**HOME VISITING SAFETY**

Listed below is guidance regarding ways for you to stay safe and tips on what to do when you do not feel safe.

Although it is not common for home visitors to find themselves in a situation they perceive as threatening, it is important for them to be cautious. The populations that home visitors serve are diverse and safety issues will vary. There are, however, several basic safety guidelines and precautions that are applicable to all Staff/Family Child Care Providers who do home visits.

A. The first, and perhaps most important, guideline is that home visitors use **common sense** and **trust** their judgment.

1. If home visitors feel frightened when they arrive or during a visit, they should assess the immediate situation and leave if they consider themselves in danger. Examples of situations that may require leaving include: violence in the home, drug use and drug dealing or the presence of acutely intoxicated or out-of-control individuals.

2. Home visitors should excuse themselves as politely as possible, explaining to the parent that they cannot stay and that they will contact them later to arrange another time for the home visit.

3. Home visitors should then report the incident to their supervisor and record the reason for the visit cancellation in writing (Family Service Workers, Child Family Specialists and Family Resource Specialists use Information Sheets; Teaching Staff use Family Contact E-10; Family Child Care Providers use CCE-10). They should record what happened, such as: “Parent’s speech was slurred and she/he was using language I have never heard her/him use before”.

4. When the home visitor and parents discuss the situation later, it should be done in a nonjudgmental manner. The home visitor was unable to work with the parent that day as home visits require everyone’s attention and participation, the home visitor thought that it would be better to return another day.

5. If the pattern is repeated, or there is a great deal of concern about future safety, the home visitor should request a program staffing with their PSC or Child Care Coordinator, with a Program Manager or Team Manager present. At this time, a plan will be developed to meet with the family to establish reasonable safe conditions or a re-evaluation of a families’ enrollment status will be made.

B. The second guideline is that home visitors should develop a safety plan with their Program Service Coordinator and FCC Coordinator.

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1. Designated staff at the home visitor’s office or Head Start Center should be aware of the home visitor’s schedule for the day and have means of contacting a visitor while they are away. It also may be advisable for a home visitor’s spouse or other family member to be aware of the weekly home visitor schedule for safety reasons.

2. If necessary, a home visit “team” can visit a family on a regular basis. This arrangement must be approved by supervisory/monitoring staff.

C. A third guideline for safe home visits is knowing the neighborhood where the visits are taking place.

1. Family members can help home visitors to learn the safest routes (and safest times) for them to visit.

2. Maintaining your automobile in good condition is clearly a necessary safety precaution, especially for those that travel long distances, for those who travel in remote rural areas and for those who travel through potentially dangerous neighborhoods.

**Home visitors should use common sense and trust their judgement, try to prevent dangerous situations from developing and keep supervisory staff aware of the conditions under which they are visiting. When personal safety is involved, home visitors must advocate for themselves - sharing concern with their supervisors, telling parents when they are uneasy, leaving a place that they perceive to be unsafe.**

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