are uncomfortable
- Always leave your daily plan at the office with phone numbers attached
- Leave your purse somewhere else (if you leave it in the trunk, place it there prior to arriving at the home or in the community)
- Walk confidently to the home, using your eyes to scan around you.
- Don't dally getting in and out of your car (this is not the time to call your next client); have keys in hand approaching your car

- Know the agency policy regarding identification badges (can work for or against you in the community; be aware of the confidentiality issues also)
- Dress inconspicuously (no attention-getting clothing, no expensive jewelry, no high heels –wear shoes you can run in if necessary)
- Discuss any concerns with your field instructor/agency supervisor and know how to document incidents or threats
- Carry a health bag in your car (latex gloves, bandages)
- If you feel that you are in a dangerous situation or place; then leave, do not go in

Safety in a Client's Home

- Know your agencies policies, procedures and protocol regarding home visits.
- Generally, there is safety in numbers, go with another person when at all possible
- Engage your client
- Respect their space and property
- Show concern about them and their situation
- Being a judge or jury does not enhance your safety
- Until you know the situation well, sit where you have easy access to a door
- When in a potentially hostile environment, maintain an arm and leg length distance between you and others
- Know your agency's protocol and techniques for de-escalation
- If you sense a safety issue, find something to agree about with the client (instead of escalating a situation) and then leave; you don't have to make your point
- Remain calm, respectful and self-assured; speak slowly, calmly and firmly; do not appear defensive, even if negative comments, insults, or cursing are directed at you.
- Hardback or leather covered chairs are less likely to have unwelcome guests in them (lice, bugs, etc.)
- Humor is a gift, but be very sensitive when using humor with clients
- If lice is a concern and you have long hair, wear your hair pulled up
- If bugs are of concern, you may want to wear pants that are tight around the bottom or have elastic around the bottom, or use socks to pull over the bottom of the pants
- If you want to clean up when you leave, you may want to keep baby wipes or antibacterial soap/lotion in your car
- It is sometimes fine to discuss neighborhood safety concerns with clients; they can be helpful. They are a wealth of information regarding being safe in their own communities. They often know safe places nearby, can let you know of gang colors, when it is best to come, where it is the safest to park, etc.
- Find out the agency policies and practice regarding meeting clients away from their home (i.e. nearest McDonalds's, at a park, etc.)

Take Care of Yourself

- Have a self-care plan (exercise, nutrition, friendships, support group, rest, vacation, etc.). Maintain professional and personal boundaries (social, work/school/family expectations)
- Learn about, understand and recognize compassion fatigue

I have reviewed and discussed this checklist with my agency Field Instructor/Supervisor

Student Signature: _____

Field Instructor/Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____