

Safety Tips for Students Serving/Working in the Community



As you prepare to get engaged with your community, it's important to consider some ways to remain street-smart and aware while meeting new people and entering new contexts. While you will not be entering dangerous situations, it's still good to keep common sense precautions in mind! This document will provide some useful tips on how to take care in different situations.

I. Getting There, Getting Back

On the street...

- Tell someone whom you trust where you are going and when you will return.
- Walk with a friend or companion whenever possible.
- Stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings. Avoid listening to earphones or texting while walking.
- Walk in well-lighted areas, avoiding alleys.
- Carry a whistle or a body alarm. This can serve as a reminder to exercise caution, and can alert someone in the area that you need help.
- If traveling near the Lake Shore Campus after dark, use the Campus Escort Service—call 8-RIDE from any campus phone (or 773.508.7433).

On your bike...

- **Always wear a helmet**, even when going for short rides.
- Avoid using chains or cables as your sole means of securing your bicycle.
- Make sure that you are visible to pedestrians and vehicles when biking at night. Consider wearing light colored clothing and/or purchasing lights for your bicycle.
- Know the City of Chicago's bicycle laws.
- Always bike with the direction of traffic and use designated bicycle lanes whenever possible.
- Secure your bicycle with a sturdy lock to designated bicycle racks.

In your car...

- Always lock your car and take your keys.
- Close windows, lock storage compartments, and stow or secure all packages and valuables. Do not leave packages or valuables visible.
- **Drive carefully!** Neither the university nor your volunteer agency is liable for risks involved in students getting to and from their service sites.

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This document and other service-learning resources available at luc.edu/celts

- **Never give a client a ride in your personal vehicle.**
- Park in open, accessible locations where you are visible to others. Make a note of where you park.
- Consider your return time when parking; it may be dark when you return.
- When returning to your car, check all sides before entering. Be alert to your surroundings. Have your keys in your hand and ready before arriving at your car.
- Once inside your car, lock all doors.
- Trust your instincts, and leave at the first sign of danger. Once you are safe, call Campus Safety at 4-4911 or use a yellow campus emergency phone (on/near campus) or call the Chicago Police Department at 911 (off-campus).

On Public Transit...

- When riding a bus, use a stop that's well lit and near a coffee shop or store that's open.
- Travel with a friend or co-worker whenever possible.
- Know the bus or train schedule ahead of time, so you aren't waiting longer than necessary. The CTA offers numerous pre-planning resources on their website, www.transitchicago.com, and real-time bus schedules are available at ctabustracker.com. You can also download the Ventra app (see www.ventrachicago.com) to plan and track transportation on your phone.
- Have your money or CTA card (U-Pass) ready when entering the bus or train station.
- Stay awake and alert to your surroundings on the bus or train.
- Keep all belongings secure and close to you either in your lap or between your feet. Don't put them on the seat beside you.
- Sit near the aisle, the bus driver, or an exit so that you can move away from an unwanted situation.
- Avoid unnecessary conversation with strangers and never give out any personal information.
- Be respectful of fellow riders and public spaces when having conversations with companions or using a cell phone.
- Get to know the built-in safety tools when using rideshare apps (like Lyft or Uber), so that you can use them in an emergency.



II. While on Site

Communication...

- Whenever on site, make sure you know who your immediate supervisor is, and how to contact them (if you are not working in close proximity). Ask your supervisor for tips on staying safe.

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- Make sure someone you trust knows your destination and your tentative return time.
- Ask for help from your supervisor or another staff member when in doubt.
- Request an alternate service site if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with your current site

Planning ahead...

- Plan for “what ifs” (what if your car breaks down, what if you can’t find a client’s or agency’s address, etc.)
- Wear appropriate, modest, easy-to-move in attire, consistent with agency policy. Wear sturdy, close-toed shoes on site.
- Know your job description and don’t engage in activities beyond the scope of your class or your agreed-upon role.
- Plan to go to your service site in pairs if you will be visiting clients in private homes, working after-hours, or engaging in service in an unfamiliar neighborhood.

Boundaries...

- **ONCE AGAIN: Even if asked, don’t give a client a ride in a personal vehicle.**
- Never give or loan clients money or other personal belongings.
- Do not share personal contact information (home/cell phone number, address, personal email address, etc.) with clients or other non-Loyola volunteers.
- Avoid talk or behavior of a sexual nature on site, whether from clients, other volunteers, or your supervisor(s). If you feel uncomfortable, leave the situation and tell your supervisor, instructor, or the Service-Learning Program Manager.
- Do not engage in any type of business with clients during the term of your service.
- Do not enter into a personal relationship with a client during the term of your service, including connecting on social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

If Serving in a Private Setting (e.g. a client’s home)...

- Get information about the client(s), cultural norms, and their situation from your agency supervisor *prior* to the home visit.
- **ONCE AGAIN: all home visits should be done with one or more partners who are known to you.** If your partner is not available, re-schedule the home visit.
- Avoid being alone with clients without adequate supervision.
- Whenever possible, meet clients at a neutral place (at the agency or at a public building such as a cafe or library).
- Keep your agency supervisor informed of your plans and itinerary and check in by phone on a prearranged schedule.
- When you arrive in a client’s home, think about where to sit, being careful to keep an unobstructed path to the door or other available exit.
- **TRUST YOUR GUT.** If something does not feel right, leave immediately. Talk to your agency supervisor about your concerns and ask to switch clients.

In Case of Injury...

- Protect yourself: make sure your health insurance information is on your person or easily accessible.
- Make sure your emergency contact(s) is/are designated in your phone. Many smartphones allow users to designate an emergency contact as part of their user information. Otherwise, use the letters “ICE” (“In case of emergency...”) before emergency contact names in your contact list so that medical authorities know who to call in case of an emergency.
- As a volunteer, agency liability insurance will cover student injuries as long as your activities are within the scope of course guidelines and your agency-defined volunteer role. If you aren’t sure if something is, err on the side of caution and ask for help from a staff rather than jumping in yourself.
- Most agencies keep first aid kits and other medical equipment on site. Know where it is and how to use it in case of an emergency.

III. If Something Happens On-Site or in the Neighborhood of Your Service Site...

If an incident occurs while you are on-site or in the area of your service site, OR if you are injured or feel unsafe while performing your volunteer service, contact your agency supervisor, your instructor, and/or the Service-Learning Program Manager (as appropriate) to discuss what actions the agency and school should take to insure your physical and emotional well-being.

All incidents occurring on, near, or in transit to/from your service site should be reported on the CELTS’s **Service-Learning Incident Report** form within 48 hours. The form is available on the CELTS website at luc.edu/celts/incident_report.shtml.

Regardless of the nature of the incident, try to STAY CALM. Your instructor, the agency, the CELTS staff, and Loyola’s various student support services will help you.