

# **Benton-Stearns Ed District**

## **Home Visiting Safety Guidelines**



# INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

(Presented to families in handbook)

**Health/Illness:** Staff members visit several homes in one day. They take health precautions which include frequent hand washing and bleaching of toys and materials. However, there can be some risk of spreading infections from home to home if extra care is not taken. Parents should inform visiting staff prior to a visit if ANY family member in the home has a contagious illness. Home visits will not take place if there is a risk of spreading germs among families.

The following are helpful guidelines of illness that would warrant canceling a visit:

Elevated temperature (above 98.6) within the last 24 hours.

Vomiting within the last 24 hours

Diarrhea within the last 24 hours

Strep throat – needs to be on antibiotics for 24 hours before home visits can resume.

Pink eye, skin rashes, lice, scabies, impetigo, measles or chicken pox.



## **Weather:**

The Early Intervention Program will follow the school closing policy for the district in which you live. Due to the amount of miles traveled to some of our home visits the teachers will use their judgment in deciding whether or not to make a home visit if school is not canceled. If the roads to your home have not been plowed, please call and let your teacher know.

## **Safety of staff:**

Please have all pets contained when staff is scheduled to visit. Staff will not get out of a vehicle if there is a dog loose in the yard.

The Benton-Stearns Education staff has the right to find and request an alternate placement or site for delivery of service if the home environment is not safe.

## Safety Guidelines for BSED Home Visiting

- ❖ Follow the guidelines presented to parents for health/illness and weather. Cancel visits when you are ill, and use your judgment when traveling in inclement weather.
- ❖ The number one thing staff can do to be safe is to be prepared. Prepare for the worse case scenarios and expect the unexpected. Staff should treat every visit as a first visit – there is no such thing as “routine” visits to some homes.
- ❖ Staff should prepare in advance for what might happen. Do not let your guard down and always be alert.
- ❖ All staff will attend Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training (verbal de-escalation training will prepare for interacting with escalated adults they may encounter on home visits). Staff will have a refresher training every two-three years.

### Intake

The intake team will screen calls and compile information regarding safety concerns to the best of their ability. If the intake facilitator senses that the environment maybe unsafe; they may suggest the first meeting take place in a neutral location (such as our office) or they may choose to bring another staff member with them. When a referral comes from human services, the intake facilitator will get as much information as they can regarding the family background and the safety of the home.

Some factors that are considered to be an “at risk” visit include:

History of aggressive behavior, violence or sexual harassment

Presence of unrestrained animals/pets

Other unknown adults that will be present

Unsafe neighboring premises

Isolation of the home

History of drug/alcohol abuse

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YOUR  
INSTINCTS**



## Staff Preparation

- ✓ Staff will keep their calendar updated on Google and call the main office with any last minute changes to their schedule.
- ✓ BSED will keep a file of the staff's current vehicle make, model and license number.
- ✓ Staff will carry in their car a list of the student's names, addresses and phone numbers ( if you need to go to your car and call 911 you need to have the address for your location)
- ✓ Staff will dress to protect themselves– wearing shoes and clothes that make it easy to move quickly.
- ✓ Call ahead of time to remind the parent of a visit and remind them to secure animals.
- ✓ Park on the street – not in the driveway.
- ✓ Keep purses and other personal belongings in the trunk of your car, do not carry large amounts of cash or wear expensive jewelry.
- ✓ Have 911 pre-programmed in your cell phone.
- ✓ Discuss the “what if’s” with the team and prepare how you will respond to situations.



## **General**

- ❖ As you approach the door –be alert to your surroundings, listen, look and smell. Listen before knocking; if you hear loud quarreling, sounds of fighting or other disturbances – leave immediately.
- ❖ If an unfamiliar person answers the door, find out if the parent is home before entering.
- ❖ Do not enter if you suspect an unsafe condition.
- ❖ In an apartment building -Do not use enclosed stairwells if an elevator is available. However, do not get into an elevator if you are uncomfortable with its occupants.
- ❖ Your cell phone and car keys should be kept on your body during the visit.
- ❖ Be aware of exits and position yourself for easy access to exits. If possible sit with your back to a wall, not to an unknown space.
- ❖ If you are physically or verbally threatened – leave immediately.
- ❖ If at any time you feel that your safety is at risk or you are not feeling secure, you should leave immediately.
- ❖ If someone in the home is intoxicated or appears to be affected by drugs, staff is not to enter the home or leave immediately.
- ❖ Don't let your guard down.
- ❖ Be aware of any other people in the dwelling and the traffic in and out of the home while you are there.
- ❖ Conduct visits during daylight hours – during normal working hours (7:30-4:30), unless otherwise arranged with your supervisor.
- ❖ Drop in visits are discouraged, please consult with your supervisor prior to making a drop in visit to a family.
- ❖ When making a 2 person visit – agree on a code word/phrase prior to the visit for a quick escape – such as “Tom has called and asked us to return to the office”.

- ❖ Be aware that your behavior may unintentionally trigger a response in another person that could not be predicted. Be prepared to respond with de-escalation techniques and/or escape.
- ❖ If a situation escalates, get yourself out and call 911 immediately. Do not try to “save” the child or anyone else. Take care of yourself first.
- ❖ Remember you are a teacher – not a police officer or social worker, report your observations to the appropriate professionals – don’t try to take care of situations you are not trained for.

## DOGS



As you approach the residence, do not get out of your vehicle if there are dogs unrestrained in the area.

- ❖ Any dog is a potential ‘biter’
- ❖ STOP – don’t panic
- ❖ Take off your sunglasses/hats
- ❖ Stand still, do not approach a dog, if you choose to turn and run for safety you will encourage them to chase.
- ❖ Slowly turn sideways – a frontal position is considered a threat.
- ❖ Speak softly but firmly at the dog say – NO Go Home – or Sit
- ❖ Do not stare at the dog – watch from the corner of your eyes.
- ❖ Shield your neck and arms
- ❖ IF the dog leaps – try and knee the dog in the chest
- ❖ Focus on the dogs areas of vulnerability – nose, throat and rib cage
- ❖ Consider carrying pepper spray.

