Personal Safety in the Community:

It is important that staff are safe at all times. To maximize the personal safety of health care professionals working in the community and home setting, the following guidelines have been established.

The following precautions should be taken before making visits:

- Wear name badges

- It is recommended that staff call patients in advance and alert them to an approximate time of the visits. If needed, ask the patient/caregiver for further directions to their residence

- Request that pets be properly secured before making visits

  - If pets are known to be menacing, back away: never run from animals

  - Walk slowly around animals so that you do not frighten them

- Keep change for a phone call on your person

  - It is recommended that staff not carry a purse

  - Before leaving the Agency, lock your purse in the trunk of your car or cover it with a blanket if it will be visible

- Consider use/advantages of a personal mobile car phone

When traveling in your car:

- Keep your vehicle in good working order with plenty of gas

- Store a blanket in your vehicle in the winter and a thermos of cool water in the summer

- Keep a snack in the glove compartment

- Turn on emergency flashers and wait for the police if you have care trouble

- Keep your car locked when parked or driving. Keep windows rolled up if possible

- Park in full view of the patient’s residence. (Avoid parking in the alleys or in deserted side streets)
- Know your route. If you get lost, look for a safe place to get additional directions or view your map

When walking to patient's home:

- Have your nursing bag/equipment ready when exiting from the vehicle. Keep one arm free.

- Walk directly to the patient's residence in a professional and businesslike manner

- Cross to the other side of the street, as appropriate, if passing a group of strangers

- Carry car keys in your hand when leaving the patient's residence. (The pointed ends of keys between fingers may make an effective weapon).

General instructions for all staff:

- Use common walkways in buildings; avoid isolated stairs

- Always knock on the door before entering a patient's home

- If relatives or neighbors become a safety problem:
  
  - Make joint visits or arrange for escort services
  
  - Schedule visit time when they are gone
  
  - Close the case (only with Director approval)

- Request escort services as appropriate; consider working in teams of two in high crime areas

Some defense techniques that can be used include:

- Scream/yell “fire”

- Kick shins, instep or groin

- Bite, scratch

- Blow a whistle attached to your key ring

- Use chemical sprays
- Use your nursing bag as a defense weapon

When in neighborhoods with questionable safety or drug/gang related problems, it is recommended that you:

- Make visits in the morning
- Some areas may have to be declared unsafe and therefore not serviced by the Agency
- Regard uniforms and name badges as an important part of identification to the public
- In the event of a robbery, never resist to keep the nursing bag; it can be easily replaced
- Notify the coordinator or supervisor of any car trouble, auto accident, or incident when personal safety is not secure for future instructions