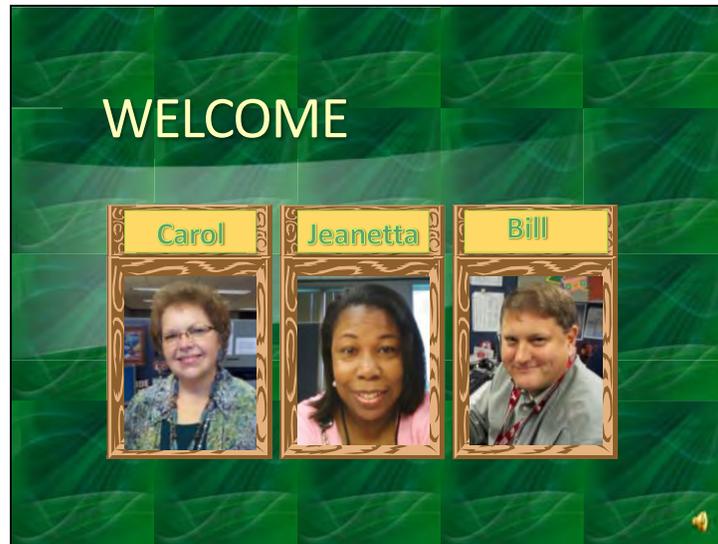




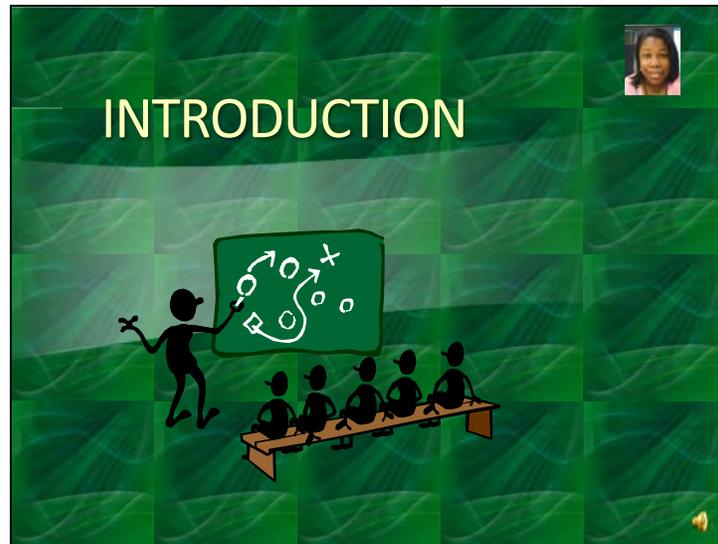
NARRATION:

- Welcome to our annual safety presentation on PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS FOR HOME VISITS, it is presented to you by the Alabama Department of Public Health Elderly and Disabled Waiver and HIV/AIDS Waiver Case Management Branch. Although this training was designed for the department Waiver Case Management Staff, the information presented is may be useful to anyone making home visits or conducting face-to-face interviews in the home environment.
- This presentation was written with the experience and insight of various home visiting professionals to include law enforcement, social workers, nurses, and others. The information contained in this presentation is provided for “general precautions” only and is not comprehensive to cover every situation; therefore, it should only be used as a guide to assist in enhancing personal safety and reducing risk of personal injury during home visits.



WAIVER CASE MANAGEMENT STAFF/PRESENTERS:

- Welcome to the annual in-service safety training for waiver case managers. This training is presented to you by:
 - ❑ **CAROL HEIER**, the Case Management Branch Director
 - ❑ **JEANETTA SHEPPARD**, Elderly and Disabled Waiver Case Management Consultant
 - ❑ **WILLIAM (BILL) KENNEDY**, HIV/AIDS Waiver Case Management Consultant
- Today, we plan to provide you some “tips” on promoting your personal safety during home visits.



