
 <p>REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN</p> <p>Policy Manual</p>	<p>Policy Name: Off-site Safety, Community Travel, Home Visits and Working Alone</p>	<p>Level: 2</p>	<p>Policy Number: ADM 6.180</p>
	<p>Department: Administration – Safety/Risk Management</p>	<p>Authorized Signature: </p>	
	<p>Effective Date: May 23, 2002</p>	<p>Last Revision: October 19, 2020</p>	

PURPOSE:

To ensure in so far as is reasonably practical, the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety, health and welfare of Rehabilitation Centre for Children's (RCC) employees who are working off site.

Guiding Principles:

In keeping with RCC's commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace as noted in the RCC Administration Safety/Risk management policy 6.10, this policy and the attached Appendix have been developed to ensure all safety risks are assessed and appropriately addressed to ensure staff safety when working off site.

While ensuring staff safety, the safety, well-being and provision of effective services for clients is also essential. It is important that safety concerns are addressed directly but also respectfully keeping in mind that there are many understandable reasons why clients may have mixed feelings about welcoming visitors into their homes or communities. Serving our clients in their homes and communities is a privilege which is to be honored.

Scope:

RCC provides services and engages in programs that require employees to provide services within families' homes and communities. While most visits occur in pleasant circumstances, untoward incidences can occur, and staff need to be prepared and knowledgeable in managing such situations in a respectful and safe manner.

Safety concerns may include but are not limited to verbal and nonverbal threatening or aggressive behavior of client, family, community members, passersby and animal/pets; travelling (road/weather conditions, vehicle etc.); ergonomics; environmental hazards; and infection control. It is noted that the threat of violence or compromised safety can be just as harmful and psychologically damaging to staff as an actual attack or incident.

POLICY:

This policy and the attached appendix are intended to be used in conjunction with all other RCC safety policies. Staff are expected to be familiar with such policies prior to working independently within the community.

While all visits should be respectful and mutually beneficial, staff safety is a priority in all interventions. If an employee has any safety concerns regarding travelling or attending visits outside of the SSCY Centre, they are to discuss their concerns with their manager. During this discussion, risks will be identified, and a mutually agreeable safety plan will be developed. Should a threat or concern arise during a visit or while travelling, staff are encouraged to use their clinical judgement to assess if the visit should be

continued or respectfully concluded so that further planning to address the safety concerns can occur. Staff should share their concerns with their manager at the earliest possible appropriate time.

Staff are always encouraged to “trust their gut” and take appropriate action when a situation feels or appears to be unsafe in any manner.

Staff are to report occurrences of threat and situations of perceived risk with their managers and seek support through EAP, spiritual supports or other resources if/as needed.

As per RCC Policy 6.51, any safety related incident or near miss must be reported to RCC management using an RCC Incident Report Form. As per RCC Policy 4.5 staff must also report workplace injuries also to Worker's Compensation and the RCC Safety and Health Committee. As per HR policy 8.85, staff are to report any incidence of abuse, discrimination or harassment directed to them, to their manager so that action to protect and support the employee can be taken.

Right to Refuse Dangerous Work

A worker may refuse to perform work at a workplace where she/he has reasonable grounds to believe and does believe that the particular work is dangerous to their safety or health, or the safety and health of another worker or any other person (Workplace Safety and Health act, Section 43(1)). If work deemed dangerous is refused, staff are required to provide written documentation of the situation to their supervisor. (Refer to Right to Refuse Policy ADM 6.170)

Procedure:

Appendix A contains staff safety procedures to be followed when travelling and conducting visits outside of the SSCY Centre.

References:

Form # W-00452 WRHA Safe Visit Plan

Form # W-00439 WRHA Safety Assessment Form Tool

Community Therapy Services Workplace Safety and Health Management Guidelines.

Consultation: with the RCC Clinical Leadership Team

APPENDIX A

Rehabilitation Centre for Children (RCC) Staff Safety Guidelines for when Working Off Site.

This document accompanies Policy ADM 6.180 Off Site Safety and will provide general information pertaining to some potential areas of risk. This list is not exhaustive, and staff are reminded to discuss any safety concerns with their manager so that appropriate planning may occur. Staff and client safety while providing effective services are our priorities.

Many safety concerns can be mitigated by respectful communication, awareness, planning and effective response as issues arise. Safety is enhanced when services are provided in a client-centered and culturally safe manner. When arranging visits, it is important to ensure there is clarity and agreement about the purpose/intent of the visit. Discuss where, when and with whom the services will be provided. Provide as many choices (location, date, time, who is to be included, agenda items etc....) and input as possible to service recipients. Our services are voluntary in nature and clients must feel comfortable and safe in opening their homes/communities to us. We are visitors in their homes/communities and must treat this as the honor and privilege that it is.

1. Staff emergency contact information:

The responsible RCC department will have emergency contact information for each employee.

