

Radford University

Safety Plan

Student: _____

MSW Field Instructor: _____

Faculty Field Liaison: _____

Task Supervisor (if applicable): _____

Agency: _____

Semester: _____

Year: _____

Work Placement Yes _____ No _____

Instructions. Talk with your field instructor regarding safety in the workplace. Create a safety plan for your individual agency, taking these standards and modifying them to apply to your unique situation to create a safety plan.

“A major tenet of the National Association of Social Workers’ (NASW) threefold mission is to promote, develop, and protect the practice of social work and social workers. In alignment with that mission, NASW establishes professional standards and guidelines to support quality social work practice.” (NASW, 2013)

Standard 1 Organizational Culture of Safety and Security

Agencies that employ social workers should establish and maintain an organizational culture that promotes safety and security for their staff. Social workers should be able to practice in environments free from physical, verbal, and psychological violence and threats of violence. Workplace safety demands diligence from organizational leadership at every step of the safety continuum—from violence prevention and organizational responses to violent acts to providing resources and supports to social workers who experience acts of violence. Therefore, agencies that employ social workers should demonstrate their ability to address issues of safety for their staff. Social work employers must protect their employees by instituting policies and procedures that maximize safety and security in the office as well as in the field.

Examples

Interns should be made aware of agency Safety Policies that

- provide an oral and written commitment by agency leadership to promote the safety of all staff
- govern the management of dangerous (or hostile and violent) behavior in the workplace (including clients, coworkers, and supervisors)
- establish safety teams or safety committees to ensure adherence to policy and procedure, as well as to provide peer support during and after an incident.

Interns should know how to report incidents of assault, threats, abuse, harassment, and violence at their agency

Plan

Standard 2 Prevention

The goal of organizations that employ social workers should be to create a culture of safety that adopts a proactive preventative approach to violence management and risk.

Prevention activities use available information to minimize the risk of future incidents of violence. Therefore, a preventative approach involves analyzing and understanding past incidents and determining actions that can circumvent or avoid their reoccurrence.

| Examples | Plan |
|--|------|
| <p>Interns should participate in orientation and training to reduce risk and promote safety.</p> <p>Interns can engage in assessment of current safety measures and policies and identify and report gaps in protocols/procedures.</p> | |

Standard 3 Office Safety

Social workers' office environments should promote safety for social workers and their clients.

The office/agency environment where social workers work should not only be safe, but should actively promote and encourage safe practices.

| Examples | Plan |
|--|------|
| <p>Interns should be working in spaces that allow for social workers to exit easily in potentially violent situations. This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• access to alarm systems that can alert others to a safety risk or breach• restricted access to objects that may be used as weapons• secure entry and access (for example, access codes, keys, or swipe cards)• well-lit workspaces and parking lots <p>Agencies and interns should consider if the intern will ever be alone in the office. If so, what is the protocol?</p> | |

Standard 4 Use of Safety Technology

Organizations that employ social workers should use technology appropriately and effectively to minimize risk.

Risk assessments may highlight the need to introduce technology to minimize risk of harm to social workers. Although technology is not a solution in and of itself, it can be a helpful tool in establishing and maintaining a culture of safety. It is important that staff understand that technology will not prevent incidents from occurring. Technology is not a substitute for safety planning. As with all technological tools, consideration should be given to their limitations as well as the legal and ethical implications of their usage. Successful use of technology relies on a comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying an appropriate system(s), and a commitment by all staff to use it appropriately. Technology can augment, but not replace, other important and critical requirements in these guidelines. Reliance on technology alone can promote a false sense of security. The introduction of safety technology must be accompanied by clear protocols and training regarding the limits and proper usage, by whom, and under what circumstances.

Examples

Plan

Interns should have access to internal alert systems that can be activated. Examples can include:

- Internal alert systems that can be activated from key fobs or other mobile devices
- Panic buttons
- Mobile safety devices
- Personal safety devices
- Security cameras where appropriate.
- Code words or phrases

Standard 5 Use of Mobile Communication

Social workers should be provided access to communication devices to promote their safety in the field.