INTRODUCTION: Talking Points

- As most of you already know, Waiver Case Managers make home visit as required by Medicaid Policy and Procedures, to assess and assist clients with their needs as well as to monitor the effectiveness of waiver services provided.
- Home visits by case managers are essential to the success of the waiver program because they provide the means for case manager's observation of the clients in their home environment, they also support client's engagement and participation in their plan of care, and they provide the opportunity for effective problem-solving interventions.
- However, making home visits can also pose some risk and challenges such as: Your clients or others who are present in the home, may have mental imbalances, substance abuse problems or violent tendencies. You may also encounter other potential safety hazards like the poor condition of the home, dangerous animals and even fire.
- Nevertheless, some risks and challenges can be anticipated and their impact lessened and/or entirely prevented, just by taking a few appropriate safety precautions and measures.
- And that brings us to the purpose and objective of this training.... (SEE NEXT SLIDE)



OBJECTIVE: TRAINING PURPOSE

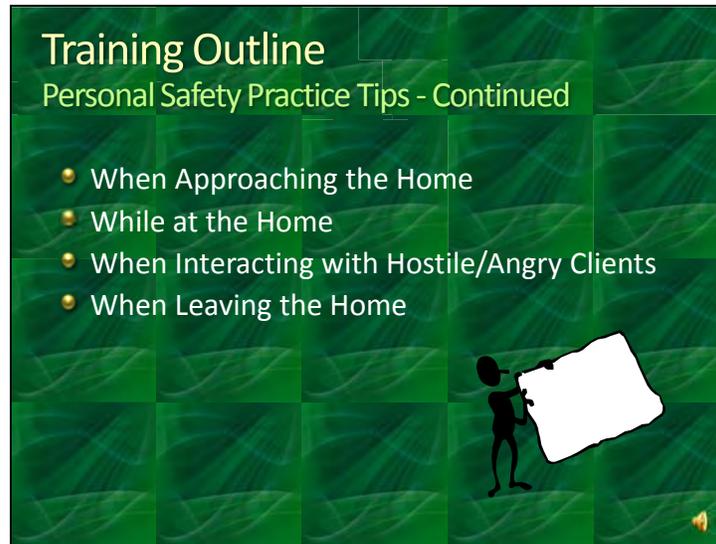
- To promote the use of common proactive safety measures to reduce the risk of personal injury and incident during home visits.
 - Every case manager worker needs to be aware of potential safety risks that may exist when making home visits.
 - ADPH Safety and Emergency guidelines reminds employees *“to exercise reasonable care for their own protection and property while away from the premises of business”*.
- In support of this effort, the information contained in this presentation will aid case manager in promoting personal safety and reducing the risk of personal injury during home visits.



TRAINING OUTLINE - PERSONAL SAFETY PRACTICE TIPS

This training provides practical information on how you can address safety issues when preparing, initiating and completing home visits. It gives you safety tips that you can use to promote your personal safety:

- When planning the home visit,
- When you are in your vehicle preparing to drive to the home visit
- When you are driving,
- When you are parking,
- When you are in the client's community



TRAINING OUTLINE - PERSONAL SAFETY PRACTICE TIPS - CONTINUED

- When you are approaching client's the home,
- When you are at the client's home,
- When interacting with hostile and angry clients, and
- When you are leaving the client's home



❖ **SAFETY TIPS - For Planning the Home Visit**

• **Start with a safety risk assessment**

- ❑ Take a few minutes to make yourself aware of any known safety hazards that may be present during the visit. This is particularly true if the client is new to you. Planning will help you take precautions to avoid potential dangers and to think through strategies to help you manage a confrontation if one occurs.
- ❑ Access available sources of information to learn all you can about the client and family history to help determine potential risk factors associated with the visit
- ❑ Access sources such as documentation in the client's case record or file. Consult with your supervisor or coworkers, particularly those who have visited the client previously
- ❑ When conducting your safety risk assessment, here are few questions to consider regarding the client or others who may be present during the visit.
 - Is anyone known to have a criminal history or to have engaged in violent encounters with police, schools, or social service providers?
 - Is there a history of mental illness? Is anyone known to exhibit any bizarre or aggressive behaviors?
 - Is there a history of illegal drug use or drinking alcohol in excess?
 - Are firearms present in the home?
 - Are vicious dogs or other aggressive animals present in the home or on the property? Are there any formal agreements in place with the client to help protect the safety of providers? For instance, is there already a plan in place to call the client before getting out of the car so that large dogs can be locked in another room during the visit? Has the client agreed to keep firearms locked up during provider visits?

