

STATE OF TEXAS
HEALTH

Home Visiting Safety



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Objectives

- Participants will:
 - Understand the importance of maintaining a safe environment when working in homes and the community
 - Identify preparedness techniques prior to conducting home visits
 - Learn how to identify and respond to unsafe environments and emergency situations

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“Caution is the parent of safety”

Traditional proverb





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The Ostrich Syndrome

"It won't happen to me"



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Be Familiar with Surroundings



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Prior to Home Visit

- Assess the Situation
 - Determine Risk factors
 - Current/past history
 - Stressors/concerns
 - Potential for violence
- Determine appropriate precautions:
 - Consider alternative sites
 - Take along a co-worker or supervisor

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Prior to a home visit

- Dress comfortably--
 - clothing in line with agency dress code
 - shoes allowing you to move quickly
- Wear photo ID or name badge
- Do not wear excessive jewelry



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Prior to a home visit

- Keep car in good running condition w/gas
- Be sure supervisor has car make, model, license plate #
- Leave daily schedule with supervisor/office staff
- Call ahead – confirm family is at home
- Be sure you have the correct address
- Ask questions about pets, other potential visitors, etc.

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Prior to Home Visit

- Carry a "Go-bag":
 - Cell phone & charger
 - Emergency numbers & contact information
 - Small amount of cash money and change
 - Plastic trash bags
 - Disinfectant wipes/hand sanitizer
 - Latex gloves
 - First aid kit
 - Dog biscuits
 - Other items

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Approaching a Home

- Park in the open near light source



- Do not park where car could be blocked
- Park on street rather than driveway when possible
- Do not park in someone else's assigned parking space

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Approaching a Home

- If approached, be brief and move on
- Don't be drawn into conversations
- Be alert – no talking on phone, texting while walking
- Don't make yourself a target

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Approaching a Home

- Do not enter the yard/home when:
 - Questionable persons are present
 - Parent/others are intoxicated
 - Violence is in progress
 - Vicious animals are present



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Entering the Home

- When door opens, quickly observe inside to determine any threats to safety
- Ask for or wait for permission to enter the home
- If denied entrance, do not attempt to persuade. Leave and consult supervisor



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In the Home

- Meet in a common room
- Choose a seat that does not put your back to any doorway
- When possible, sit in a hard chair rather than upholstered furniture
- If pets concern you, ask that they be put away/secured
- Don't accept food or beverages
- Build rapport but limit the amount of personal information you share



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In the Home

- Remain alert and observant
- Be aware of unusual sights/smells, drug paraphernalia, pornography, weapons



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Leaving the Home

- Have car keys in hand
- Observe your surroundings
- Do not linger
- Pay attention - no talking on phone, texting while walking
- Let someone know when you are finished

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Special Circumstances



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Special Circumstance --

**Anger/ Threat of
Physical Harm/ Violence**

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Anger/ Threat of Physical Harm/ Violence

- Warning signs:

- Clinched fists
- Dilated pupils
- Pacing
- Restlessness
- Voice rises
- Tone changes
- Agitation increases
- Forced eye contact, staring
- Tells you to get away, move back



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Anger/ Threat of Physical Harm/ Violence

- If Threatened --

- Remain calm – speak slowly and softly
- Keep pitch and volume of your voice down
- Do not show anxiety, fear or anger
- Do not touch anyone if they are upset
- Document and report any threats



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Anger/ Threat of Physical Harm/ Violence

- If attacked --

- Use enough force to restrain the person
- Notify the police
- Don't change your clothes or take a shower until given permission from law enforcement
- Notify your supervisor ASAP
- ASAP write down details about the attacker
 - Vehicle
 - Witnesses, if any
 - Anything the attacker touched that might contain finger prints



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Anger/ Threat of Physical Harm/ Violence

- **Red flags** re: Gang Involvement:
 - Consistently wears one color, especially same color shoes, shirt, handkerchiefs, etc.
 - Gang writing present in home or on property
 - Gang related hand gestures or signs
 - Gang related tattoos
 - Other



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Anger/ Threat of Physical Harm/ Violence

- Gang Involvement
 - If evidence of gang involvement – do not discuss when gang members are present
 - Discuss observations with family at a safe time (use discretion)
 - Encourage parents to consider assistance to deal with gang issues
 - Refer to community resources
 - If imminent danger, leave



