

## LCCS POLICY 175

### Employee Safety

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<b>See new Policy #:</b>	

  

<b>Scope:</b>	All Lucas County Children Services employees
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Executive Director, all Directors, Manager of Building and Operations
<b>Purpose:</b>	To establish safety procedures for LCCS employees.
<b>Legal Cite:</b>	O.R.C. 5153.16, O.A.C. 5101:2-33-55, 5101:2-33-56.

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## POLICY STATEMENT

Families are primarily involuntary clients, and it is incumbent upon staff to conduct an assessment and identify indicators of risk to personal safety. Therefore, LCCS will:

- do what is reasonably necessary to protect the life, health, safety and welfare of employees and visitors;
- not permit employees to engage in unsafe acts or violate safety and health rules and regulations;
- not require or permit any employee to go to or be in any work-related environment which is not considered to be reasonably safe;
- furnish, use and/or make available safety devices and safeguards that are reasonably adequate for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment; and
- ensure that agency staff members have safe options for the transportation of children determined to pose risk of flight or significant behavioral challenges difficult to manage while in a motor vehicle.

Consistent with LCCS' commitment to provide quality protective services to children, employees will respond to children and families in need while utilizing good judgment in potentially dangerous situations.

LCCS prohibits the possession, transport and storage of any weapon capable of inflicting serious bodily harm on agency property and in agency work areas regardless of whether an employee possesses a concealed-weapons permit or is allowed by law to possess a weapon. Any weapon capable of inflicting serious bodily harm is prohibited on any

LCCS property or in any location in which the employee represents LCCS for business purposes, including those listed above. Employees are reminded that their personal safety comes first, and that every effort should be made to avoid physical conflict at any time.

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## **PROCEDURE**

### ***PERSONAL SAFETY***

#### **SCREENING**

The intake worker will ask the following questions and the answers will be recorded on the intake reporting form:

- Are there any indications of drug involvement, especially, whether the home is an active "drug house"?
- Is there any suspected criminal activity occurring on the premises, especially, gang activity?
- Are there any weapons that you know about in the home?
- Has anyone in this household threatened or been involved in assaultive behavior?

#### **SERVICING**

Should the referral indicate the presence of weapons, the Manager/Assistant Manager of Building and Operations (Security) should be contacted so an attempt can be made to partner the worker with the Lucas County Sherriff's Office's Warrant Task Force. Should the Task Force be unavailable, the worker should contact the Toledo Police Department's Non-Emergency number to have a crew accompany them to the home.

When a worker is concerned about his/her physical safety, (s)he will consult with his/her supervisor, to determine if assistance may be needed.

The supervisor will discuss the potential for risk, make an assessment, and develop an appropriate plan of action with the employee.

In a field emergency, the caseworker should utilize the mandatory SafeSignal app, and tether provided by LCCS Security. If staff does not have an agency issued tether, they should contact 911. Law Enforcement will automatically be dispatched in an emergency capacity to the worker's location. LCCS Security will monitor electronically the activation of a field emergency stemming from an agency-issued tether being pulled. LCCS Security will contact the worker in crisis' supervisor and continue up the Chain of Command until they make contact with someone. Whoever LCCS Security makes contact with is responsible for contacting the next up the chain, and so on until the Executive Director has been notified. LCCS Security will continue to monitor the field emergency until it is resolved and provide updates up the Chain of Command

When a worker needs non-emergency Toledo Police assistance, (s)he should call 245-3340 (e.g., need to remove a child from their home and the child is not in immediate danger).

