

## Three Keys to Personal Safety



### Awareness

The knowledge or perception of a situation or fact. Being aware of our surroundings is critical to staying safe while partnering with families; pay attention to what is going on around you, such as noticing who is loitering in the area, or if someone is walking behind you.



### Preparedness

The state of being prepared or ready. Being mentally prepared for a variety of circumstances is your best defense for staying safe. It is also good to know some basic self-defense and de-escalation techniques so you can respond when action is needed.



### Intuition

The instant understanding or knowledge without evidence of logical thought; gut instinct; Learn to listen and trust your inner voice so you can act on what it tells you.

Check out the video below that illustrates these three keys to personal safety and the steps Family Support Professionals (FSPs) should take to ensure their personal safety when home visiting.

- [Home Visiting Safety](#)

## Car Safety

To promote preparedness, FSPs should make sure they have the following supplies in their car:

- Gas (keep tank at least a 1/4 full at all times)
- Water
- Spare tire with jack
- Emergency tire inflator
- Jumper cables or portable battery jump starter device
- Car cell phone charger
- Flashlight
- First Aid Kit
- Hand Sanitizer
- Change of clothes and re-sealable bag for soiled clothing

Click the links below for more additional information on emergency car kits and preparation tactics.

- [Prepare Your Car](#)
- [Emergency Car Kit](#)



## Dealing with a threatening dog

- First, remain calm. Avoid direct eye contact. Move slowly. Don't turn your back and run away.
- Turn slightly to your side, and slowly walk backward or to the side. You want to give the dog the impression that you are leaving calmly.
- Try to put a barrier between you and the dog. This could be something as small as your bag or coat, or it could be something bigger, like a trash can.
- Keep your arms and hands close to your body. Avoid sudden movements. Don't try to shoo, push, or kick the dog away as this will make the dog more aggressive.
- Speak in a soft, calm voice. "No" or "Stay." This may help establish authority and deter the dog. Avoid yelling as it may make the dog more aggressive.
- If you are pulled to the ground, curl into a fetal position and protect your neck with your hands.
- If the dog bites you, don't pull away. This may cause more injury. The vulnerable parts on a dog are the nose, throat, chest, and ribs.
- As soon as possible, clean the wound. If it's serious, seek medical attention
- Afterwards, report the incident to local animal control or the police. Be sure to find out if the dog has rabies.

## Common signs of substance use in an individual

- Changes in behavior; sudden mood swings, agitation, irritability or aggressiveness.
- Changes in physical appearance; bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, frequent nosebleeds or sniffles, tremors, slurred speech.
- Changes in sleep patterns; sleeping more or less than usual, sleeping during the day, or insomnia.
- Changes in appetite; weight loss or gain or decreased interest in food.
- Neglect of responsibilities; ignoring work, school or household duties.
- Secretive behavior; avoiding social interactions or hiding paraphernalia in the home.

## Common signs of drug manufacture in a home

- Strong, unusual odors; substances can emit unpleasant chemical odors such as ammonia or ether.
- Chemical equipment or materials that may be found in unusual quantities or combinations; glassware, plastic tubing, drain cleaner, or cold medicine.
- Discoloration to walls, floors, or ceilings; chemicals used may cause damage to the home.
- Fans or ventilation equipment; these may be used to prevent harmful fumes.
- Increased security measures; video cameras, blacked-out windows, or locked and reinforced doors.
- Frequent or unusual visits from strangers; visitors who come and go consistently.

## Gun Safety

If there is a concern about guns in a home, FSPs can help promote gun safety by providing education to the whole family.

- Discuss proper storage in a gun safe, locked cabinet or case; guns should be unloaded with ammunition stored separately.
- Share resources to educate children and encourage parents to teach the dangers of guns. [Gun Safety \(for Kids\)](#)

## De-escalation techniques

Talk with your supervisor about possible de-escalation and crisis prevention trainings available locally. Below are more steps FSPs can take to prevent further escalation and resolve or minimize conflict.

- Stay calm. Speak in a clear voice.
- Actively listen. Escalated individuals believe they are right and misunderstood. Acknowledge feelings and concerns to show the individual they are being heard and understood.
- Use empathy to see the individual's perspective. Validate their experience.
- Clarify any misunderstandings or confusion.
- Keep your body language equal to theirs and nonthreatening.
- Continue to treat the individual with respect and dignity to reduce defensiveness.

## Self-defense Techniques

If you are ever attacked, you want to be able to recall these vulnerable soft targets. You also want to know these targets so you can protect them from an attacker. If you are unable to avoid a threatening situation, you want to attack whichever soft target is most accessible. It's important to pick a few self-defense moves to practice so that they become a reflexive response when you need them.

**EYES**

The eyes are a sensitive soft target; using a thumb gouge maneuver will cause temporary loss of sight to your attacker and give you the opportunity to flee.



**EARS**

The ear slap maneuver may also disorient your attacker allowing you to get away. You can complete this by using the palms of your hands to cover and strike one or both ears of your attacker.



**NOSE**

A palm strike to the nose of your attacker may also give you time to get away. Ensure you are using your palm by pointing fingers up & tilting fingers back slightly.



**MOUTH**

Using a palm strike to the attacker's mouth or jaw may give you an opening to flee or try another self-defense tactic. Ground yourself and with force thrust in an upward direction towards the soft target.



**FINGERS**

If your attacker's hands are easily accessible, you may disable your attacker by grabbing their hand using both of your hands & dividing it into two parts.



**THROAT**

The throat is another vulnerable target. You can flee after a forceful strike to the attacker's throat with your hand in the shape of a V. A throat strike can also be done with a hand chop, punch or elbow blow.



**GROIN**

You can use your knee to deliver a blow to your attacker's groin. Balancing on one leg & using the opposite knee to thrust up and forward.



**TOES**

A quick heel stomp aiming for your attacker's toes is also a simple escape tactic.





## Self-care

Personal safety does not just mean physical safety– it also refers to emotional safety. It is important for FSPs to take steps to practice and promote self-care. Below are some additional self-care resources and tips:

- [Taking Care of You](#)
- [How Meditation Works Video](#)
- [Mindful Self-Compassion](#)
- [Self-Care: Strategies to Regulate & Recharge](#)
- [Self-Care-Activities](#)