





Slide 7

**CONFRONTATION FACTS**

- Nothing is ROUTINE!
- The MEANS and OPPORTUNITY to carry out an attack are readily at hand
- ANYONE can SUCCESSFULLY attack you
- Most attacks are conceived and executed by subjects acting ALONE
- Assailants decide when, where and whom to attack. Motivations can be SELFISH or IRRATIONAL and INDESCRIMINATE

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Slide 8

**CONFRONTATION FACTS CONT'D**

- Weapons can be easily HIDDEN about the person

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Slide 9

**Assaults on Social Workers**

- Female workers that are killed are also more likely to be a victim of sexual assault
- 2004 Social Worker Teri Zenner (Kansas) was attacked and killed during a "routine" home visit with her 17 year old client.
- This prompted new policies of social workers required to carry cell phones and included personal safety training as part of their annual required training hours.

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Slide 10

**Further Assaults**

- April 2005: woman in Texas fires a shot gun at two social workers visiting her home
- March 2006: Social Worker Sally Blackwell (Texas) who investigated accusations of child abuse and neglect kidnapped from her home, killed and found in a field.
- Family stated threats were a daily part of her job.

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Slide 11

- 2008: Social Worker Brenda Yeager was conducting a scheduled visit involving an infant when her attackers were waiting inside. She was also sexually assaulting before suffocated to death by both the male and female attacker.
- 2011: Stefanie Moulton, Mental Health Worker was killed at the group home where she was employed by a client diagnosed with schizophrenia and episodes of major mental illness.

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Slide 12

**SAFETY PLAN OF ACTION**

- General Outline developed by NASW Massachusetts's Chapter's Committee for the Study and Prevention of Violence Against Social Workers
- Recognition of client agitation
- Establish code words with staff to signal danger secretly
- De-escalation attempts

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Slide 13

**Plan of Action Cont'd**

- Dis-engagement skills
- Self-Defense
- BEHAVIOR IS NOT PREDICTABLE!

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Slide 14

**Get to know the client, before "knowing" the client...**

- Conduct a thorough assessment of each client that you are assigned
- Do they have a prior history of violence?
- Do they have alcohol/drug use history (past or present)?
- Do they have a history involving weapons?

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Slide 15

**SAFETY IN NUMBERS**

- When at all possible, go on home visits with a partner
- Statistics for safety with a partner improve by 70 % versus alone
- 2 partners reduce your chance of being assaulted by 90%
- Review roles when working with a partner/positioning

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Slide 16

**Working with Partners**

- Code words
- Discuss home visit afterward with partner/ "debrief"
- What could we have done better?

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Slide 17

**CONTACT VS. COVER**

- Conducts all communication with subject
- Issues commands when required
- Devotes full attention to the subject
- Discourages any hostile acts by the subject
- Alerts Contact worker of any weapons
- Intervenes if necessary to protect partner
- Resists distractions
- Maintains exit at all times

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Slide 18

**HOME VISITS**

- Utilize cell phone
- Who knows where you are??
- Do not bring purses or calendars with personal information/Clipboards
- Be aware of animals
- Never let your client leave your sight
- Know your exits
- Always be prepared for the unexpected
- Do not remove your shoes
- Avoid sitting in soft furniture
- Be mindful of problems associated with third parties
- ALWAYS trust your instincts!
- LEAVE if something doesn't feel right

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Slide 19

**HOME VISITS CONT'D**

- Action is quicker than reaction
- YOU control the situation, don't let the situation control you...
- "Routine" contacts are most dangerous because we let our guard down
- Past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior
- Know your client's past
- Assaultive priors?
- Separate personal stressors from work

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Slide 20

**Approaching the Residence**

- Conduct a "drive-by" of the residence first
- Know your address and location!
- Park car in an "exit" position/not in front
- Before knocking on the door, look and listen
- Look into windows and determine how many people are inside and if there is any danger
- Listen for signals that may indicate danger

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Slide 21

**Entry**

- Identify yourself
- Ask your client who else is in the residence
- Complete a scan of the residence
- Never let someone get between you and the exit
- Be respectful

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Slide 22

### Dog attacks

- Don't be afraid to request the dog be put away
- NEVER scream and run
- Remain motionless, hands at your sides and avoid eye contact
- Once the dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until he is out of sight
- If the dog does attack, "feed" him your bag, coat, or other...
- If you are knocked down to the ground, curl up into a ball, protect your ears and remain motionless
- Partner??

