

Home Visits

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR MAKING SAFE AND EFFECTIVE HOME VISITS



Home Visit Best Practices: Using the Elevate AIDET Principle

- **Acknowledge** all family members. Knock, smile, make eye contact, and be pleasant.
- **Introduce** yourself and your role.
- **Duration.** At the start, state how long the overall visit will take, and during the visit you may want to state the length of particular tasks.
- **Explain** all processes and procedures so they know what to expect.
- **Thank** the family for inviting you into their home and for their time. Ask if there are any other questions before ending.

Establishing Rapport

Show respect by using titles (e.g., Mr., Mrs., Ms.), be aware of potential cultural differences, and be sure to use people-first language and practice disability etiquette.

Boundaries and Roles

- Maintain a professional relationship. Becoming “friends” may make it difficult to talk about hard topics.
- Respect personal space. Do not initiate touch unless necessary for the intervention. If touch is necessary, ask permission.
- Use self-disclosure sparingly to communicate understanding/build trust. The focus is not on you.

- Maintain confidentiality. While OK to discuss cases with supervisor as needed, do not share specifics or identifying information with your friends or family.

Self-Care: Practical Tips Before You Go

- Keep dress simple - avoid jewelry, scarves, clothing that will attract unwanted attention.
- Wear safe footwear with closed toes.
- Take hand sanitizer.
- Avoid wearing scents as some people are sensitive.

Think Safety Before You Go

- Assess risks by phone before the visit (e.g., animals, other persons in home).
- Ask clients to secure unruly pets.
- Ask clients to turn on lights, meet you at the door.
- If visit presents significant safety hazards, consider an alternative site to meet and/or take a buddy.
- Be sure you have enough gas and a spare tire.
- Program the client’s number into your phone.
- Identify safe routes within the neighborhood.
- Wear a name tag.
- Plan what you want to take into the home. Have items like laptops or backpacks locked away out of sight before arriving at your destination.
- Consider carrying clipboard, pepper spray, or a whistle.
- Carry important phone numbers with you.

Safety During the Home Visit

- Do not park in someone’s assigned space, or block access to other cars.
- Keep hands free and car keys in hand.
- Walk with confidence.
- Do not walk through groups on street/sidewalk.
- Plan safe physical proximity in the home by positioning yourself between the client and the door. Sit near an exit or facing hallway to view other rooms. Sit on a hard chair or the edge of a soft chair to be able to get up quickly.

Please see reverse for resources.



Home Visits

RESOURCES

If There Are Safety Concerns

- If a family member becomes agitated or says things that make you uncomfortable:
- Respond calmly, using “I” statements.
- Acknowledge what they are saying.
- Redirect using matter of fact, simple, direct statements.
- Keep a physical distance of at least 3 feet.
- Do not reach out to touch the person, stand in front of the person, or turn your back to the person.
- Do not get up from a chair while the person is sitting.
- Do not try to leave too abruptly.
- Trust your instincts regarding impending danger.
- Do not reveal information about yourself or your family that could increase the risk of being harmed.
- If you feel threatened, remain calm but leave as quickly as possible.
- Report any incident to your supervisor.

Recognizing and Responding to Health and Home Safety Issues

Establish procedures for how to report home safety issues.

Examples of health/safety issues are:

- Neglect - unmet medical, dental, personal hygiene, or nutrition needs.
- Unsafe living conditions or injuries.
- Possible abuse – physical, sexual.
- Emotional abuse – name calling, making fun, putting the person down.
- Mental status – depression, anxiety, sleep deprivation.
- Financial abuse – taking money, not allowing the person to get or keep a job when one is desired.
- Caregivers - memory problems, confusion, inappropriate behaviors. Inappropriate behaviors of paid staff.

After you leave, be sure to make notes about any concerning observations or statements.

Who We Are and Who We Serve

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, service providers and advocates, researchers and policy makers. It is among only a few centers nationwide to be a

University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, a *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center, and a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Training Program. The following are some of the ways the Center’s programs and staff can assist families, educators, and other service providers.

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free statewide phone, web, and print referral service in English and Spanish. It connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and resources. Its website database has over 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities, TN Department of Health, and the TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Contact www.familypathfinder.org, (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636.

Other Resources

- Making the Most of Home Visits - www.healthychild.net/InSicknessandHealth.php?article_id=98
- The “Home Ranger” Rides Again: Making Home Visits Safer and More Effective hpp.sagepub.com/content/9/4/323.full.pdf
- Home Visitor’s Handbook - eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/05F613A8CC15D89DAFE1D1568DB0719A.pdf
- Disability Etiquette: Engaging People With Disabilities www.tndisability.org/sites/default/files/Disability%20Etiquette%20Brochure_0.pdf
- Disability Etiquette: Interacting with People with Disabilities - www.crinet.org/education/Independent%20Living/Etiquette
- Confidentiality in Research - vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/assets/files/tipsheets/confidentialitytips.pdf

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