

# Safety Tips

## **Mindset:** Always Stay alert!

- Do not enter an environment with people who make you feel uncomfortable in any way
- Mobile response team staff do not physically lift, carry, or touch clients; this is outside of their scope of practice.
- Wash your hands regularly. Keep a hand sanitizer or wipes in your bag.
- Do not give clients cash. Do not carry significant amounts of cash in a way that clients can see it.
- Bodily fluids general rule – if it is wet and not yours, DON'T TOUCH IT.
- Make sure you have a first aid kit (including gloves) in your car or bag.
- Don't be afraid to exit a situation that makes you uncomfortable or afraid. You can apologize later if the client is offended, but you might not be able to fix a situation that continues to escalate.
- Most importantly, trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right and you are uneasy about the situation you are in, leave and consult.
- The best preparation will still not remove all threats of danger. Vigilance and situational awareness are imperative.

## **Vehicle safety**

- When pulling into a parking lot or neighborhood, observe who is hanging around and what their general presentation is.
- Make note of the exits and entrances to the parking area.
- Park near well-lit areas if there is a chance of you returning to your car in the dark.
- Have your car keys in your hand as you approach your vehicle.
- Be careful about what you leave on your seats or dashboard; put things in your trunk BEFORE you reach your destination.
- Scan the area as you approach your car and always check the floor and backseat before getting in.
- Do not talk on your cell phone as you are entering or exiting your car.

## **Field Safety**

Your safety can impact your partner's and law enforcement's safety:

- I. During the Field Visit
  - a. Stand to the side, not in front of the door or windows.
  - b. Scan the area for any potential hazards (i.e., Bottles, broken glasses, needles, drugs, etc.)
  - c. Note the general layout and exits of the residence. Position yourself for an easy exit if necessary.  
Sit where you are between your client and the exit points.
  - d. Scan the environment for any weapons or things that can be used as weapons.

- e. Most importantly, trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right and you are uneasy about the situation you are in, leave.
- f. When assessing a client make sure you stand at least 6 feet away from them. This will give you enough space to react in case they lunge at you or make any sudden movements.
- g. Be mindful of how you stand while assessing the client. Stand with a slight bend in your knees, one foot in front of the other, and position yourself so that you are not head on with the client.

II. Law Enforcement (LE) – *Note: IHOT would only be approaching with LE in the event of a violent, aggressive, or otherwise concerning behaviors of the clients*

- a. Upon approaching the client's home let law enforcement take the lead and stand behind them when walking toward the client in crisis
- b. Follow the Officer's signals.
- c. Always follow law enforcement's directions about your positioning.
- d. If you hear violence or fighting, defer to law enforcement for direction.

III. Dwellings

- a. Be aware of doors, windows, alley ways.
- b. Do not stand close to the door while waiting for an answer.
- c. Avoid sitting down when meeting with a client unless it is safe to do so.
- d. Make sure that your path to the exit is clear and that the client is not between you and the door.
- e. Be aware of anyone else in the dwelling and their location(s).
- f. Avoid meeting with a client inside a kitchen.
- g. Always approach with caution. This includes keeping distance between you and the client, positioning yourself behind your law enforcement partner.
- h. Be aware of anything in the client's vicinity that could be used as a weapon and communicate anything concerning to your clinical partner and to law enforcement immediately. When entering a room with a client, scan it for possible weapons (knives, pipes, etc). Pay attention to nontraditional weapons as well; a book or a coffee mug can be used as a weapon.
- i. Bed bugs – if you have concerns that a client may have an infestation, make sure that you avoid contact with materials in which they may hitch a ride on you (e.g. sitting on couches and chairs). Make sure that you bag your clothes as soon as you get home and dry them on high heat for at least an hour to reduce the risk of transferring them.