

## National Gang Center

# Outreach Worker Safety Tips

- » Always let your supervisor or coworkers know your schedule. Provide the clients' names and locations of contacts.
- » Make sure that your phone is on and charged at all times. Program emergency numbers.
- » Dress casually and avoid wearing colors identified as gang colors.
- » Be aware of recent violence in the community. Work with another outreach worker, especially when areas are "hot." Reschedule meetings and activities until situations are under control.
- » Be aware of your surroundings. Observe carefully what is happening in the neighborhood. Trust your instincts and avoid areas where there is unusual activity.
- » When you leave your vehicle unattended, lock up items containing personal information and confidential client information.
- » On visits to clients' homes, position yourself at the side of the door when ringing the bell or knocking.
- » Always find out whether a client is alone or someone else is in the home.
- » If there is a domestic quarrel at the home or in the vicinity of your contact with the client, do not attempt to mediate the dispute.
- » Do not give out personal information, phone numbers, addresses, etc. Do not talk about your own personal issues with youth.
- » Maintain professional boundaries with clients and their families. Do not engage in activities with clients outside of non-business hours.
- » Discuss matters pertaining to youth and sensitive work-related information outside the presence of clients.
- » Use de-escalation techniques to handle conflict with a client or community member. Remember to actively listen and acknowledge the other person's feelings and point of view.
- » Tell people in the community who you are. Introduce yourself and clarify your role as an outreach worker. Explain the services offered by your program. Identify yourself with an ID or business card.
- » Maintain high ethical standards on and off the job. The community will pay particular attention to the interactions between outreach workers and youth, especially in a new program.
- » Be trustworthy and follow through on what you say you will do. Do not make promises you will not be able to keep.
- » Take care of yourself physically and mentally. Debrief with your supervisor, coworker, and others you trust.

