WORKER SAFETY

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Goal

Develop skills in working effectively and safely in stressful and potentially dangerous situations
Objectives:

- Identify potential safety issues
- Recognize three levels of awareness necessary when working in potentially dangerous situations
- Relate the four phases of crisis
- Develop skills to utilize in crisis situations
Objectives:

• Relate some techniques utilized to avoid dog bites
• Describe the process of reporting a safety incident
Do you see what I See?
Reality Check

Workers that practice good casework skills can diffuse most crises and deliver services without jeopardizing the worker or the client's safety.
Values

• Strength Based

• Dignity

• Respect
Crisis Intervention Theory: Dealing with potentially dangerous people

• What is crisis?
• Behaviorally- a change in the order, equilibrium, or the status quo.
• Dynamically- we need to understand that some clients have never learned or developed effective, rational, or constructive coping skills.
* This means a crisis is more likely to escalate
3 Levels of Awareness

1. Self-Awareness
   • What am I feeling?
   • Be selective about personal disclosures
   • What are their overall needs, and;
   • What is the best response I can give?
3 Levels of Awareness

- Should you wear jewelry?
- Should you wear high heels?
- Should you carry a purse?
- Should I “buddy up”?
3 Levels of Awareness

• Transference
  The reproduction of positive or negative feelings that were at one time associated with another person or a past experience that are now (unconsciously) transferred to a new individual (typically someone who is in charge or an authority figure).
3 Levels of Awareness

- Counter-Transference

The same dynamic only in reverse, it occurs in the authority figure towards the client.
3 Levels of Awareness

2. Environmental Awareness
Before you leave the office you should fill out a field safety form:
• Name and address of clients you are visiting
• The specific directions you are taking
• Rural setting
• Estimated time of arrival and departure
• The nature of your visit
• Your cell number
3 Levels of Awareness

• Is it a high crime area?
• If there are any safety concerns with the neighborhood plan early a.m. appointments.
3 Levels of Awareness

When selecting a car to use in the field...

- Is it in good driving condition?
- Does it have enough gas?
- The license plate and make, model, color of the vehicle you are driving
- Place any valuables out of sight.
- Park in well lit visible areas.
- Don’t get out of the car if you don’t feel safe.
3 Levels of Awareness

3. Client Awareness
Is this case high risk?
• History of violence (DV, etc.)
• Substance abuse history
• Guns in the home
• Past criminal history
• Mental illness
• Possible removal
3 Levels of Awareness

In the field.....

• Establish the goal of the visit
• Keep a clear path to the exit door
• Avoid the clients bedroom unless absolutely necessary
• Always respect their personal space
3 Levels of Awareness

Four different levels of space:
1. Intimate space- 0 to 1 arm
2. Personal space- 1 to 2 arm
3. Social space- 4 to 12 feet
4. Public space- 12 feet and more
3 Levels of Awareness

- Lice
- *Communicable diseases/illnesses*
- Dogs
- Sexual threat and innuendo
Canine Considerations
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- Dogs bite!
- Getting Bit Hurts!
- Any dog can bite!
- Look for signs of a dog before entering the yard
- Don’t surprise a dog….
  whistle, tap, call out
Canine Approach Techniques

- Take off Sunglasses
- Stand Still – Let the Dog Approach
- Stand Sideways
- Speak Softly
- Don’t Stare at the Dogs Eyes
- Observe the Dogs “Body Language”
Canine Protection Techniques

- Don’t Turn Your Back
- Use Firm Commands
- Give the Dog Something Other Than Your Hand to Bite
- Don’t Run…….

(unless you think you can win the race!)
Defense Against Dog Attack

- Maintain Self-Defense Stance
- Yell
- Shield Your Neck & Face
- Feed the Dog Your Notebook
- Vulnerable Parts of a Dog.....
  (nose, throat, chest & ribs)
THE FOUR PHASES OF CRISIS
Anxiety Phase

- Autonomic Body Responses
- Speech
- Motor Activity
Anxiety Phase

- Worker Skills During This Phase
  - Culture
  - Empathy
  - Building rapport
  - Active listening
  - Be Supportive
Verbal/Non-verbal Communication

• Tone
• Volume
• Cadence
CRISIS INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

• Identify yourself and agency
• Explain your reason for being there
• Explain your responsibility to investigate
• Inform the parents of their rights
• Let the clients know you understand their feelings
Defensive Phase

They are beginning to lose control.

• Focus on feelings and behavior.
• Process Messages differently
• Your affective delivery is more important than the content
• They begin “pushing buttons”
• They challenge your authority
Defensive Phase

Investigator takes control of the potentially escalating situation by setting limits

- S.O.D.A.S.
- Proxemics
- Kinesics
Defensive Phase

Personal Space Boundary Factors

- Culture
- Size
- Relationship
- Gender
- History
CRISIS INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

• Project a calm assured feeling that you will see the situation through to a peaceful end no matter what happens
• Don’t continue to push the client for specific answers, if the questions tend to increase anger
• Don’t corner the client physically or psychologically
CRISIS INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

DON'T....

• Appear afraid or unsure of yourself
• Appear bossy, arrogant, nor assume an “I don’t give a damn” attitude
• Don’t become defensive
• Don’t take clients anger as a personal attack
Aggression Phase

The stage in which the person will discharge their tension.

Worker Skills During This Phase

• Observation
  - Is there a dramatic change in behavior?
  - Hyperactivity?
Aggression Phase

- Shortness of breath
- Posture, clenching of jaw or fists
- Fixed stare
Aggression Phase

- Terminating the interview
  - Get away ASAP
  - Take actions to ensure your safety (Discuss policy)
  - Terminate in a way that will not embarrass the client
Tension Reduction Phase

Characterized by a noticeable decrease in the tension level.

Intervention Strategies:
- Process the incident
Video Exercise
When should I bring the Five-O?