

Safety Guidelines for Street Outreach

These safety guidelines for street outreach are adapted from guidelines developed by outreach workers in the downtown skid row area of Los Angeles. They are designed solely to assist staff in avoiding trouble on the street. They do not address how to handle difficulties once they arise. The strength of these guidelines is that they address the needs of the street outreach worker who operates in a very different work environment than staff who are agency-based. The guidelines are intended as only one part of an agency's overall safety policies and procedures.

1. Your supervisor needs to know where you will be at all times.
2. Learn as much as possible about the situation before setting out to do outreach.
3. Do not plan outreach in areas which you have good reason to believe are inherently dangerous.
4. Be aware of gang areas and their colors. Avoid wearing those colors.
5. Always carry business cards and identification with you.
6. Inform collaborating agencies of your presence.
7. Introduce yourself and inform people of what you are doing and why.
8. Do not stand and argue with someone who does not agree with what you are doing.
9. Outreach is preferably conducted in two-person teams. No team member should conduct outreach activities alone unless receiving prior approval from their supervisor.
10. Do not approach those who are giving "signs" that they do not want to be bothered.
11. Do not be critical of your partner in public while conducting outreach. Always present yourselves as a team.
12. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes. Do not overdress.
13. Do not carry valuables or other personal possessions such as jewelry, large amounts of money, radios, laptops, etc. If carrying incentives, make arrangements to hold these in a secure place.

14. Do not remain in a spot where you are privy to a drug deal in process or is being set up to "go down." Leave the area immediately without drawing attention to yourself or others.
15. Do not linger with a person who you know is holding illicit drugs.
16. Do not interrupt the sale of sex or drugs for money. Leave the area immediately without drawing attention to yourself or others.
17. Do not counsel or play the role of a social worker on the streets.
18. Maintain confidentiality with all clients you meet.
19. Do not accept gifts, food or buy any merchandise from clients.
20. Do not give or lend money to clients.
21. Do not accept or hold any type of controlled substance.
22. Never enter any clients' cars, homes or any enclosed area.
23. Tell clients approximately when you will be back and where you can be reached. Provide clients with a business card.
24. Develop a contingency plan for worst-case scenarios or dangerous situations with your partner and supervisor.
25. Keep your supervisor informed of any unusual developments.
26. In case of an emergency, call or have another person call 911. Do not separate from your partner unless you feel that staying would increase your danger.

Employee Statement:

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the safety guidelines for performing outreach. I certify that I have read and understand these guidelines, and I agree to comply with agency guidelines related to this issue to the best of my ability.

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____