• **Ensure you discuss with your supervisor**

- ❑ **Any concerns** about potential dangers, incidents, or uncomfortable circumstances with your supervisor so that together you can make decisions about what needs to be done to help protect your safety



❖ **SAFETY TIPS - For Planning the Home Visit – Continued**

- **Schedule the visit**

- **Confirm address and driving directions**
 - Safety can often be improved if the home visit is planned and the client and/or caregiver has time to prepare for your visit
 - When scheduling your visit, introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the visit
 - Confirm that you have the client's correct street address and make sure you have accurate and complete driving directions. Use a map to familiarize yourself with the area.
 - If the client lives in a risky area, attempt to schedule your visit early--early in the week and early in the morning when you will be less likely to encounter loitering and illegal activities in the area

- **Always inform your supervisor or another designated individual in the office that you are making a home visit**
 - Make sure that you provide information sufficient to know your whereabouts and for others to contact you, if needed
 - At a minimum, leave information such as:
 - The client's name and contact information.
 - The reason for the visit and estimated duration
 - The time of your departure
 - The time of your appointment
 - The estimated time of your return
 - If your plans change, be sure to notify your supervisor or the other person you have informed regarding your plans



❖ **SAFETY TIPS - For Planning the Home Visit - Continued**

- **Dress appropriately**
 - Wear business attire appropriate for professional work in the community setting
 - Wear shoes that protect your feet and support your ability to respond quickly in a threatening situation

- **Select clothing accessories wisely**
 - Women should avoid carrying a large handbag or purse if possible. Instead, carry your cell phone and essentials in your pockets or choose to carry a briefcase, if needed
 - Do not wear expensive watches or jewelry that can draw attention of a potential predictor
 - Avoid clothing accessories that could potentially be used to limit your ability to flee a dangerous situation, such as long necklaces or scarves

- **Carry with you only what you need**
 - Make sure you wear your employee name tag
 - Consider carrying a noise-making device such as a whistle on your key chain
 - Carry your Driver's License and a minimal amount of cash/credit cards
 - Carry a fully charged cell phone



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – Regarding your Vehicle**

- Keep your car in good working condition:
 - Make sure you have enough gas to carry you through the day; ensuring you have over a ½ tank of gas prior to your visit, is good practice.
 - Keep a first aid kit and a driving emergency kit in your car at all times

- Before entering the car:
 - When you are approaching your car, look around and under before entering
 - Check the back seat



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – Regarding your Vehicle - Continued**

- When in the car:
 - Lock doors & keep windows up at all times
 - If it is necessary to keep the windows opened, recommend opening them partially (above ear level) while driving
 - Keep valuables out of sight. Before traveling to the home:
 - Cover-up any valuables inside the car
 - Lock purse in trunk
 - Lock the glove compartment



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – For Driving**

- Keep Doors locked at all times:
 - If traveling alone, unlock the driver's side door only, when entering your vehicle.
 - Lock the door as soon as you are seated in the vehicle

- Drive around neighborhood before parking:
 - Look for unsafe conditions like poor lighting, limited visibility (fences, buses), unsecured animals, people yelling, drinking, fighting, loitering
 - Look for sources of help like pay phones, neighbors at home, open businesses, other community workers such as police and fire personnel, utility trucks

- Evaluate the best way to exit the area:
 - Be wary of dead end streets

- If presenting circumstances cause you to feel uncomfortable, do not stop, return to a safe place and notify your supervisor immediately of or your concerns



❖ **SAFETY TIPS- For Parking**

- Avoid parking:
 - In rubble/broken glass that can flatten a tire and immobilize your car
 - Driveways to lessen the chance of being blocked in when you want to leave
 - Avoid areas of poor visibility by others such as alleys and isolated buildings



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – For Parking - Continued**

- When possible, park:
 - Where you can see your car from inside the home
 - In a well lit area
 - In an area that offers the safest walking route to the dwelling
 - In the direction you will go upon leaving the home
 - On a dead end street, park car facing away from the dead end to exit the area quicker



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – While in the Community**

- Be Observant:
 - Develop a sense of consciousness regarding your immediate environment
 - If something does not look, sound, or feel right, go back and get an escort

- Be alert:
 - To being followed
 - If you suspect you are being followed, enter the closest public place
 - If a car is following you, turn around and walk in the opposite direction

 - To people loitering and crowds
 - If people are loitering on the street or sidewalk, walk around them or cross the street.

 - To verbal confrontations
 - If you are verbally confronted, maintain a professional manner and don't attempt to answer verbal challenges

 - Using an elevator
 - If you are using an elevator, use an empty one if possible
 - Always stand next to the door and the control panel
 - If you have a problem, push all the buttons so the elevator stops on all the floors, providing a better chance of escape.
 - Press the appropriate floor number yourself; don't ask someone to do it for you.
 - If someone suspicious gets on while you are already in the elevator, get off as soon as possible.



