

National Gang Center

Outreach Worker Safety Tips

- » Always let your supervisor or coworkers know your schedule. Provide clients' names and locations of contacts.
- » Make sure that your phone is on and charged at all times. Program emergency numbers.
- » Do not discuss matters pertaining to youth and sensitive work-related information in the presence of clients.
- » Be aware of recent violence in the community. Work with another outreach worker, especially in areas that are "hot." Reschedule meetings and activities until situations are under control.
- » Be aware of your surroundings. Observe carefully what is happening in the neighborhood. Trust your instincts and avoid areas where there is unusual activity.
- » When you leave your vehicle unattended, lock up items containing personal information and confidential client information.
- » On visits to clients' homes, position yourself at the side of the door when ringing the bell or knocking.
- » Abide by agency protocols regarding outreach worker health and safety. For example, if conducting a client home visit in adherence to social distancing requirements, position yourself at a safe distance, such as at a curbside or outside the porch.
- » Always find out whether a client is alone in the home or with someone else.
- » Trust your intuition and leave the environment if something feels amiss.
- » If there is a domestic quarrel at the home or in the vicinity of your contact with the client, do not attempt to mediate the dispute.
- » Use de-escalation techniques to handle conflict with a client or community member. Remember to actively listen and acknowledge the other person's feelings and point of view.
- » Do not give out personal information, phone numbers, addresses, etc. Do not talk about your own personal issues with your clients.
- » Do not carry weapons (even with a concealed license permit) or keep them in your work or personal vehicle while meeting with clients.
- » Maintain professional boundaries with clients and their families. Do not engage in activities with clients during nonbusiness hours.
- » Dress casually and avoid wearing colors identified as gang colors.
- » Review safety protocols periodically with your supervisor to ensure that guidelines address emerging changes in the environment.
- » Tell people in the community who you are. Introduce yourself and clarify your role as an outreach worker. Explain the services offered by your program. Identify yourself with an ID or a business card.
- » Maintain high ethical standards on and off the job. The community will pay particular attention to the interactions between outreach workers and youth, especially in a new program.
- » Be trustworthy and follow through on what you say you will do. Do not make promises you will not be able to keep.
- » Take care of yourself physically and mentally. Debrief with your supervisor, coworkers, and others you trust.