2. Safeguarding files including laptops/USB memory sticks/ work cell phones with client information:

Client files contain confidential information, are legal documents, and are the property of RCC. As a trustee of this information, staff are responsible for the proper care and management of these files at all times to help ensure that all confidential material is protected.

PROCEDURES: Laptops and work cell phones should always be kept with staff or in safe location with your home but should not be left in a vehicle. Take only what is necessary with you from RCC and to off site visits. Staff who are carrying client files outside of RCC must ensure that they are kept:

- a) enclosed in a file box, brief case or other enclosed storage container
- b) secured in the trunk of the vehicle when unattended
- c) out of sight, as much as possible, if the vehicle does not have a trunk
- d) safely stored out of sight of others in the home of the therapist during evenings and weekends
- e) when flying, files will either be in carry-on luggage with staff or in checked luggage with lock on luggage

3. Dress:

Staff are to dress in accordance with RCC dress code (Human Resource Policy, 7.2) always keep safety in mind. Staff may consider wearing sensible footwear, minimal jewelry/valuables, and refrain from scarves or items that can easily be pulled or caught on things. Consider taking indoor shoes with you to visits.

4. Setting up Home/Community Visits:

- a) Whenever possible, home visits will be scheduled through phone contact with the parent or care provider by the administrative assistant for the department, Jordan's Principle community staff or by the direct service personnel who will be doing the visit.
- b) Screening for concerns. Initial contact for the first appointment should include questions to ascertain possible risks to the employee and may include:
 - Will anyone else be home during the visit?
 - Do you have any pets/dogs?
 - Does anyone smoke in the home?
 - Other information deemed suitable to the visit (i.e.; Clarifying questions or the house/property – it is isolated - can it be seen from the road - directions to get there - particularities of the road etc....)
- c) If concerns arise during the scheduling of appointments, the staff member will advise the manager and may consult, in a confidential and non-judgmental way with colleagues or referral sources that have had previous contact with the family. Appropriate safety planning will occur with the staff involved. Whenever possible, staff should arrange to have a colleague attend a first visit with them.
- d) Staff are responsible to ensure their department has an itinerary of all scheduled off site appointments (i.e. Accuro, Outlook calendar access, Jordan's Principle travel log etc....) with contact numbers for all families or Jordan's Principle community case managers and cellular phones of all employees conducting the visits.
- e) Where cell service exists, a cellular phone must be taken to all visits and be kept charged and turned on. Relevant emergency contact numbers should be stored in the phone. For all Jordan's Principle community visits, relevant contact numbers for community liaison must be obtained from either Tribal Services Coordinator or case manager for the community. Staff must be aware of limitations of cellular phone reception.
- f) To help ensure the safety and security of service recipients, all initial home visits in First Nations' communities will be completed with a community staff person accompanying the RCC staff to the visit. RCC staff will follow the recommendations of the community staff regarding home visits (i.e. if community staff recommends a visit at a Health Centre/ Jordan's Principle Centre, then staff will complete a visit with the child and caregiver at the Centre rather than contact through a home visit). For follow up home visits, staff will consider feedback from service recipients and community staff in their planning.

5. Arriving at Home/Community Visits

- a) Do not park in the driveway/parking lot where the vehicle can be blocked in. If possible, park in a well-lit area as close to the home/building as possible. Lock the doors and keep the keys easily accessible, on your person at all times. If possible, valuables should not be left in the car and if so, should be kept out of sight – locked in trunk and/or covered if possible.
- b) Observe your environment as you approach the building (i.e.: sounds/sights that may be concerning – this may include but is not limited to aggressive dogs). If this occurs, consider returning to your vehicle to call the client to ensure it is still an appropriate time to visit. Staff may

respectfully raise the observed concern with the client and request assistance to mitigate the risk. For example, staff may ask client to lock up the dog in an appropriate location for the duration of the visit. At all times, staff may consult with their manager and/or cancel/postpone the visit due to perceived safety risks. Remembering again to trust your instincts.

- c) Stand back after knocking on the door. Wait for the door to be opened.
- d) Introduce yourself and wear or present your RCC ID badge.
- e) Do not enter unless greeted and invited in.
- f) Do not enter the house unless a resident parent or care giver is home.
- g) Take a cellular phone into the home with you, be sure it is charged and on.
- h) Determine/assess who else is in the home at the time of your visit or expected to arrive during the visit.
- i) Be aware of your surroundings, making note of any implements or potential weapons in the area that may be used in a hostile situation.
- j) Try not to sit in closed spaces or a distance from the door. Visually locate a second exit.
- k) If possible, sit on a hard surface such as a kitchen chair as opposed to a soft surface such as a couch. These are easier/faster to get up from and are less likely to attract pests such as bed bugs.
- l) Ensure all resources are kept close by in case of the need for a quick exit. Take only items necessary for the visit into the home.
- m) Staff should remain only in the general living area of the house (kitchen, hall, living room). Other rooms may be entered for the purposes of assessment or evaluation of an identified problem requiring a therapeutic intervention by invitation only and when assessed as safe and appropriate to do so.
- n) Use discretion when offered/accepting food and/or drinks. Consider ahead of time, a respectful response to decline offerings if that is your intention.
- o) If you feel at all unsafe, end the visit prematurely. You need to be guided by your professional skills and assessment of the situation. If you feel the situation is potentially dangerous, be alert and leave the situation as soon as possible. Inform your manager of the situation.

