



In order to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and families we serve, social workers should first prioritize their own safety.

Social workers are often put in hostile situations with emotionally charged clients where personal safety is at risk.

This guide is to help you take the necessary safety precautions to protect yourself from potential harm.



Worker Safety First



Before You Go

Assess the potential for violence

- ▶ **Review case history** Are there family members with untreated substance abuse or mental health issues?
- ▶ Are there **reports of violence** related to the family or a history of domestic violence?
- ▶ Are there **weapons** in the home?
- ▶ **Avoid going at night** to a new location/home for the first time. Visits to potentially dangerous homes should be announced. Talk to your supervisor if you have concerns.

Proactive Steps



Ask a supervisor to complete a criminal history check on the family.



Determine if you need to bring a co-worker or the police with you.



Document appointments in Outlook calendar: names, address and phone numbers.

Outside the Home

Be alert!

- ▶ Size up the environment and the neighbors. Look for any hostile pets.
- ▶ Park in a way that ensures your car will not be blocked in.
- ▶ Take only the necessities with you: pen, paper, charged cell phone and keys

Inside the Home

Explain your purpose and repeat yourself if needed.

- ▶ Allow the client to walk ahead of you.
- ▶ Try to meet in areas of the home that are not isolated.
- ▶ Be mindful of exits. Position yourself so that you have an unobstructed path to the exit. Sit with your back to a wall.
- ▶ Ask who else is in the home.
- ▶ Maintain physical distance.
- ▶ Keep a polite and calm demeanor.

Deescalation Tips

Stay calm and allow the client to vent while acknowledging their feelings.

Don't argue with the client, let them do most of the talking.

Use empathetic statements, "I can imagine this is difficult."
"I can see you are very upset."

Maintain an air of confidence.

Speak in an honest and consistent manner.

⚠ REMEMBER ⚠

You have the right to end a verbally or physically threatening visit.

Always trust your gut!