❖ **SAFETY TIPS - While in the Community - Continued**

- Trust your instincts:
 - If you feel uncomfortable in any given situation, trust your gut and leave!
- Walk confidently and purposefully:
 - Walk straight to the building or home; do not wander
 - Avoid walking in unlit or unpopulated areas – You can't see the criminals and others can't see or hear you.
- Make yourself known to management/security personnel in public housing areas and other high-rise buildings
- Avoid opening your car trunk while in the community because it may alert thieves to the location of your valuables



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – When Approaching the Home**

- Visually inspect the outside of the home and surroundings residence to become aware of people, animals, or unfamiliar vehicles
 - ❑ Pay attention to signs outside the dwelling: *(They may be a indicator of the residents' attitude toward strangers)*
 - “No Trespassing”
 - “ Beware of the Dog”
 - ❑ If you feel uncomfortable in any given situation, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY
 - Contact your supervisor to discuss the concern and possible options and alternatives
- Pause at the door before knocking (look listen, smell):
 - ❑ Do not walk around the residence looking in windows if no one answers the door
 - ❑ If you hear loud quarreling or fighting or other disturbances, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY
 - ❑ Take note of any smells associated with substance use or manufacturing; if present, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY
- If an unfamiliar person answers the door, find out if the client is home before entering
- DO NOT ENTER THE HOME IF YOU SUSPECT AN UNSAFE CONDITION EXISTS



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – At the Home**

- **If you decide it's safe to enter the client's home**
 - ❑ **Remain alert.** Use your eyes, ears, and nose to detect warning signs of potential risks. Observe your surroundings and use caution upon entry to any room and when moving around in the home.
 - Do not enter any part of the home without the permission. When walking into a dark room, basement or upstairs room have the client or caregiver go in first and turn on the light. Follow, never lead, even if you've been to the dwelling before.
 - When you enter a room, note the location of room entrances and exits.
 - If you need to retrieve something from outside, knock or announce your reentrance when you reenter the home.
 - ❑ **Choose your seat carefully**
 - Do not sit down for the interview if the client stands.
 - If you are seated for the interview, choose to sit in a hard chair so that you are able to get up more rapidly, if needed
 - Try to sit close to an exit, with your back to a solid wall. Position yourself between the client and the exit.
- **Be aware of unusual smells** that might be an indication of gas, electrical, or fire hazards, as well as those which may be associated with the use or manufacturing of substances



❖ **Safety Tips**
While at the Home - Continued

- Ask that aggressive or dangerous pets be secured
- Ask that firearms be put away
- Be observant of behaviors

If at anytime during the home visit you feel unsafe, LEAVE immediately

❖ **SAFETY TIPS - At the Home - Continued**

- **If there are pets in the home that present a danger, ask that they be secured**, preferably in another location, for the duration of the visit.
 - If individuals in the home are not responsive to your request, leave the home as soon as possible and speak with your supervisor about the situation so that a safety plan can be implemented
- **Be on the lookout for any open display of firearms or other weapons**
 - While it is legal to have a firearm in the home, its casual display is inappropriate
 - If you see a firearm or see that someone is armed, leave the home as soon as possible; notify your supervisor so that a safety plan can be developed and implemented for future visits
 - Minimally, require the client to put the firearm in another room during your rescheduled visit and request that no armed individuals be allowed in the residence during your visits(s)
- **Be observant** regarding the behaviors of the client and others in the home. For example:
 - Be aware of people coming in and out of the home while you are there. Numerous visitors with concealed encounters may indicate that illegal activity is taking place.
 - Does anyone demonstrate slurred speech, a staggering gait, moodiness, or irritability that might be a sign of substance abuse?
 - Does anyone display a change in personality, attitude, or grooming habits that might indicate the exacerbation of a mental illness?
 - Is anyone mentally confused, disoriented, seeing things that aren't there or hearing voices that you don't hear? These disruptions in perception have the potential to increase the risk of a physical aggression.
 - Awareness can help you make better judgments about how to conduct yourself in the environment so that you can protect your personal safety.



