



Monterey County Behavioral Health Policy and Procedure

Policy Number	202
Policy Title	SAFETY PRACTICES FOR FIELD VISITS
References	NONE
Form	ATTACHMENT 1 – SAMPLE ACTION PLAN ATTACHMENT 2 - TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH 911
Effective	APRIL 1, 1998 REVISED: APRIL 1, 2009

1
2 POLICY

3
4 It is a continuing, sincere desire that staff never be placed at risk. Reasonable efforts and steps toward safety
5 should be maintained at all times.

6
7 Personnel having to make an assessment in the field and are concerned about their personal safety should
8 consider taking one or more of the following actions:

9
10 Discuss the situation with a Unit Supervisor or Program Manager. The consumer's agitation level, history of
11 violence, access to weapons, and possible abuse of substances all play a potential role in possible violence.

12
13 Schedule office appointments only, with the presence of another worker. Have a plan of action ready in the
14 event of problems. The visit should be in a centrally located room that is partially furnished, with easily
15 accessible exits for the consumer and the workers.

16
17 Take another staff person with you on the field visit and have a plan of action ready. (See the attached Sample
18 Action Plan).

19
20 Request police back-up.

21
22 Limit the field visit to daytime hours.

23
24 Take a cellular phone with you. (Verify you have phone reception in the area you are in).

25
26 Give staff the time you are leaving, the name and address of the consumer you are visiting, the time you
27 anticipate returning to the office and that you will report back to them when you have returned. If no response is
28 made to indicate the staff members are safe at the agreed upon time, the police should be called to make a
29 health and safety check. (Be prepared to show your staff identification badge at the field visit).

Attachment 1

SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

1. Discuss your plan of intervention with your field visit partner and what is expected of them prior to making contact with the consumer. Designate who is to call for help if needed. Go in as a team.
2. Drive by the residence and look for safety issues. Is there anything suspicious that might pose a potential threat to the team or the consumer? Is there a loose dog in the yard?
3. Don't park directly in front of the residence. Look around to see who is in the neighborhood and what the atmosphere seems to be.
4. Be aware of at least two routes of exit from the residence in the event it is needed and where a safety zone might be found.
5. If parking in a space, back the vehicle in to allow for an easier exit.
6. Listen outside the door of the residence for disturbances such as screaming, yelling, or fighting. If a viewing of the residence is possible prior to knocking, quickly scan to see if there are any potential problems you will encounter.
7. When knocking on the door, stand to the side, not in front of it.
8. Announce yourself clearly, letting the family know who you are and why you are there.
9. Assess the person/persons you are talking with. What is their demeanor? Are they under the influence of substances? (Is there any pacing or fidgeting? Clinching of fists or jaw? Do they have a "wild look" in their eye? Are they present and in touch with reality? Are they speaking in a loud voice or becoming verbally abusive?).
10. Note the location of the doors and exits to the home. Leave the door unlocked if possible.
11. Scan the room for any weapons – firearms are often kept in the bedroom, knives in the kitchen. Be aware that "toys", such as bats or even lamps can be used as weapons.
12. While doing your assessment, be mindful of your safety and that of the client. Act accordingly. Taking risks is not an acceptable plan of action.

Tips for Communicating with 911 Dispatchers

When calling 911 to request Law Enforcement assistance in crisis situations note whether you are calling from a land line or a cellular phone. *Important: Calling 911 from a cell phone will delay the response as these calls are routed to CHP dispatch not local law enforcement.* It is advisable to program your cell phone with the direct numbers for County Communications and your local police departments so you can get connected immediately to the correct jurisdiction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ◆ Stay calm and speak clearly.
- ◆ State your name, position, location, brief description of situation. (Example: My name is _____. I am a Social Worker with Monterey County Behavioral Health. I am at _____ conducting a home visit on client _____. I am placing him/her on a 5150 DTS / DTO / GDA. I need LE back up to help get the client safely to NMC-ER as he/she is (briefly describe behavior / safety concerns)).
- ◆ Be prepared to provide Name / DOB / description of client including attire; any known information about weapons in client's possession; history of assaultive / combative behavior; under the influence of drugs / ETOH. Know where the client is and what they are doing. Other persons at location? Staff / clients / adults / kids?
- ◆ You can request a CIT trained officer (if available).
- ◆ Before you hang up, get the dispatcher's # and ask for the Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA).
- ◆ Do not tell individual you are placing them on a 5150 until back up is at the scene. Even the most compliant of clients can change their mind about cooperating if given too much time to think it over.
- ◆ Call back dispatch if situation changes and LE is not there (i.e., client's behavior escalates, they go mobile, etc). In certain situations, the dispatcher may keep you on the phone until officers arrive.

Additional Notes:

- ◆ Staff should notify their supervisor of 5150 situations.
- ◆ Do not intervene alone whenever possible.
- ◆ Those case managers with more crisis / 5150 experience should accompany and assist less experienced staff on welfare checks in the field that may result in 5150 situations.
- ◆ BH staff should write the 5150 and follow-up with both the NMC-ER & crisis team staff. In person follow-up at ER is best (may not be possible for Monterey staff). Be prepared to provide copies of annual plan, medication order history, and insurance cards.

Important Phone Numbers:

County Communications	755-5100
Salinas PD	758-7321
NMC Crisis Team	755-4300 (<i>For staff use only</i>)
	755-4111 (<i>For staff and public use</i>)