## **CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

When a critical incident has occurred, the following steps will be taken:

- The supervisor will debrief the worker as soon as possible and provide the specifics of the incident to his/her manager, in writing, utilizing LCCS Form #1453 (Critical Incident Form).
- The manager will send a copy of LCCS Form #1453 to all services managers, the Supervisor of Security, and ensure that a copy is included in the case file.
- The manager will facilitate the scheduling of an EAP appointment by contacting the Training and Development Manager. Should the employee choose not to attend, he/she must cancel the appointment.
- The manager will discuss each critical incident with the reporting supervisor.
- The supervisor and manager will confer with the Human Resources Department to determine if administrative leave would be appropriate.
- If a group debriefing is appropriate, it will normally take place within 72 hours of the incident, and will be led by a mental health professional.
- A critical incident debriefing will occur between the employee and LCCS Security within one week of reporting the critical incident.

LCCS Security will:

- prepare and disseminate any factual information to the workforce. (Information will only be provided on a need to know basis.); and
- forward copies of the Critical Incident Report to County Risk Management (after they have been properly redacted by the Manager/Assistant Manager of building and Operations) and the Human Resources Director or designee.

## ***STAFF SUPPORT***

### **AGENCY SECURITY OFFICERS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES**

When information is received that suggests the need for caution when visiting particular locations (i.e., criminal activity, vicious dogs, SACWIS Safety Hazards, etc.) workers may contact security to obtain 911 reports and the Lucas County Dog Warden's Dangerous Dog List for a particular address or they may access this information directly themselves online.

The Security Department is available to:

- observe staffings, interviews, and meetings within the building and Family Visits when line of sight security is needed;
- monitor via cell phone with caseworker in the field;
- search adults and youths for possible weapons or contraband;
- provide back-up equipment such as flashlights and additional cellular phones;
- respond to emergency buttons located in rooms throughout the agency;
- consult with LCCS staff; and
- train caseworkers on safety issues.

## **TRAINING**

A safety discussion shall be a regular part of every unit meeting. Any critical incident that has recently occurred will also be discussed. This policy will be reviewed a minimum of every six (6) months in unit meetings. This policy will be included in the Training Unit curriculum.

Training on employee safety will be offered annually.

All employees who go into the field, in the performance of their duties, are required to complete Employee Safety Training. Safety Training shall be provided to casework trainees during the training class. All employees who go into the field are required to have the agency-provide SafeSignal app installed on their cellular device and/or agency-issued I Pad.

Concerns arising out of this policy shall be referred up the chain-of-command ending with the Labor-Management Committee, which may reconvene the Safety Subcommittee as needed.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

When LCCS employees must transport a child that may pose a flight risk or who exhibits behaviors which may compromise the safe operation of a motor vehicle, the transporting worker, his or her supervisor and, if appropriate, a member of the Security staff, should discuss the following options and determine a strategy for reducing the risk to the staff person and child during the transport:

- Security may escort the child(ren) and the assigned staff member while in transport;
- have a second caseworker or other staff member accompany the transport;
- use child safety locks where this is an option on the vehicle and, if appropriate;
- discuss with a youth who is a potential flight risk that while flight is a choice, LCCS staff would not endanger themselves or the child.

The worker should consult with LCCS Security and utilize the agency vehicle that has a protective partition whenever necessary.

Decisions reached are to be documented in the case record and other appropriate locations (Security logs, etc.), along with a rationale for the action.

### **In addition to the guidelines above, staff members are to:**

- contact 911 at anytime during an emergency situation where police or medical assistance may be needed;
- immediately contact his or her supervisor during any crisis within the transportation process as soon as it is safe to do so;
- get to a safe location and contact his or her supervisor or back-up supervisor for direction, should a child state an intent or act in a manner to leave a motor vehicle without authorization;
- not attempt to restrain the child; and

- ensure that any incidents during transportation are appropriately documented per agency policies and procedures.

