

Outreach Safety Tips:

Never work alone: Outreach should always be done with two or more people and at least one male if possible. Never leave your outreach team.

Let people know where you are: Someone should always know where you will be doing outreach and should be alerted if you move to another location. Never go off the route that you are expected to be without first letting someone know. Check in after outreach to let them know that you are safe.

Don't dress to impress: Don't wear jewelry or clothing that will make you stand out or put you in danger. Wear comfortable clothing that isn't too tight or too loose. No flip flops or high heeled shoes, in case you need to run. Having some kind of shirt, hat, pin... identifying who you are and/or what you are doing can be helpful.

Pare down the personal items you carry: Don't bring money or expensive items. Bring a cell phone, but leave it in your pocket unless needed. Always keep your hands free, eyes open and be aware of your surroundings. Talking and texting can distract you from what is going on around you and put you and your team in danger. Bags to distribute materials should be light, have straps to put on your back, over your shoulder or across the body to keep your hands free.

Be a good observer: Go in slowly after looking at the larger landscape of where you will be doing your outreach. Note potential dangers and accessible exit paths in case of an emergency. Be aware of all verbal and non-verbal communication that you receive when interacting with participants. While one outreach worker is engaging a participant the other should be observing them and also their surroundings. Expect the unexpected!!

Let people know who you are: Always identify yourself, your program and what you are doing so that people don't make assumptions and can sometimes assist you if you need help.

Be consistent, trustworthy, and ethical: Be honest about your intentions and what you can offer. Be non-judgmental and aware of your own values and biases. Be competent, sensitive and respectful of the diversity of cultures you may come in contact with.

Share what you know about specific people: If someone knows information about a particular person that you are coming in contact with that can assist in outreach don't be afraid to share that with the team. This information should not cause prejudgment and should always stay confidential and never shared with people outside of the outreach team.

Don't get lulled into complacency: Don't be discouraged if you don't get the outcome you want immediately. It takes time to build trust and relationships. Sometimes you may get bored or tired, but you shouldn't change focus to private conversations, phone calls, texting... Stay focused on your goal and surroundings at all times. If necessary take a break in a safe place to refocus.

Know the "gatekeepers:" These are people known and trusted in the neighborhood, and they can include store owners, police, church and or community members... Know who these people are and be respectful of the role they play in the community.

Keep an eye on neighborhood safety levels: A drug bust, an explosion of violent crime... Knowing these things have happened recently in a neighborhood might make you reassess whether to do outreach on a particular day. If a dangerous situation occurs while you are on the street **GET AWAY AND TO SAFETY IMMEDIATELY!!! DO NOT STAND AROUND WATCHING THE SITUATION UNFOLD.** Call 911 if necessary once you are safe.

Show extra caution in isolated areas: Avoid empty side streets, parking lots, parks... Do not go on porches, up driveways, to side doors, or in back yards!!! Ask the person to come to you if they want what you are offering. Do not approach people in cars.

Establish a code word: This should be a simple word or phrase that isn't commonly used in conversation. This code word/phrase should be known by the entire team, but secret to outsiders and only used to alert the team to leave immediately for a safer place.

Know when to back off: If you are talking to someone who doesn't agree with you or understand what you are saying don't get discouraged or angry. Stay away from the scenes of drug trades or other illegal activities. Avoid anyone with a weapon, people fighting, or someone obviously drunk or high. Be aware of people with a tense look or facial expression, who are yelling or cursing, and/or displaying aggressive behavior. If there's a risky situation, leave before it escalates to the point of danger. It's important to recognize a risky situation well before it gets dangerous. Always respect a threat and take it seriously.

Don't give out personal phone numbers or talk about personal things.

Use basic de-escalation techniques when confronted by angry or aggressive person. These are simple methods for defusing a tense situation. For instance, a worker might respond to an angry person by saying, "I hear where you're coming from. How can we help you?" If a person is getting angry, back off. Never belittle, argue or fight with them. Don't take things personally. You cannot know what issues a stranger may be dealing with. Don't give them an excuse to take them out on you and put yourself and/or team in danger.

Take care of yourself, and encourage your partner to do the same.

Safety Rules:

- 1) Establish a good relationship, 2) Ask, 3) Trust your instincts, 4) Respect threats, 5) Try not to make things worse, 6) Set real limits, 7) Offer space, 8) Don't be afraid to ask for help, 9) Avoid stereotypes and 10) Above all- Never do anything you think is stupid!