

ALH 210 – Introduction to Community Health Advocacy

CLASS #19 SAFETY ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Course Objectives:

Implement appropriate personal safety practices during community outreach activities.
Discuss basic effective communication techniques and barriers to effective communication.

Class Objectives: Student will be able to:

1. List ways in which personal safety when doing outreach can be maximized.
2. Identify signs that indicate personal conflict is imminent and describe methods to de-escalate and avoid conflict.

Participants:

Instructors
Students

Materials/Resources Needed:

Handout: “Safety Guidelines for Street Outreach”

Handout: “Wasatch Homeless Health Care Program Safety Manual”

Equipment Needed:

1. Flip chart
2. Masking tape
3. Markers

Plan for the Class:

- I. Questions, comments from class on last session -Cultural competency**
- II. Personal safety for outreach workers, threats to safety and how they can be minimized**
 - A. Faculty introduces group activity. The purpose of this activity is to have students anticipate and identify health and safety risks they are likely to encounter in outreach. Procedure:
 1. Break into small groups of 3-5.
 2. Ask each group to brainstorm the various kinds of health and safety risks outreach workers encounter. Encourage them to think broadly. For example, remind them to define health not only in physical terms, but in relation to one’s psychological, emotional and spiritual health as well. Urge participants to freely brainstorm ideas that come to mind without

- regard to how insignificant or "off the wall" they might appear. Often by voicing such ideas, other ideas are spawned.
3. Ask groups in turn to call out risks they brainstormed, while faculty writes them on a flip chart. Some hazards that may come up are: physical injury from accident, injury from assault, exposure to lice/disease, emotional pain from dealing with an angry client, emotional pain from sad client situations, etc.
 4. Have students assist in grouping the ideas. For example, groupings likely to emerge may include: exposure to diseases, accidents, physical violence, harassment or verbal/emotional abuse, emotional/psychological symptoms, etc.
- B. Discussion of safety precautions and guidelines. Purpose is to identify and generate discussion about safety guidelines in outreach. Procedure:
1. Distribute handout "Safety Guidelines for Street Outreach." Note that these guidelines were developed for outreach workers in the downtown skid row area of Los Angeles, and so not all may apply in all situations.
 2. Review the guidelines together as a group. Have students identify which guidelines might apply to outreach in Dayton, OH. For example, guideline 4 talks about gangs and their colors. Does this apply to Dayton? Ask why each guideline was included on the list. Have students generate additional guidelines for safety during home visits.
 3. Ask the group for other guidelines they would add to the list, specifically safety during home visits.

Break

III. How to detect and avoid conflict

- A. Faculty distributes handout, "Wasatch Homeless Health Care Program Safety Manual." Please note that these materials are taken from *Sample Safety Guidelines in Homeless Health Services Programs* compiled by the Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians' Network (1996). Faculty talks through the Manual, noting especially:
- the importance of having safety guidelines and a plan for avoiding tension and conflict,
 - acknowledgement that Advocate clients often are under stress that can influence their behavior,
 - the three basic levels of intervention: prevention, de-escalation of tension, and action aimed toward safety for all individuals involved
 - the four basic steps of preventing violent behavior: observing, skilled listening, talking, and taking action.
- B. Role play exercise. The purpose is to allow students to practice skills discussed above. Break class into groups of three. Two individuals will play an aggressive client and an outreach worker. The third person is a witness-observer to the interaction who acts as a "coach" for the worker during and after the role-play. Instruct the client to pick an issue and act in an angry, aggressive manner, short of physical violence, towards the worker. The outreach worker is to practice the skills just discussed to try to de-escalate

the client. Provide ample time so that everyone gets to play each of the three roles.

- C. Faculty debriefs the role-play exercise with the whole class. **(15 minutes)**
Ask: What was it like to be in the various roles? What de-escalation skills worked well? Which ones didn't? What did participants learn?

IV. Conclusion

- A. Faculty briefly summarizes what has been talked about tonight, referring back to the risks identified, guidelines, and conflict avoidance.
- B. Faculty asks for questions or further comments on the subject of tonight's class.
- C. Preview next class – Quiz and Community Agency assignment is due.