**Note: Employees are expected to refrain from using a cell phone while driving on agency business. LCCS recognizes there may be emergency situations which require the use of a cell phone, but the expectation is that the safety of everyone must come before all other concerns. Regardless of the circumstance, including slow or stopped traffic, employees are strongly encouraged to pull off to the side of the road and safely stop the vehicle before placing or accepting a call.**

**No other function of cell phones such as text messaging, use of the internet, or other operations is permitted while driving on agency business. These activities can only be done in a stopped, safely parked vehicle.**

**Agency Transportation staff members are provided radios for emergencies and other critical needs. Safety of everyone is to be observed at all times, and as with use of a cell phone, is the overriding consideration for the use of a radio.**

## ***INVITING DANGEROUS PEOPLE TO THE AGENCY***

### **BUILDING SAFETY/SECURITY**

Employees are discouraged from having clients above the first floor. If/when it becomes necessary to invite clients to other floors, a staff person must escort the individuals to and from the location.

No person, whether a client, family member, or member of the general public, will be invited to the agency if:

- (s)he has made a specific threat to harm the caseworker or other agency personnel. "Specific" is intended to mean a threat that includes a "plan" or mentions a specific weapon or timeframe;
- (s)he has a history of physical violence to others (other than any physical/sexual abuse against the children of the case); and
- (s)he has a prior history of physical violence to a caseworker or other agency staff.

If the caseworker believes that an individual fits any of the above criteria, (s)he will advise his/her supervisor. If the supervisor agrees with the validity of the threat, the supervisor will confer with his/her manager, and Security will be consulted to determine if any prior incidents have been reported.

If a dangerous individual is to visit, the casework supervisor, Family Visits Supervisor, and the Supervisor of Security will meet to determine if the visit can safely take place in the Family Visits area at 705 Adams. If the visit cannot safely take place in the Family Visits area, the supervisors will identify a location where the visit can safely take place. If no accommodation can be made, the WOR's manager will be notified and assistance will be requested from the LCCS Legal Department.

When there is a decision not to invite an individual to the agency, the decision and the rationale must be documented in the case notes.

When an individual is invited to the agency that appears to fit any of the above criteria, at the time of arrival or if Security personnel believe that there is an immediate, significant threat of harm to agency personnel or others, Security will instruct the individual to leave. If the individual does not leave, law enforcement will be called to address the trespass or threat. If children are searched, there must be a second witness present.

## **SEARCHES OF CHILDREN UPON ARRIVAL AT THE AGENCY**

Children who have already been searched immediately prior to coming to the agency by law enforcement or juvenile justice personnel will not be searched.

LCCS Security Officers will not receive youths (age 13 or older) from law enforcement without actively inquiring as to whether a search was performed, and they will document that information. Where a search of such a youth was not performed by law enforcement, LCCS Security Officers will request this be done and document the response of the transporting officer(s).

Children under age nine (9) will not be searched unless there is a reason to believe that the child has a weapon, pills or other item(s) that could be used to cause harm to self or others.

All children age 9 and over will be searched by LCCS Security prior to entering a vehicle with a worker, unless they were searched by Law Enforcement upon or just prior to being brought to the agency.

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## **CASE PRACTICE GUIDES**

### **DEFINITIONS:**

#### Critical Incidents -

- any injury that requires more than first aid, is a lost-time injury, requires modified duty, or causes loss of consciousness;
- a situation in which an employee is physically or verbally threatened or assaulted, or that involves unwanted physical contact; or
- aggressive behavior which may be threatening to the employee, but not resulting in injury.

#### Non- Critical Incident -

- Work related injuries, verbal attacks or threats of violence reported to a third party.

#### Search -

- A “pat-down”, by Security personnel consisting of: having the youth/adult empty his/her pockets; having youth/adult empty purses or other baggage; patting down socks, pockets, etc. At their discretion, LCCS Security Officers may utilize a “wand”.

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## **RELATED POLICIES and FORMS**

LCCS Policy 174 (Workplace Violence)

LCCS Policy 410 (Employee Assistance Program)

LCCS Policy 915 (Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan)

LCCS Policy 1002 (Electronic Mail)

LCCS Policy 1003 (Voice Mail)

LCCS Form # 1453 (Unusual Incident Form)

LCCS Workplace Violence Prevention Procedures and Documents