

Never Give Safety the Day Off:

Safety tips for MEP staff

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Agenda:

As a job that involves working in the field and frequently being in remote areas, MEP staff can run into challenges and situations that they are unfamiliar with. Personal safety should always be a top priority for all staff. During this presentation we will hear true stories from recruiters about incidents they have had in the field and we will share some helpful practices and tips so that MEP staff can be prepared for whatever they encounter in the field.



Never Give Safety the Day Off

Feel Free to Share!

During the presentation share in the chat safety situations you are concerned about or safety situations you are unsure how to handle. We will choose some answers from the chat and discuss them at the end of the presentation.

Why is Safety Important

Safety for all MEP staff should be a top priority. Part of learning the job is learning when to recognize what could potentially be a safety risk so you can take the necessary precautions.

Remember, safety is not just about knowing what to do when you are in a situation, safety is also about knowing what to do to avoid situations where you or those you are with could be at risk.



Topics We Will Cover

- General safety guidelines
- Vehicle safety
- Safety while on site
- Safety when leaving the home
- Handling harassment on site
- Social media safety
- Emergency protocols
- Recommended safety items
- Recommended safety apps



The First Rule of Safety

The most important rule for any Migrant Education Program staff is that they **should always trust their instincts**. If you have doubts or feel as if a situation is potentially dangerous don't hesitate to leave and contact your supervisor.



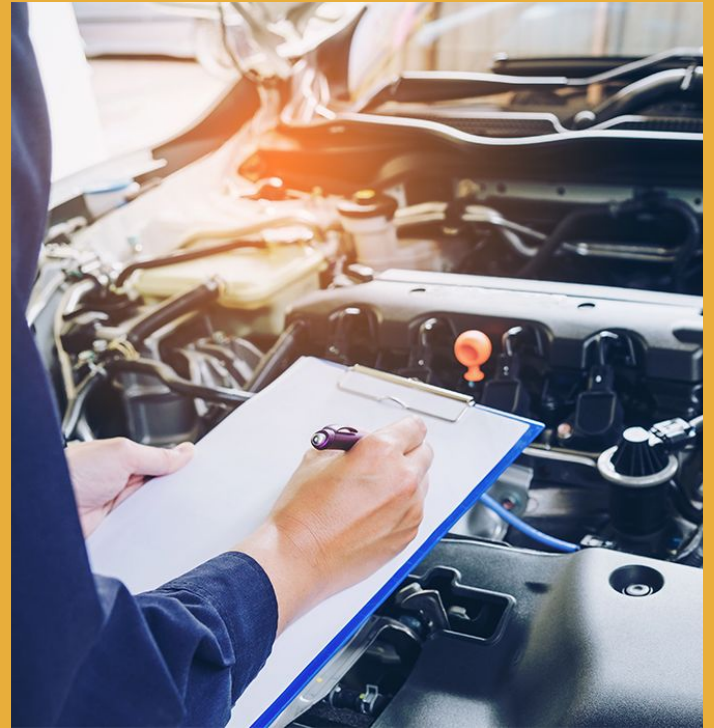
General Safety Guidelines

- Always carry a cell phone while out in the field and have a charger in your car.
- Carry some form of identification. If you have a badge or some official form of identification, wear it in a visible place on the outside of your shirt or jacket. Carry business cards at all times.
- Wear clothes that are work-appropriate and comfortable so they do not restrict movement.



