

If your Health Center does not have a home visiting policy/procedure in place, then it is important to create one that will help keep your Community Health Workers (CHWs) and families safe when they are working outside the clinic setting.

Potential components of a CHW Home Visiting Policy/Procedure document

Purpose. To ensure that Community Health Workers (CHWs) conduct visits and interactions with patients outside of the [clinic setting/health center name] such that the patient's needs are met, and the safety of staff, patients, and family members are prioritized.

Scope. This policy applies to all CHWs who have contact with patients or potential patients outside of the clinic as part of their professional role at the [health center name].

Description. Designated staff/CHWs may conduct visits/have contact with patients or potential patients as directed by their [health center] supervisor in order to provide patient-centered and responsive care. These home and/or community visits must be conducted only when it is considered safe for staff and patients alike.

Procedures.

- This is where having a discussion of procedure and protocol with your CHW team will be helpful to develop routines that work for all parties. Examples:
 - CHWs must attend safety training prior to conducting visits in the home or community settings (NOTE: Your agency should have a standard safety training policy/protocol in place. If not, there are many resources on the internet to help you develop one.)
 - Home or community visits are generally conducted during business hours, but it may be necessary to meet patients and family members during the evening or on a weekend due to work schedules. CHWs should have this flexibility, within reason.
 - What are the parameters of working outside of clinic hours?
 - What about holidays? What would be the health concern that would require a holiday visit? And would there be a pay differential?
 - If meeting in the evening, should a CHW go alone (especially if female) or should there be two CHWs?
 - There might be other circumstances where two CHWs need to be present on the visit. Who should make that decision?
 - If in doubt, should CHW check with supervisor first, or - if unable to reach the supervisor - can they ask another CHW to accompany them?

- How will the CHW communicate that they will be doing a home or community visit to their supervisor?
 - Suggestions can include CHW communicates with supervisor (or designee) by text, phone, or email to let them know the following:
 - When they are leaving for the visit
 - When they arrive
 - When they return to clinic or home
 - It is important for Supervisor to know where CHW is going, but names and addresses are considered PHI, so strategize how this information can be transmitted
- What safety strategies will the CHW use to keep themselves safe
 - Before getting out of your car, scan the area for safety
 - People or animals that make you feel unsafe
 - Carry a cell phone with you, but don't look at it while walking
 - Wear comfortable clothes and low-heeled shoes
 - When leaving the house, carry your keys in your hand
 - **Always trust your gut – if you feel unsafe, leave the area immediately**
 - Then check in with your supervisor and/or a designated manager