

## Home Visitation Safety

### Policy and Procedure

**Policy:** to ensure the safety of all NWCA staff who provide services to the families in their homes such as Head Start and Early Head Start. To promote NWCA staff's knowledge and competence in matters of home visitation safety.

#### Procedures:

- Provide supervisor with a monthly calendar of scheduled home visits. Call or e-mail changes as they occur.
- Have your picture identification/name badge with you at all times.
- Schedule home visits early in the day whenever possible
- Normal home visiting hours are between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. When accommodating parents and scheduling visits after normal business hours, staff is expected to inform someone of the scheduled meeting and make contact with that person upon completion of the visit.
- If home visit location presents a significant safety risk consider alternative sites for visiting with the family, take along a coworker, or arrange joint visits with staff from other agencies (ECSE, Social Services, Public Health, etc.)
- Maintain your vehicle.
- Check your gas tank in advance.
- Carry your work cell phone with you. Make sure that it is fully charged.
- Take precautions around pets. Ask the family about pets by phone and ask them to secure pets before your arrival.
- Do not enter the yard/home when there are threats present: questionable people, violence in progress, unsecured vicious animals, parent/others are obviously intoxicated.
- Enter a home only after an adult gives you permission to do so.
- Limit valuables, credit cards or money on your person when visiting homes of families. Take only items necessary for the home visit into the home.
- Lock your vehicle at all times. Check around, inside, and under your vehicle before entering it. Carry vehicle keys in your hand for accessibility. Do not linger or make phone calls or notes, leave immediately.
- If you have time between home visits, return to the local office or wait in a public place such as the library.
- Carefully consider your safety before entering a home, listen to your instincts and feelings.
- Be aware of occupants in the home at the time of the visit.
- Be aware of smells associated with substance use. Where there is suspicion of weapons, illicit drugs, or alcohol present, the home visit should not 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 in position to do so, inform your supervisor immediately. Document what happened.
- Dress appropriately. Maintain appropriate appearance and grooming in order to project an image of a clean and neat professional.

- Set the tone for the professional relationship by maintaining clear boundaries between you and the family. You should always be friendly, but not their “friend.”
- One of the best and easiest ways of preventing the spread of communicable disease is to wash your hands before and after each home visit.
- When you are experiencing stress or feel that home visits are impacting your personal and professional life, seek help from your peers and supervisor.
- This policy will be reviewed annually with all staff.
- As part of new employee orientation, all new employees will review this policy.