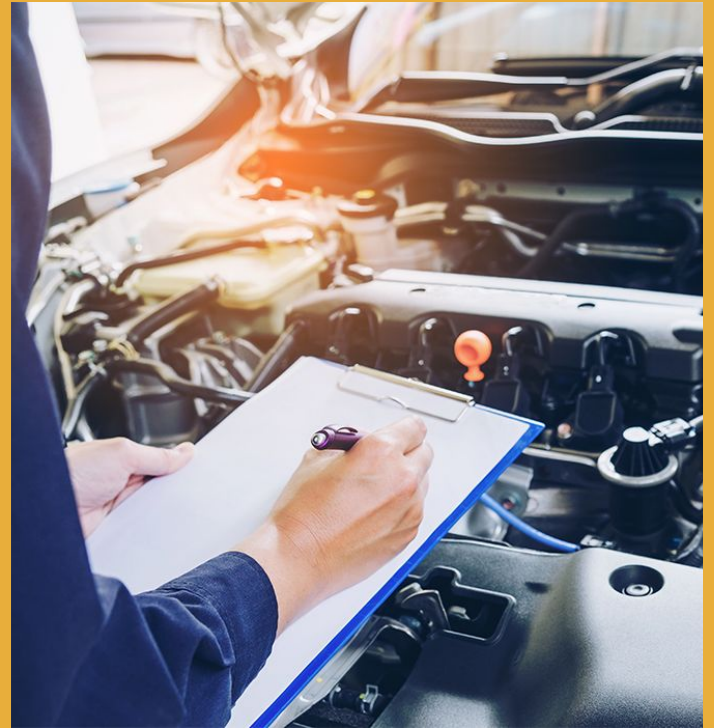
Vehicle Safety

"I was spending a day out visiting families and I had one last family on my list. I had saved the family for the end of the day because they were far away and isolated from the other families. It had been a rough day, several of the families were not doing well, and I really just wanted to visit the family and get home to rest. I heard a beeping noise from my car. I looked down and saw that I was running dangerously low on gas. I looked around but couldn't find a gas station and when I got out my phone I had no signal to access the GPS."



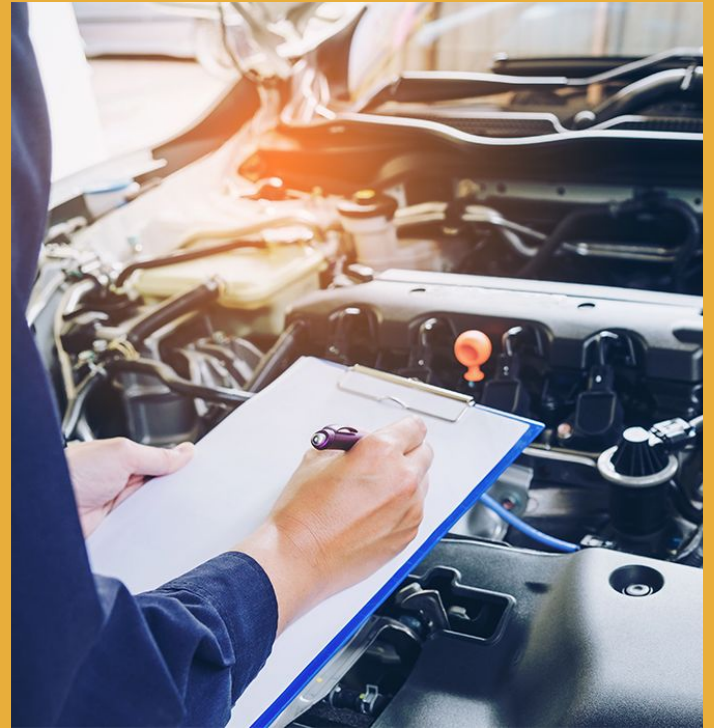
Vehicle Safety

- Perform regular maintenance on your vehicle to reduce safety risks (i.e. regular oil changes, routine check-ups, keep tires properly inflated, etc.)
- Keep vehicle doors locked at all times while in the field and keep valuables in the trunk.
- Have a plan for what to do to ensure vehicle safety if something happens while on the road, (what to do in case of an accident, breakdown, flat tire, or other mechanical problem with the vehicle).
- Have gas in the car at all times and look up locations of gas stations along your route.



Vehicle Safety

- Before entering the field, you can map your route using Google Maps, BatchGeo, or another mapping service so that you are familiar with your route. If you are driving to a place that does not have internet, most mapping services allow you to download the map before leaving for your destination.
- Park in a well-lit area that is a safe distance from your destination. If working in pairs, park next to your colleague.
- Park in an area with a clear exit and with the driver's side door easily accessible



Check the Weather

“One morning I was really rushed to go out recruiting. I had not gotten enough sleep and was worried about making it on time to the processing plant to meet with workers as they went on break. I left my house as fast as possible but quickly found myself in trouble. I had forgotten to look at the weather forecast and as I drove through the mountain roads it began to snow really hard and I could no longer see the road.”