6.Traveling outside the perimeter or to home visits:

- a) Employees will initiate a call to Encore Tele Solutions (1-888-725-6707) or manager as per department procedures, at the beginning of their day when driving out of town or prior to a home visit. They will indicate their ETA (or the next time they will check in), who is travelling, their contact information and vehicle and license plate number. Employees will then be responsible to call and check in upon their arrival at their destination or at the designated time.

For staff travelling in areas with irregular or no cellular service, they will borrow a satellite communication device. This device will allow the employee to get in touch with RCC staff via SMS or text. Every Satellite device has an SOS button which can also be activated in case of emergency need (for example car breaks down). If SOS button is activated, the company will contact the user by text message on the device and ask what is needed. You can then correspond by text to communicate your needs. If no response, the company will alert emergency personnel and they are dispatched to the device location.

- b) Employees will initiate a check in call when leaving a community to drive home or to accommodations for the night outside the community perimeter. Employees will provide the same information as above and an ETA for arrival to home or accommodations and will be responsible to check in on their arrival.
- c) If an employee does not check in at the scheduled time plus 60 minutes:
- Encore/ manager will attempt to contact the employee.
 - If they are unable to do so, they will then contact RCC department for that employee. If after hours, they will contact the RCC (or designate) staff on call.
 - RCC Staff will then attempt to reach employee and if necessary, will contact the staff member's personal emergency contacts and those they were scheduled to meet with throughout the day.
 - If staff is unable to reach the employee, they will contact RCMP detachment for the location closest to the employee's destination. This will initiate the RCMPs assistance in locating the staff member.
- d) Staff must frequently monitor weather and travel conditions (looking out window, listening to radio/media updates and consulting 511). If at any point an employee is uncertain of roads or weather conditions, they can initiate a check in call, and provide the same information as above and ETA or next check in time.
- e) Staff are not to engage in highway travel when severe weather is occurring, or hazardous weather is probable. Remain at home or another safe location until it is deemed safe to travel. If at any point an employee feels unsafe while travelling, they are to take measures to ensure their safety (i.e.: pull off the road, seek shelter, call 911 if necessary) and contact their manager to address and plan for safety concerns.
- f) RCC staff are required to observe all rules of the road to help ensure their safety and must ensure their vehicle is in good working order with sufficient fuel, oil, spare tire, emergency supplies etc.....

7. Air Travel:

For travel that involves flights on any aircraft carriers where the noise level exceeds 87 dB, staff will wear hearing protection. Disposable earplugs are available from most of these airlines and a supply of these can also be obtained from the Centre. Custom ear molds for hearing protection are an option for staff who travel regularly on these aircrafts.

8. Environmental Hazards:

Staff should remain alert to environmental hazards during home/community visits. These may include rickety stairs, the presence of mold or rodents, etc.... Staff should respectfully and non-judgmentally bring their concerns to the client's attention keeping at the forefront that this is the client's home/community. Agreement may be made to hold visit in another mutually agreed upon location. With client's consent and if appropriate to do so, concerns may be brought to the homeowner, an Environmental Housing Officer or Tenant Relations.

9. Infestations such as Bed bugs

Bed bugs themselves do not present as a health and safety issue however staff will want to help ensure that they do not transport these pests from one location to another or to their vehicle/home. To help prevent the transference of the presence of bed bugs, staff are to:

- a) Take in/out minimal/essential items into a home/community visit.
- b) Avoid sitting on soft cushions/carpeting when possible (hard surfaced chairs such as kitchen chairs are less likely to attract bed bugs).
- c) Avoid wearing loose/flowing articles of clothing or those with multiple pleats/pockets where bed bugs can hide. Light colored clothes are easier to see bed bugs.
- d) As discreetly as possible, brush yourself and your belongings off when leaving residence.
- e) If necessary, change and bag clothes along with other items that had gone into visit.

10. Infection Control

Staff are to be aware of all current Infectious Control guidelines and ensure they have an adequate supply of PPE for home/community visits. Comply with all RCC and public health guidelines and orders.

11. Ergonomics

Staff are to be familiar with appropriate ergonomics as per ADM 6.195. Ergonomic should be considered during travel and home/community visits to the greatest extent possible. Where workstation lay out is less than ideal from an ergonomic perspective, staff are encouraged to take appropriate movement/stretching breaks to help prevent/minimize the risk of injury/harm.

12. Additional Tips/resources are available from multiple sources.

Please visit:

<https://www.pshsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Tips-for-Personal-Safety-Home-Visits.pdf.pdf> for guarding your personal Safety on Home visits from Public Services health and Safety Association Ontario.

https://www.winnipeg.ca/police/takeaction/safety_street.stm