

PLAYING IT **SAFE**

Be safe and healthy on the job at Homewatch CareGivers with these helpful tips provided by Gallagher Risk Management - Tulsa

Home Health Care: Preventing Violence on the Job

Helpful tips for reducing your risk of injury at work

Home health care workers provide care to patients in the patients' homes, without the protections of a hospital setting. Because of this, home health care workers can be vulnerable as they face an unprotected and unpredictable environment each time they enter a patient's community or home.

The spectrum of violence ranges from verbal abuse to stalking or threats of assault to homicide.

Verbal abuse from the patient, family members or people in the community is a form of workplace violence. Verbal abuse may be subtle, such as asking for help beyond the scope of the job (such as with cleaning), or it may be obvious, such as complaining about job performance or worker appearance—or even threatening to cause harm.

During home visits, use basic safety precautions:

1. Be alert.
2. Evaluate each situation for possible violence.
3. Watch for signals of impending violent assault, such as verbally expressed anger and frustration, threatening gestures, signs of drug or alcohol abuse or the presence of weapons.

The following are tips for managing a potentially violent situation:

Vehicle Safety

- Keep your vehicle well-maintained and in good working order.
- When driving alone, keep the windows rolled up and doors locked.
- Park the vehicle in a well-lit area, away from large trees or shrubs where a person could hide.
- Keep health care equipment, supplies and personal belongings locked out of sight in the trunk of the vehicle.

On Location

- Consider working with an escort in high-crime areas and, if possible, schedule visits during daylight hours.
- Be sure of the location and have accurate directions to the house or apartment.
- Always let your employer know your location and when to expect you to report back.
- Before getting out of the car, check the surrounding location and activity. If you feel uneasy, do not get out of the car.
- Stay in your car and contact your manager if you notice anything that might threaten your security, such as



As a home health care worker, you face an unprotected and unpredictable environment each time you enter a patient's community or home.

Always be alert and aware of your surroundings when conducting home visits.

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strong odors that could be from a drug lab, gunshots or shouting and signs of fighting.

During the Home Visit

- Notify your employer if you observe an unsecured weapon in the client's home.
- Maintain behavior that helps to defuse anger by presenting a calm, caring attitude, not matching threats, not giving orders and acknowledging the person's feelings.
- Avoid behaviors that may be interpreted as aggressive (for example, moving rapidly or getting too close, touching unnecessarily or speaking loudly).
- If possible, keep an open pathway for exiting.
- Trust your judgment.
- Avoid situations that don't feel right.
- If you are being verbally abused, ask the abuser to stop. If the abuser does not stop, then leave and notify your employer.
- If you cannot gain control of the situation, shorten the visit and remove yourself from the situation. If you feel threatened, leave immediately.
- If you need help, use your cellphone to call your employer or 911, depending on the severity of the situation.
- If you observe a crime, contact the police.

