

**County of San Bernardino
Department of Behavioral Health**

Safety in the Field Procedure

Effective Date 07/13/1994
Revision Date 05/28/2010



Allan Rawland, Director

Purpose To establish safety procedures for the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) staff when they are providing mental health, alcohol and drug, case management, or other related services in the field.

Caution DBH staff should review a client's medical record and other available information to assess the client's history of mental illness and/or alcohol and drug abuse, and potential for dangerous behavior prior to making a home/facility visit. If sufficient information is not available, or if DBH staff is unsure as to his/her assured safety, the Clinic Supervisor will determine if multiple DBH staff shall conduct the visit.

Important Note: Under no circumstances are DBH staff members to transport any client in their own vehicle.

Procedure DBH staff shall utilize the following roles and responsibilities when preparing for and conducting home/facility visits:

Roles	Responsibilities
Clinic	Set up a tracking system to use when staff make field visits. The tracking system shall include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff sign-out time and approximate return time.• A pager and/or cell phone number where staff can be contacted. A "sign-in/sign-out" board may be used for the above.

Continued on next page

County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health

Safety in the Field Procedure, Continued

Procedure (continued)

Roles	Responsibilities
DBH Staff	<p>Staff making field visits shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the Outlook Calendar or other calendar mechanism used (i. e., Clinic Scheduler, e-mail) for the purpose of providing concise information on the staff member's location while in the field (name of client, address and phone number of each destination planned). • Plan client field visits. Do not make unexpected visits to client and/or facility unless such visits are mandated by program policies/regulations. • Wear Department photo identification badges at all times while on field visits. • Never assume that any field visit/intervention is routine. Always err on the side of caution to ensure safety. When in doubt, contact supervisory staff for consultation. If supervisory staff is not available, terminate the visit and return to the clinic for consultation. • When visiting an unknown area, drive through the area to assess potential for danger. If staff determines the area is not safe, return to the clinic and consult with the Clinic Supervisor. • Upon arrival at the facility, identify yourself to the facility staff and state who you are visiting. • If time allocated for the visit is exceeded based on calendar documentation and "sign-out" board or if a diversion has occurred for any reason, contact immediate supervisor, notify him/her of the delay, and provide an updated estimated time of completion. • Follow the emergency safety back-up rules that schools have in place when conducting field visits at school sites. In certain cases, clinics/programs may choose to co-develop safety procedures with school site administration. In this case, follow the mutually agreed upon procedures.

Continued on next page

County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health

Safety in the Field Procedure, Continued

Procedure (continued)

Roles	Responsibilities
Clerical Staff	Clerical staff or designee will notify the Clinic Supervisor/designee when a staff person conducting a home/facility visit does not return within thirty (30) minutes of the scheduled return time.
Clinic Supervisor	The Clinic Supervisor/designee is responsible for monitoring all staff in the field. Monitoring may include, but is not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal/visual contact with staff member who does not return to designated office as indicated on the sign-out board. • Monitor Outlook Calendar or other calendar mechanism for a schedule of staff person's stops. • Any other monitoring techniques that may be available.

Home Visit Protocol

Whenever a DBH staff member is conducting a home/field visit, the following protocol shall be followed:

- Park in a well-lit area. Always park vehicle in a manner that facilitates easy access and departure.
- Never enter a dark room.
- Always have ready access to a door/exit. Never move too far away from a door entry
- Be aware of dangerous objects such as scissors, flowerpots, utensils, etc., that could be used as weapons.
- Avoid unchecked/unleashed animals. When protection from unrestricted animals cannot be insured, staff should not proceed further onto the property.
- If available, take a cellular phone and/or pager.
- Report any threats or assaults made to a DBH staff person immediately to Law Enforcement by calling 911. Thereafter, immediately contact the supervisor, summarize the incident and complete the [DBH Unusual Occurrence/Incident Report](#) form.

Related Policies

DBH Standard Practices Manual SFT7017: [How to Report an Incident](#)
 DBH Standard Practices Manual SFT7028: [Local Community Crisis Incident Response Procedure](#)