Check the Weather

- Weather can greatly influence working conditions for migrant farmworkers and it can have an impact on recruiting
- Always check the weather forecast before recruiting so you can prepare and avoid any severe weather
- Download a weather app to your phone so you can always know what to expect while out recruiting
- Bring adequate supplies to help combat the weather you will see in the field. E.g. extra bottles of water during a heatwave, a comfortable coat during cold temperatures, etc.



Check the Weather

- If you encounter a situation in the field caused by weather, such as a flooded road or downed power lines, it is always best to turn around and find either an alternate route or cancel the visit
- Have a plan for what to do in case of severe weather out in the field.
- Check with your supervisor to see if your state has a policy on what staff should do in case there is inclement weather



Safety While on Site

"I was giving a short English lesson to an OSY student who had just arrived from Guatemala. We were sitting in the student's bedroom while I was explaining basic English verbs. All of a sudden the student's older roommate entered the room and wanted to have an English lesson as well. I tried to explain that the student was too old to qualify but he refused to take no for an answer. The older roommate stood in the doorway and got angry. The man wouldn't let me leave until I also taught him some English."



Safety While on Site

- Before entering a location notice any unusual smells, such as gas, electrical, or fire hazards, as well as those which may be associated with the manufacture of substances.
- **Never enter a location if you feel unsafe or unsure.** All work conversations can take place on the porch or front stop. Carry tools with you, such as folding tables and chairs, that will facilitate being able to work in public visible places.
- If you feel unsafe, unsure, or uncomfortable going on a visit alone, for any factors you may have experienced, contact your supervisor ahead of time so he/she can help organize for a partner to accompany you.



Safety While on Site

- In the case of working within a home, it is recommended that recruitment and tutoring should only take place in common public spaces such as a living room or kitchen area.
- If you do not feel comfortable entering a home, you can recruit or tutor outside. During colder months you can ask the local schools to set up a meeting in the school with the student and their family.
- In the case of working with minors within a home, a guardian must always be on site.
- Leave immediately if there is a perceived safety risk.



Safety When Leaving the House

"I was visiting a house in the mountains of Tennessee to visit with a family. The house was isolated and had a long, uphill driveway. After speaking with the family, I turned to leave and a dog came out from under the porch and began barking. I saw the dog, and tried to back away slowly. However, 5 other large dogs quickly came around the back of the house. Before I knew what was happening all 6 of the dogs had surrounded me and were preventing me from leaving. The dogs barked violently and began to nip at my feet."



Safety When Leaving the House

- Have your car keys out and ready upon approaching the vehicle.
- Observe any people or activities taking place in relative proximity to the residence, the exit route, or the vehicle.
- Following the visit leave the area immediately. Do not remain on-site/ or in the vehicle to make phone calls or take notes.



How to Handle Harassment on Site

"I was out visiting a hotel where we have previously had families living. I spoke to a few families, signed a few COEs, and as I was walking back to the car I was approached by a young man and woman who asked me for money. When I said no they continued to insist and began following me. It made me very uncomfortable. I ran back to my car and left in a hurry. I wanted to tell someone so others would be careful but I did not know what to do."