Wherever possible, social workers should use agency phones, rather than personal phones, to reduce exposure of their personal information. Although excellent tools for communication, a mobile phone can also potentially escalate an aggressive situation, and the social worker should therefore use it in a sensitive and sensible manner.

| Examples | Plan |
|---|------|
| <p>The agency and interns should be familiar with limitations of cell phone coverage in areas where they may visit; what happens if they don't have service?</p> <p>Interns should have contact information in the case of an emergency</p> <p>Interns should have a way to let their supervisor or agency know where they are located</p> <p>Interns should agree on and use "code" words or phrases to help social workers convey the nature of threats to their managers or colleagues</p> | |

Standard 6 Risk Assessment for Field Visits

Social workers should assess and take steps to reduce their risk for violence prior to each field visit.

Social workers who make visits to clients in the field may be subjected to a range of safety risks. Prior to each field visit, social workers should conduct a risk assessment that includes the following:

| Examples | Plan |
|---|------|
| <p>Interns should understand the importance of assessing for safety when making client visits. Examples of what to assess for include: (These can be unique to the type of visit you are conducting.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment of environmental factors• Assessment of client’s living space• Assessment of proposed work activities• Assessment of increased risk due to client’s condition• Assessment of worker vulnerability• Assessment of condition of emergency equipment that may be needed• Discussion of the issue of safety with the client, formally as a mutual safety contract or informally as a discussion of mutual safety | |

Standard 7 Transporting Clients

Social workers should acknowledge particular safety concerns when transporting clients.

When transporting clients is an expectation of the job, employers should ensure that policies and practices are in place to protect both social workers and clients.

Examples

Plan

At the time of pick up, the intern should assess:

- the client's level of agitation (if any), use of intoxicants, and the meaning of the appointment to the client
- and the condition of the vehicle

If the client is assessed to be unsafe to transport, or the vehicle is assessed to be unsafe to operate, agency policies should prohibit the intern from transporting the client.

Standard 8 Comprehensive Reporting Practices

Social workers should engage in comprehensive reporting practices regarding field visits.

Social workers who are in the field should ensure that their in-office setting (supervisor, manager, coworker) is aware of their whereabouts and plans. This information should be kept in a secure location, accessible only to staff who need it.

Examples

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Prior to each field visit, if interns will be alone, interns should inform their supervisor of their schedule (where they will be, what client, what times, etc.)

Intern should carry agency identification cards at all times (if agencies do not have ID cards, how will clients be informed of what agency the intern is with?)

Standard 9 Post-Incident Reporting and Response

Employers of social workers should develop protocols that follow an incidence of violence or abuse.

Despite an agency's best intentions, every incidence of violence or abuse cannot be anticipated or avoided. However, employers of social workers have an obligation to develop policies and protocols following a violent or abusive incident that seek to ameliorate the current victim's condition and to avoid future incidents. The protocols can include the following:

| Examples | Plan |
|--|------|
| <p>Interns should be made aware of how to complete an incident report that details the incident, where and when the incident occurred, who was present/involved, a description of injuries, factors contributing to the event and whether or not medical services were advised and/or accessed.</p> <p>Interns and their supervisors should follow up on this safety plan after an incident occurs to make changes as needed</p> | |

Standard 10 Safety Training

Social workers should participate in annual training (or case supervision as needed) that develops and maintains their ability to practice safely. Safety training can include skill building in risk assessment, risk management, risk reduction, a previously constructed Safety Plan of Action that includes exit strategies, verbal de-escalation techniques, effective strategies for clinical interventions with violent or potentially violent clients, and nonviolent self-defense and the impact of secondary trauma. Safety training can also include the use of safety technology devices and advocating for self-care to effectively manage secondary trauma in the workplace

| Examples | Plan |
|---|------|
| <p>Intern will participate in new hire orientation and annual trainings that are necessary for best practice and safety in their internship Some examples of such trainings can include (these can be unique to your agency):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blood born pathogen training • fire safety training • PPE training • De-escalation | |

Student Date

Faculty Field Liaison Date

Field Instructor Date

Task Supervisor Date