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Special Circumstance --

Mental Health/ Psychiatric Issues



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Mental Health /Psychiatric Issues

- Symptoms:
 - Hallucinations or delusions
 - Disorganized, bizarre behavior & speech
 - Severe deterioration of hygiene & functioning
 - Rapid mood changes & extremes of mood
 - Self injurious behavior
 - Other

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Mental Health/Psychiatric Issues

- If imminent danger – leave
- If no imminent danger
 - Encourage person to contact professional
 - If no professional involved, make referrals
 - Consult supervisor

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Special Circumstance --

**Domestic Violence/
Abuse/
Neglect/Exploitation**

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Domestic Violence/ Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation

- Child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education
- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds

Florida Abuse Hotline
1-800-962-2873 / 1-800-96 ABUSE

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Domestic Violence/ Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation

- Victims of domestic violence are at greatest risk when they try to leave
- Victims leave an average of 7 times before finally ending a relationship

Florida Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-500-1119

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Domestic Violence/ Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation

- Determine immediate danger to you or others (if imminent danger – leave)
- Report abuse, neglect, exploitation
- Do not conduct “child protection work” or “domestic violence work” in the home
- Do not transport families to shelters
- Refer to service providers – shelter, counseling, community resources
- Continue to provide support, as permitted (within your role)

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Special Circumstance --

Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

- Examples of paraphernalia:
 - Mirrors with razor blades, straws, etc.
 - Pipes, water wipes
 - Hypodermic needles, syringes, glass vials
 - Burnt spoons, rolling papers
 - Excessive amount of empty alcohol bottles

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

Red flags - under the influence:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of motor coordination • Slowed reflexes • Slurred speech, confused behavior • Dilated or constricted pupils • Drowsiness, hyperactivity, euphoria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paranoia suspicion / altered perceptions • Easily angered or enraged • Needle marks • Rapid or decreased eye movement • Substance odor on clothing, breath • Insensitivity to pain |
|--|---|

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

- **Red flags** re: methamphetamine (meth):
 - Strong odor resembling urine or usual chemicals such as ether, ammonia, or acetone
 - Little or no traffic around the home during the day but significant activity during late hours
 - Extra efforts to cover windows or reinforce doors
 - Trash not put out for collection
 - Vehicles loaded with laboratory materials or chemicals

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

- If methamphetamine use:
 - Do not enter home with evidence of meth lab materials on property
 - If you enter and see evidence of a meth lab
 - Discreetly, but immediately leave
 - Drive to a safe location – contact law enforcement

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

- If exposed to methamphetamine:
 - Cover your car seats and floorboards with plastic covering
 - Clean hands with disinfecting wipes before touching steering wheel
 - Go to a safe location to change clothes
 - Place dirty clothes in a plastic trash bag.
 - Clean all exposed skin surfaces with soap & water
 - Wash items carried into the home with soap/water
 - Don't touch any surface until skin and items are clean

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Alcohol/Drug Use/ Paraphernalia

- If imminent danger – leave
- Do not confront suspected drug activity while in the home



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Special Circumstance --

Suicidal Plans/Attempts

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Suicidal Plans/Attempts

- Most often a person will not come right out and say he/she is considering suicide
- Be aware of subtle hints or **red flags** -- vague statements such as:
 - "I don't want to be here anymore.", or
 - "I feel like giving up."
- Statements may be person's way of reaching out

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Suicidal Plans/Attempts

- Ask – “Are you thinking of suicide?”
 - Asking a person if he/she is thinking of suicide does not lead them to commit suicide or make them more likely to do so
- Talk to person about making verbal or written agreement not to harm self or others until receiving assistance
- Refer/link to mental health service provider

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Suicidal Plans/Attempts

- For a suicide attempt
 - Call 911
 - Apply first aid , as appropriate
 - Ensure safety of others in home
 - Consult supervisor immediately

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Remember ...

Have a “game plan”. Be prepared.



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Remember ...

Don't make yourself a mark



Obscurity brings safety ~ Aesop
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Remember ...

Leave quickly if you feel uncomfortable,
unsafe, in danger



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Remember ...

Inform supervisor immediately of any
irregularity



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Acknowledgements

Some of the information on the previous slides used with permission from:
Oklahoma State Department of Health --
- Family Support and Prevention Service,
Home Visitation Leadership Advisory Coalition



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Thank You!

**“Don’t learn safety rules
simply by accident.”**
Author Unknown



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