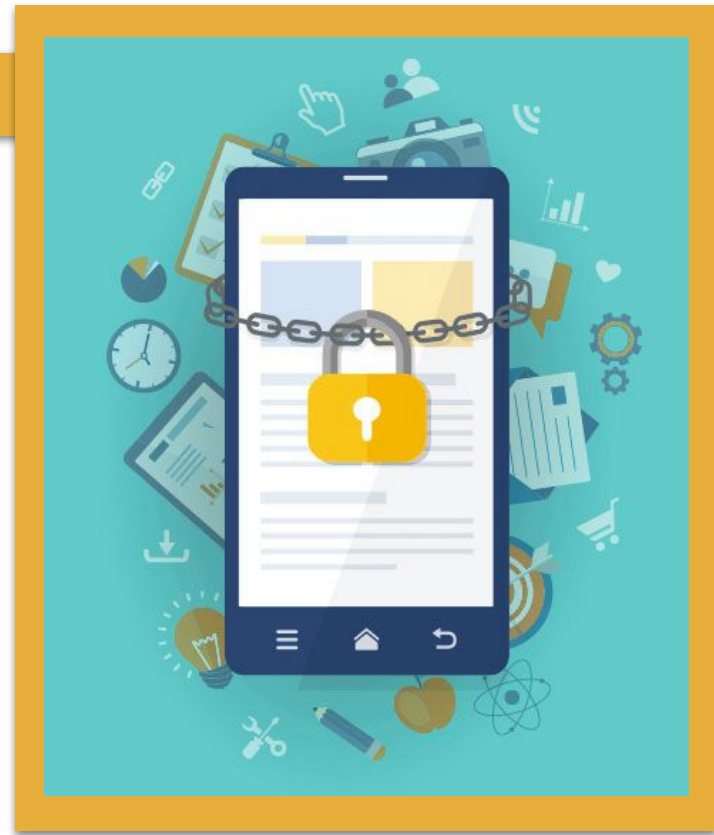
How to Handle Harassment on Site

- All Migrant Education Program staff have the right to work in a safe environment and not face harassment
- Bring pepper spray with you.
- Leave the site at the first hint of danger or harassment and alert your supervisor.
- If someone is harassing you or following you, call someone you trust or fake a phone call to try and escape the situation.
- If you are afraid or suspect danger you should go to a previously identified safe place or ask a trusted person to accompany you to your car.



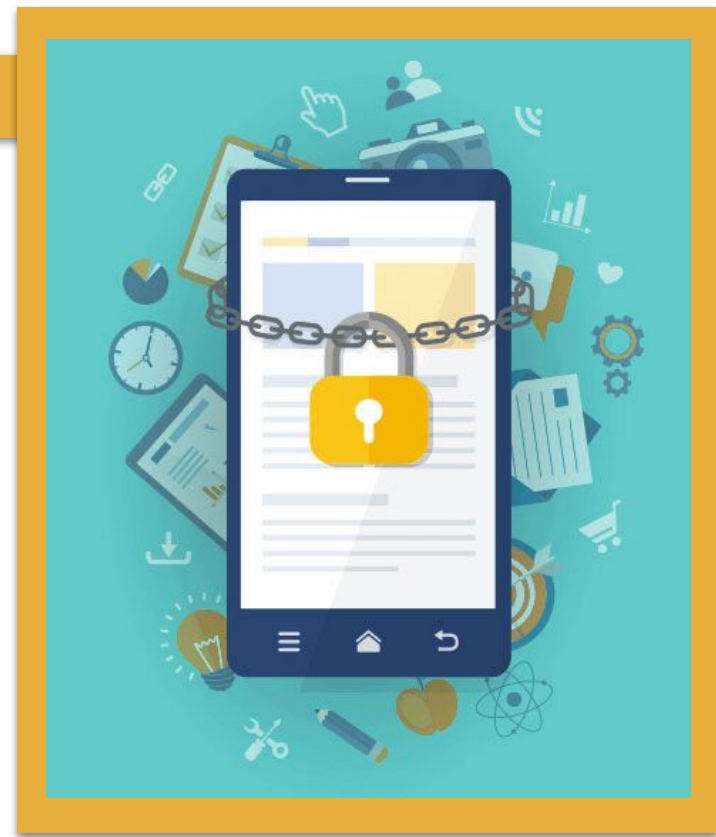
Social Media Safety

"Our team has been working hard to increase our presence on social media. We have been trying to reach out to new families and get our name out in the community. However, recently a new recruiter was given access to our Facebook page and accidentally posted some inappropriate articles because they forgot to switch to their personal account. We had to spend several days reaching out to any families that could see the Facebook page in order to apologize to them."