❖ **SAFETY TIPS - At the Home – Continued: REMINDER – Client Responsibility**

- Waiver clients should be made aware of and reminded from time to time about their responsibility to ensure that providers have a safe place to deliver services. Failure of the client to cooperate with providers in this regard and to ensure a safe environment can lead to termination of waiver eligibility.
- It is advisable to ask the client or responsible person to sign a written agreement when a safety plan has been negotiated. The documentation can be used to help reinforce the agreement periodically. It can also be beneficial if further action is required due to non-compliance with the agreement.



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – When Dealing with Angry or Hostile People**

- People can react in anger for any number of reasons. Anger can be expressed when the person is feeling sad, vulnerable, fearful, or anxious. Emotional pain or discomfort can sometimes be the root of angry and aggressive behaviors. The question, however, is how should you respond to that anger? The following are some reminders and tips that you may find helpful.
 - ❑ **Notice and acknowledge non-verbal cues.** Angry and frustrated people usually indicate their mood prior to expressing their anger verbally. If you notice this early, you may be able to diffuse the anger before it escalates. Simply acknowledging that they appear to be upset and asking them to speak with you about it can sometimes allow for a more respectful interaction.
 - ❑ If the anger is expressed, **react and respond to it in a calm, but firm manner**
 - Appear composed, centered, and self-assured (even if you don't feel it.) Sometimes, a little self-talk can help with this. Simply telling yourself to stay calm and assuring yourself that you can handle the situation is enough to help you maintain self-control.
 - Pay special attention to the speed and loudness of your speech. When people get excited, they tend to talk more quickly and loudly. Trying to speak louder than the angry person or speaking while they are talking is not productive. Take your time. Wait until he or she takes a breath; then talk.
 - ❑ **Avoid becoming defensive**, even if comments or insults are directed at you. When you become defensive, you actually empower the hostile person. Try to look behind the anger to the real hurt, disappointment, or hopelessness the person may be feeling. Once you do see the feelings behind the hostility, you stop taking things personally. The anger is more about them than you.
 - ❑ **Treat the person with dignity and respect.** Being calm and polite does not make you look weak; it makes it clear that you, for one, are in control of yourself. Avoid being judgmental, critical, or sarcastic or trying to interpret the person's feelings in an analytical way. Instead, acknowledge their anger using empathy statements and listening responses. Then, move on to address the issue to the best of your ability.



❖ **SAFETY TIPS – When Dealing with Angry or Hostile People - Continued**

- **Manage the environment.** Encourage the person to sit down if they are standing. Do your best to be at the same eye level as the angry person, but do not maintain constant eye contact. Allow extra physical space between you and the hostile or angry person. Never turn your back on the angry person for any reason. Avoid actions that might appear threatening to them such as putting your hands into your pockets.
- **Express interest in addressing the concerns.** Focus on the long-term benefits of your assistance, your commitment to their best interest, and your role as their ally.
- **Know when to walk away.** If your best attempts to diffuse the anger do not appear to improve the situation or if you perceive at any time that the situation is dangerous, leave the client's home. Call 911 for assistance, if needed, and make sure to inform your supervisory about what transpired.



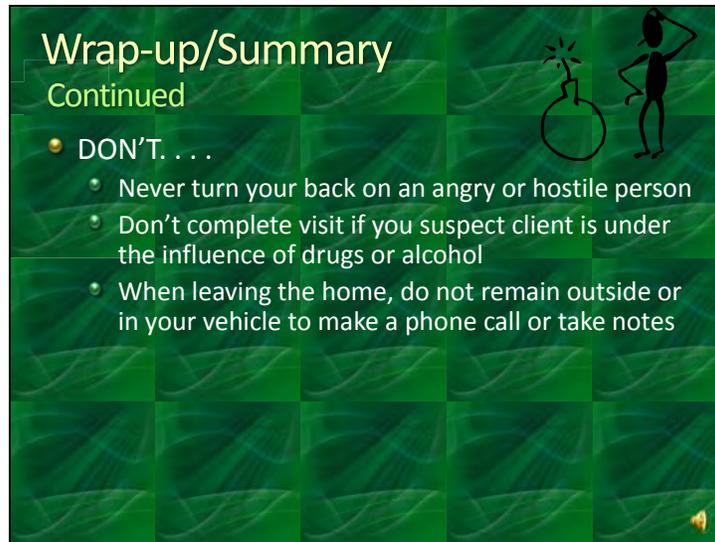
❖ **SAFETY TIPS - When Leaving the Home**

