



**Welcome to today's webinar!**  
 Florida's MIECHV Initiative presents

# Home Visitor Safety

March 9, 2017  
 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**Panelists**

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**“Some of the homes I visit are in rough neighborhoods. I am afraid to go there. I have been wondering if I am just not cut out for this work.”**

**Dress for Success**

Susie is planning her visit and wants to look very professional. She is planning to wear her new white shirt, pencil skirt, and heels. Susie is a new home visitor and is mentally rehearsing the visit so that she is as prepared as possible.




**Dress & Appearance**

- Keep dress simple - avoid jewelry, scarves, clothing that will attract unwanted attention.
- Wear safe footwear with closed toes.
- Wear name tag or shirt with program logo.
- Use small wallet or stash a little money in sock or shoe.
- Leave purse & valuables locked in trunk.

**Think Safety before you go!**

- Develop a **daily schedule** & call if major changes occur.
- Schedule **check in times** with office.
- **Assess risks** before the visit.
- On the very first visit to a home, might consider **bringing a coworker**.
- **Remain on cell phone** talking to colleague while entering a home to assess situation.

### Poll 1

Have you ever pulled up to conduct a visit and your "gut" feeling told you it was unsafe so you left?



### Drive Defensively

- Have clear directions before you leave the office - ask for visual landmarks.
- Know your exact location (address) so that you can notify police or call 911.
- Carry area map.
- Don't look lost.
- Know your local police/fire station sites.



### Evening Visits

- Don't schedule them unless it is part of your program's services & your policy.
- Ask client to turn on lights, meet you at the door or apartment elevator.
- Take a co-worker.
- Have someone to report to when visit is complete.



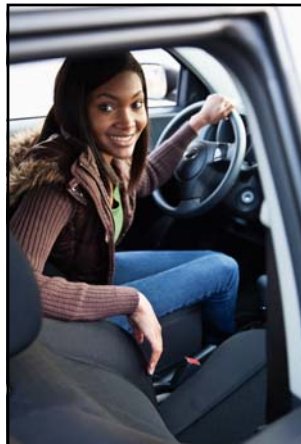
### Running Late!

Nicky is running late and can't find parking along the street so she pulls into the driveway next to a closed gate. She is wondering if she should enter the closed gate and head for the porch and front door. Then she realizes that she left her cell phone at the office.



### Car Safety

- Keep your car in good working condition and have enough gas.
- Choose a well lit parking space & one that offers the safest walking route to the home.
- Try to park where you can see your car from inside the home & can easily leave quickly if needed.
- Park on the street rather than in a driveway to lessen the chance of being blocked in.
- Park in the direction you want to go when you leave.



### General Situational Safety

- If a group of people are hanging out in front of the house/apartment, walk with confidence.
- Position yourself between the door and the family so you can exit quickly if needed.
- Acknowledge others in the home and introduce yourself.
- Let your client lead when entering another part of the house.



### Unsecured Animals



- Ask about pets before first visit.
- Watch for signs of animal.
- Carry pepper spray to protect against dogs.
- If there is an enclosed yard, watch for dogs.
- Call from the gate before you enter.
- Do a pet alert – Toot the horn.
- Remember – not your pets and you have no idea how they will behave.

### Poll 2

Have you ever made a visit where there was a gun or weapon in the room?



### Weapons

- Observe for any weapons such as knives, baseball bats, guns.
- Ask for weapons to be put away, especially during visits.
- If a situation feels wrong, reschedule to a public location like a library, conference room, or restaurant.



### Boundary Considerations

*Boundaries set the tone for the professional relationship.*

1. What is reasonable & acceptable behavior?
2. What tools/processes does your program build in to help you set & maintain boundaries?
3. What are your triggers?



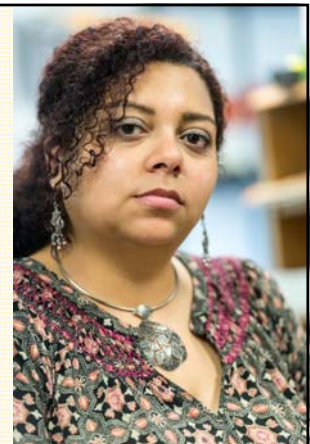
### Boyfriend Problems

During a home visit, Margarita's boyfriend comes home. He glares at you and paces around the room. When you explain who you are and why you are visiting, he yells. He begins cursing and gesturing, but stays away from you.



### Responding to Aggression

- Leave as quickly as possible.
- Try to react and respond to the person in a calm but firm manner.
- Say "It looks like this is not a good time for a visit" or "I can come back at a better time."
- Try and keep a barrier like a table between you and aggressor.



## Signs of Potential Drug Environment

**Drug paraphernalia such as:**

- Glass pipes
- Rolling papers
- Little plastic baggies
- Different people coming in & out

**Unusual supply of:**

- Cold meds or a requests for meds
- Denatured alcohol, hydrogen peroxide
- Lye, antifreeze, propane fuel
- Solvents, paint thinners, fingernail polish remover
- Pool chemicals, pesticides
- Coffee filters
- Pillow cases or sheets stained red
- Blenders, jars, batteries
- Alcohol, ether, or heavy propane odors




## Poll 3

Have you ever made a visit where you suspected someone in the home was high?



## Dealing with Substance Use

- Talk clearly and directly in a non-threatening manner.
- Keep a safe distance.
- If a member of household is impaired, ask the client to move your visit outside or reschedule if necessary.
- If client appears to be under the influence, reschedule.
- Talk with your supervisor and discuss your concerns.




## Disease & Health Concerns

- Common contagious health concerns include: lice, scabies, pink eye, staph infections, stomach viruses.
- Look for a safe public place to wash hands.
- Ask how everyone is feeling at the start of visit and then decide if safe for you to proceed.
- Do not take mouthed toys from one home to another without disinfecting.
- Know agency health procedures.



# Thank you!



## References

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