

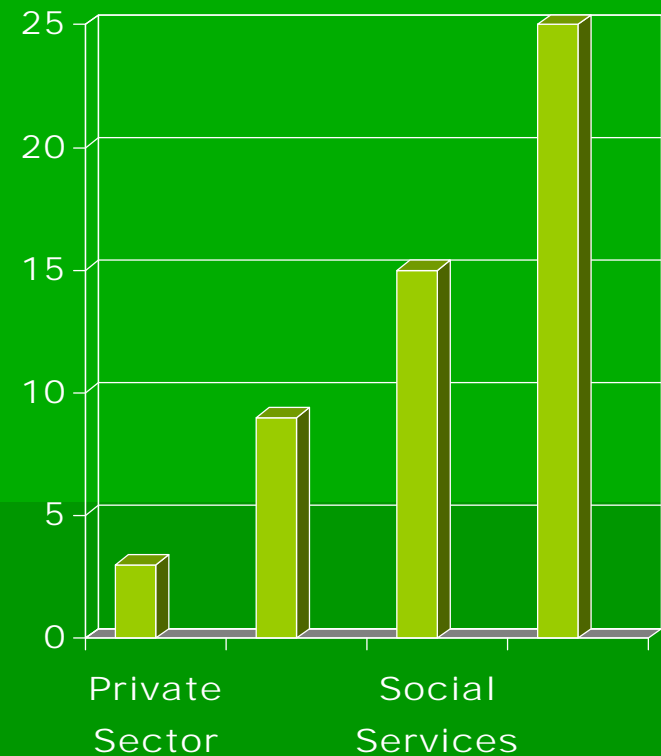


# HOME VISITOR SAFETY

**TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR  
PERSONAL SAFETY**

# Workplace Violence affects Health Care and Social Service Workers

- In a 2004 report issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on workplace violence, 48% of all non-fatal violence against all workers in the United States occurred in the fields of health care and social services.



# Workplace Violence Cont'd...

- 50%-80% of public human service workers have experienced threats, damaged properties and physical attacks during their career.
- 70% of front-line child welfare workers have been victims of violence or threats in the line of duty.

# Workplace Violence

## Cont'd...

- A review of 585 exit interviews found that 90% of former child welfare workers experienced verbal threats, 30% experienced physical attacks, and 13% had been threatened with weapons.
- Social service workers in the public sector are approximately 17 times more likely to be victims of violent assaults while at work than workers in the private sector.

# The Impact

- In 2004, Kansas Social Worker, Teri Zenner, was brutally killed during a routine home visit.
- In 2005, a woman in Texas fired a shotgun at two social workers visiting her home.
- In 2006, Social Worker, Sally Blackwell was found dead in a field just outside of Austin, TX.
- In 2006, Social Service Aide, Boni Frederick, was beaten to death while overseeing a home visit between a mother and her infant.

# Risk Factors

- The prevalence of handguns and other weapons among clients, their families or friends
- The increasing number of acute & chronic mentally ill patients being released from hospitals without follow-up care
- The increasing presence of gang members, drug or alcohol abusers, trauma patients or distraught family members
- Solo work, often in remote locations with no back up or way to get assistance
- Lack of staff training in recognizing & managing escalating hostile and assaultive behavior

# Before the Visit...

- Always let someone know where you are going.
- Mentally rehearse the visit and what you need to accomplish.
- Dress casually & don't wear excessive jewelry.
- Take your ID with you, but do not wear your ID cord around your neck.
- Wear comfortable shoes with low or no heels.
- Carry a cell phone with you, if possible.

# Approaching the House...

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Park your vehicle in a way that you can make a quick exit, if necessary.
- Do not block anyone's parking space.
- Lock valuables in the trunk of your vehicle.

# During the Visit

- Be aware of the exits from the home. Keep yourself between the client & the door.
- Sit near an exit or facing the hallway so you can view hall and bedrooms.
- Use non-threatening body language and remain calm & polite.
- Respect the client's home and their emotions.
- Listen to you instincts and feelings.
- Be cautious and use common sense. Leave if you feel threatened.

# Just in case...

- Make sure your vehicle is in good running condition and has enough gas
- When possible, back your vehicle into parking spaces.
- Keep a flashlight and a first aid kit in your vehicle.
- Take dog biscuits along to calm excited/aggressive dogs.
- Don't reveal too much personal information about yourself or your family

# What do we do now?

- **The Teri Zenner Social Worker Safety Act** was introduced to congress on May 3, 2007 to establish a grant that will assist in the provision of safety measures to protect social workers and other professionals who work with at-risk populations.

# What does this mean?

- Installation of safety equipment, including communication systems such as GPS tracking devices and GPS cell phones
- Training exercises for self-defense and crisis management
- Facility safety improvements
- The provision of pepper spray for self-defense
- Educational resources and materials to train staff on safety and awareness measures
- Training in cultural competency
- Other activities determined by the Secretary to be safety training or violence prevention program

What makes an effective  
violence prevention  
program?

# Elements of an Effective Violence Prevention Program

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- Management commitment and employee involvement
- Worksite Analysis
- Hazard prevention and control
- Safety and health training
- Recordkeeping and program evaluation

# Management Commitment

- Demonstrating concern for employee emotional and physical safety and health
- Maintaining a system of accountability for involved managers, supervisors and employees
- Establishing a comprehensive program of medical and psychological counseling and debriefing for employees experiencing or witnessing assaults or other violent incidents

# Employee Involvement

- Understanding and complying with the workplace prevention program
- Participating in employee complaint or suggestion procedures covering safety and security concerns
- Reporting violent incidents promptly and accurately

# Worksite Analysis

- Analyze incidents
- Identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk of violence
- Note high risk factors
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures

# Hazard Prevention & Control

- Arrange furniture to prevent entrapment of staff
- Provide lockable and secure bathrooms for staff members separate from patient/client and visitor facilities
- Install and maintain alarm systems and other security devices
- Keep automobiles well maintained if they are used in the field

# Hazard Prevention & Control

- Establish liaison with local police and state prosecutors
- Require all employees to report all assaults or threats to a supervisor or manager
- Use case management conferences with coworkers and supervisors to discuss ways to effectively treat potentially violent clients
- Establish a system to identify patients and clients with assaultive behavior problems

# Safety & Health Training

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- Identify risk factors that cause or contribute to assaults
- Identify ways to prevent or diffuse volatile situations or aggressive behavior
- Provide information on multicultural diversity
- Review policies and procedures for obtaining medical care, counseling, workers' compensation or legal assistance

# Recordkeeping & Program Evaluation

- Review reports and minutes from staff meetings on safety and security issues
- Keep up-to-date records of administrative and work practice changes
- Keep abreast of new available strategies

Above all else...

**Always TRUST YOUR  
INSTINCTS...**

# For More Information

**Please contact Occupational Safety &  
Health Administration:**

**[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) or 1-800-321-OSHA**

