

PROJECT CHASM

Volunteer **Safety** Guidelines

Introduction

Volunteer work with Project CHAM is both challenging and rewarding. Because of the nature of the outreach, the client population we serve, and the environment in which our clients dwell, volunteers are exposed to potential hazards they might not otherwise encounter in the home or workplace.

Introduction

Charleston's geography and demographics contribute to the safety issues that volunteers face. These hazards include:

- steep terrain and rocky ground

- waterfront exposure

- high traffic streets

- limited sight distance

- climate extremes

Introduction

In addition, the profile our client population adds to the safety risk. Many of our clients are marginalized or isolated because of :

- alcohol abuse

- drug abuse

- schizophrenia

- bipolar disorder

- explosive behavior disorder.

Introduction

There is always small, but defined health and safety risks involved with Street Medicine.

In an attempt to minimize these risks to you as a volunteer with Project CHASM, the following Safety Guidelines have been developed.

As always, caution, advance preparation, and common sense are your best safeguards.

Safety Guidelines

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots
- Wear layered clothing appropriate for weather conditions
- Wear long pants or jeans
- Avoid wearing flashy or expensive clothing
- Wear hat and gloves during cold weather
- Pack rain gear when needed

Safety Guidelines

- ① Use insect repellent and check for ticks during “bug season”
- ① Apply sunscreen for daytime rounds
- ① Know how to identify poison ivy/oak and avoid contact
- ① Watch for rocks, gravel, ice and mud that might cause falls
- ① Bring a flashlight or wear a head lamp

Safety Guidelines

- Obey all traffic laws
- Cross at intersections and watch for traffic
- Make sure that you have eye or hand signal contact with drivers before entering the street
- Watch for uneven sidewalks and curbs
- Walk facing the traffic

Safety Guidelines

- ① Distribute weight in your backpack evenly and wear the shoulder straps to avoid back strain
- ① Leave jewelry, valuables and money at home or locked out of sight in your vehicle
- ① Never go out on rounds alone
- ① Carry a well charged cell phone
- ① Always have a male member on your team

Safety Guidelines

- Make sure that others know where you are going and when you will be expected back
- Do not enter client cars, homes, or enclosed areas
- Do not interrupt sales of sex or drugs – leave the area immediately without drawing attention to yourself or others
- Do not approach those clients with weapons

Safety Guidelines

- Do not approach those giving distinct signs that they want to be left alone
- Pay attention to non-verbal signs that indicate agitation or extreme irritability
- Observe the 40 foot rule – stay back, announce your name and purpose
- Proceed slowly and in small groups of 2

Safety Guidelines

- Always approach clients from the front while maintaining full eye contact
- Be aware of your body space and do not intrude upon others
- Always scan the area for hidden dangers
- Have an escape plan at all times
- Watch behind you
- Give a wide berth to dogs and wild animals

Safety Guidelines

- Engage clients first in non-threatening conversation
- Offer food, drink and clothing before probing for medical or mental health issues
- Be assertive but not intrusive
- Never argue with or reprimand a client

Safety Guidelines

- Never accept food items, cash, merchandise or packages from clients
- Do not get in “over your head” – if problems arise that you can not or should not handle, call your team leader
- Report illegal activities immediately to your team leader
- Call 911 for emergencies

Summary

Street Rounds are an exciting and richly rewarding way to make a difference in the lives of those in need. Because of the psychosocial needs of our clients, as well as the environments in which they live, volunteers are exposed to potential health and safety risks. Adherence to safety guidelines can help reduce these risks to volunteers.

Summary

Adapted from the “Safety Guidelines” of
Project MUSHROOM, Morgantown, WV.