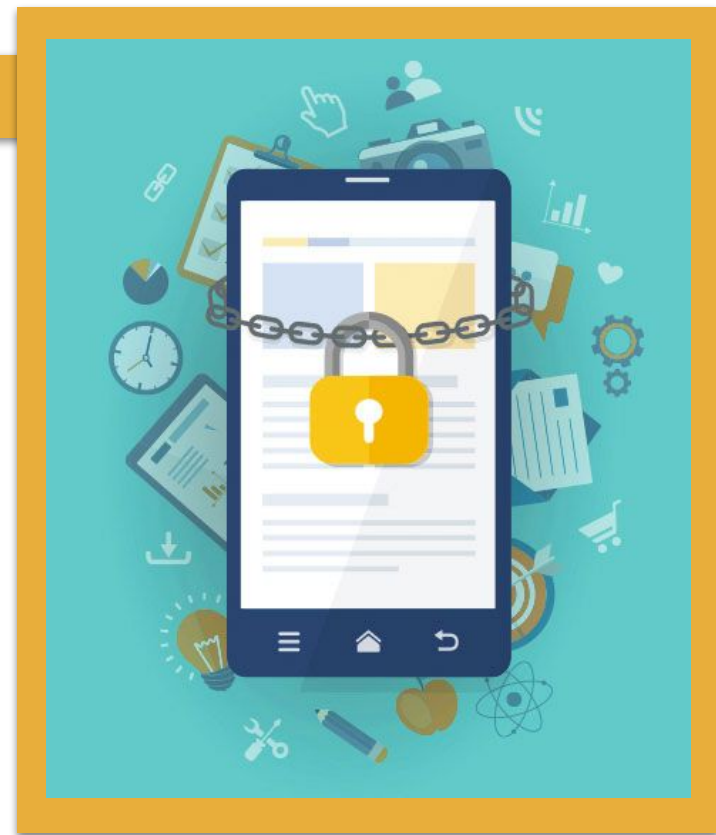
Social Media Safety

- We recommend not using personal social media accounts for MEP business and only posting information related to the Migrant Education Program.
- Before creating a social media account for work, check with your supervisor to see if your state has a social media policy. Many states have established social media rules to help protect staff, students, and student's families.
- To help maintain work boundaries, post clear hours and information on your account page about when you will be interacting with others.



Social Media Safety

- Only allow approved users to post to your account to prevent inappropriate posts/pictures from being shared.
- Don't post any pictures or stories on social media without first obtaining written consent from the parties involved.
- After creating your account, be sure to review your account's privacy settings. Make sure the setting to "Review all posts you are tagged in" is enabled to prevent being tagged in inappropriate posts/pictures.



Emergency Protocols

- Always have a plan in case of an emergency. If a situation occurs where you or someone you are with is in danger call 911 first and alert your supervisor
- If you have a vehicle emergency inform your supervisor and call roadside assistance if available. If roadside assistance is unavailable see if other Migrant Education Staff are in the area or call 911 if it is an emergency.



Recommended Safety Items

- 911 and medical ID Information programmed in Cell Phone, if available
- Identification badge and business cards
- Emergency flashlight/phone charger
- Pepper spray
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant hand wipes
- First aid kit
- Jumper cables
- Functioning spare tire and a car jack
- Umbrella/Raincoat
- Water Bottles and healthy snacks (i.e. protein bars, fruit, etc.)
- Table and blankets for recruiting/tutoring outside



Recommended Safety Apps

- WEATHER FOR YOU: <http://www.weatherforyou.com>
- COMPANION: <http://www.companionapp.io/>
- SAFE TREK: <https://www.safetrekapp.com/>
- WATCH OVER ME: <http://www.watchovermeapp.com/>
- NOONLIGHT <http://www.noonlight.com>
- KITESTRING: <https://www.kitestring.io/>
- SPOT CRIME: <http://www.spotcrime.info/>
- REACT MOBILE: <https://reactmobile.com>



Training Review:

Please fill out the IDRC Training review form by using the link below or the scanning the QR code with the phone's camera

Training title:

Safety Never Takes a Day Off

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IDRCStaffTrainingEval20-21>



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thank you