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Slide 23

### COLOR CODE OF AWARENESS

Blind Panic  
State of Combat  
Confrontation  
Imminent

State of Alertness  
Seconds From  
Confrontation

Relaxed Awareness

Totally  
Relaxed

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Slide 24

### Crisis Rehearsal

- Crisis Rehearsal is the use of mental images (internal movies) including defensive tactics to develop appropriate reactions to confrontations. By repeatedly imagining yourself in a crisis where you successfully defeat a threat, you condition yourself to respond with the same proficiency in the same manner. The more you practice the better prepared you will be.

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Slide 28

**Assailant Indicators**

- When ready to attack, harder for them to think
- Eye Contact- "Windows to the Soul"
- Emotions are honest- believe anything but happiness
- Hands in pockets
- Body Positions
- Behaviors: testing the waters, not following requests, scanning, target glance, evasive

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Slide 29

**DEESCALATION**

- Recognize warning signs
- Awareness of change in demeanor
- Cues and appropriate responses
- Respect- separate person from problems, focus on specific events
- Tension and distance (proximity)
- Nonverbal impressions
- Assess the effect of your actions
- Using calm behaviors
- Redirecting
- Look for what is similar not differences
- Mutually agreed on solutions- they may not be exactly what you want

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Slide 30

**Verbal Abuse**

- U.S. Legal Definition: "Verbal abuse is the use of words to cause harm to the person being spoken to. It is difficult to define and may take many forms. Similarly, the harm caused is often difficult to measure. The most commonly understood form is name-calling. Verbal abuse may consist of shouting, insulting, intimidating, threatening, shaming, demeaning, or derogatory language, among other forms of communication."

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Slide 31

**OFFICE SAFETY**

- Identify common objects found in office that can be used as a weapon
- Eliminate objects that may be thrown
- Avoid personal pictures in view
- Positioning of you versus client (worker closest to exit)
- Be the "voice" when you hear things escalating with one of your co-workers and their client

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Slide 32

**OFFICE SAFETY CONT'D**

- If a client becomes hostile and leaves, do not pursue

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Slide 33

**NOTHING is Routine!**

- Don't act on automatic pilot
- Recognize the potential for violence
- Let circumstances dictate your actions
- Be ready to carry out your plan instinctively
- Cultivate actions that are unexpected

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Slide 34

**I've been working with this client a long time...**

- Remember, A client's world view may be different from yours
- Lack of medication compliance/CD issues
- Working with clients that are extremely vulnerable and for some at a point of severe hardship/difficulties

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Slide 35

**Ramsey County Case**

- February 2014: Offender disclosed to his social worker that he had several specific plans to kill his probation officer because he thought the probation officer had filed a child protection report and that he was losing his visitation rights with his child.
- Complaint and warrant filed for Terroristic Threats.

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Slide 36

**Being a "Safe" Professional**

- Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries
- Address boundary violations when they occur
- Use caution when divulging personal information about yourself
- Avoid having personal photos or information in view of clients
- Never be afraid to "use" your supervisor as an "out" for safety purposes

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Slide 37

- Maintain an unlisted address and telephone number
- Be aware of the potential of personal information on the internet especially social media
- Consult with supervisor if concerned with behaviors of a particular client
- Document! Document! Document!

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Slide 38

**3-5 RULE**

- The majority of attacks will occur within 3-5 seconds
- The attacks are initiated within a distance of 3-5 feet
- The victim will sustain 3-5 blows

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Slide 39

**Weapons**

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