- **Prepare to return to your vehicle**
 - Have car keys out and ready to use them
 - Consider notifying your supervisor or the designated individual in your office regarding your departure from the home.
- **Be alert and observant and cautious** when walking to your car
 - Do not use this time to make a phone call or send a text message.
 - Instead, be observant regarding any people or activities taking place in relative proximity to the residence, the exit route, or your vehicle.
 - Walk directly to your vehicle with confidence; do not wander
 - Glance into the back seat before entering your vehicle. Do not open the car trunk to store or retrieve items.
 - If you are traveling alone, unlock and open only the driver's side door of your vehicle to enter it. Lock the door as soon as you are seated in the car.
 - If you are afraid or suspect danger, go to your previously identified a safe place. If necessary, call the police or contact someone for alternative transportation.
- **Leave the area immediately.** Do not remain outside the residence or in the vehicle to make a phone call or take notes; these activities should be completed upon reaching a safe or familiar destination.
- **Always wash your hands** as soon as possible or use an alcohol-based sanitizer after completing a home visit.



WRAP-UP/SUMMARY

- Okay we have provided you a few personal safety practice tips for preparing and completing home visits. Now, let me try and wrap –up and summarize the information presented, with some basic “DO’s” and “DON’TS”. Let ‘s first review a few tips that were covered on what you should do:
 - Plan your visit:
 - Complete a safety assessment prior to visit in order to be aware of any known or potential safety hazards and to take appropriate precautions to avoid danger
 - Always inform your supervisor or another designated individual in the office that you are making a home visit
 - Practice vehicle safety
 - Ensure vehicle is in good working condition
 - Keep doors lock at all time
 - When in the community
 - Be alert and observant
 - If something does not look, sound, or feel right
 - When approaching the home, visually inspect/scan the outside before entering
 - To become aware of people, animals or unfamiliar vehicles
 - Pause at the door before knocking (look, listen, and smell)
 - Be observant while in the home:
 - Unusual smells and behaviors may be indicative of substance use/abuse ; leave the home if substance use/abuse or manufacturing is suspected
 - Treat the client with dignity and respect

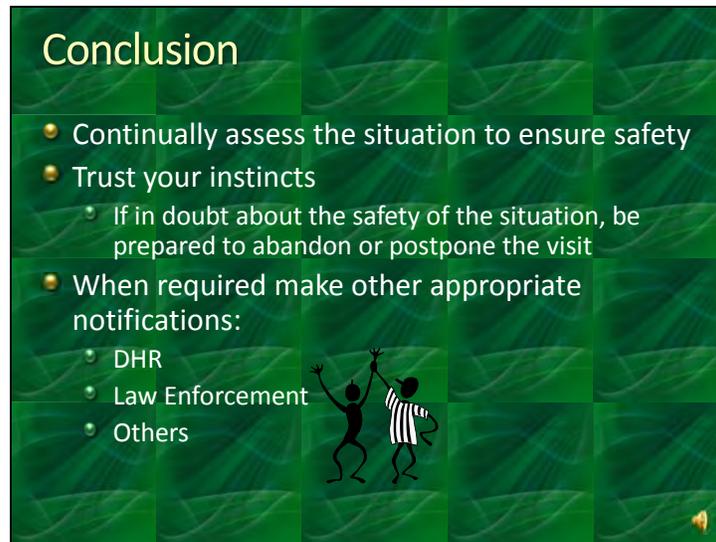


Wrap-up/Summary
Continued

- DON'T . . .
 - Never turn your back on an angry or hostile person
 - Don't complete visit if you suspect client is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
 - When leaving the home, do not remain outside or in your vehicle to make a phone call or take notes

WRAP-UP/SUMMARY - Continued

- Here are a few “Don’ts” that were also addressed:
 - Never turn your back on an angry or hostile person
 - Avoid actions that might appear threatening
 - Don’t complete visit if you suspect client is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
 - Do not remain outside the residence or in the vehicle to make a phone call or take notes:
 - These activities should be completed upon reaching a safe or familiar destination



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "Safety is always first!"

We have provided you have a few general safety precautions that you can immediately put into practice. So remember:

- Continually assess the situation
- Trust your instincts, and
- If in doubt about the safety of the situation, be prepared to abandon or postpone the visit
- When required make other appropriate notifications:
 - DHR
 - Law Enforcement
 - Other

Be Safe!



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