Safety Tips for Students Serving/Working in the Community

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 whenever possible: research indicates that two people walking together are 70% less likely to be the victims of a street crime.
- Stay alert and tuned-in to your surroundings.
- Walk in well-lighted areas, avoiding alleys.
- Do not listen to earphones or “walk & text” while out alone, this minimizes your ability to notice an approaching threat, and also advertises to a would-be thief that you have a desirable item to attempt to steal.
- 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...

Chicago has recently experienced a rise in the occurrence of bicycle thefts. The Campus Safety Department offers the following advice to help keep your bicycle safe:

- Avoid chains or cables as your sole means of securing your bicycle. These are easily defeated and are usually responsible for the majority of bicycle thefts.
- Consult this guide, published by the City of Chicago, for tips on securing your bike.
- Do not place your bike lock close to the ground (or other hard object) where a thief can easily smash it with a hammer.
- The City of Chicago has designated bike lanes on many major streets. Use them!
- While riding, don’t assume that you are safer than pedestrians because you are faster than they are. Stick to well-lighted, well-populated areas, avoiding alleys and other unsafe shortcuts.

In your car...

- Always lock your car and take your keys.
- Close windows and lock storage compartments.
- Do not leave packages and 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.
- Never give a client a ride in your personal vehicle.
- Do not park in isolated locations or behind obstructions that block you from the view of others, and make a note of where you parked.
- Consider your return time when choosing a parking location; it may be dark when you return. Be alert to strangers hanging around the parking area.
• When returning to your car, check all sides before entering. Have your keys in your hand and ready before arriving at your car.
• Once inside your car, lock all doors.
• Trust your instincts, 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 forced to wait longer than necessary. (The CTA offers numerous pre-planning resources on their website, www.transitchicago.com, and real-time bus schedules are available at www.ctabustracker.com.)
• Don't sleep on the bus or train.
• Sit near the bus driver.
• Have your money or CTA card (U-Pass) in hand when entering the bus or train. This way you won't fumble with your wallet or purse.
• Don't engage in unnecessary conversation with strangers, and never give out any personal information. The person you're talking to may be fine, but others can overhear. Be similarly attuned to what you say during cell phone conversations while using public transit!
• Don't get too involved with reading/texting/chatting on your phone while you wait OR while you ride. Stay alert!
• Move away from people who appear intoxicated, even if this means going to another stop or changing cars on the train.
• Don't share a cab with a stranger.
• Sit near the aisle so you can get up quickly if someone bothers you.
• Don't sit near the exit door on busses or trains. At stops, when the door opens, someone can reach in and snatch your purse or backpack.
• Hold on firmly to your purse or backpack. Don't put it on the seat beside you. Keep it in your lap or wedge it between your feet.
• Tuck necklaces inside your clothing and turn rings around so that valuable stones aren't showing. Better yet, remove jewelry before using public transportation.

II. While on Site

Communication…

• Whenever on site, make sure you know who your immediate supervisor is, and how to contact him/her (if you are not working in close proximity). Ask your supervisor for tips on staying safe.
• Make sure someone whom 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.

Jon Schmidt, Service-Learning Coordinator | 773-508-7080 or jschmidt12@luc.edu
This document and other service-learning resources available at LUC.edu/experiential
Planning ahead...

- Plan for “what if’s” (what if car breaks down, what if I can’t find clients or agency address, etc.)
- Wear appropriate, modest, easy-to-move in attire, consistent with agency policy. Always wear sturdy shoes. Flip-flops are seldom practical or appropriate on-site.
- Know your job description as a volunteer, 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 a dangerous 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.
- Do not tolerate talk or behavior of a sexual nature on site, whether from clients, other volunteers, or your supervisor(s). If you feel harassed, leave the situation and tell your supervisor, instructor, or the Service-Learning Coordinator, as appropriate.
- 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 “friending” him/her on Facebook or other social networking sites.

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.
- Try not to be alone with clients without adequate supervision.
- Whenever possible, consider meeting clients at a neutral place (at the agency or at a public building such as a café 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: carry your health insurance card at all times.
- Make sure your emergency contact/s is/are designated in your phone. 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 a debilitating injury.
- 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.
- 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 made to feel unsafe while performing your volunteer service, contact your agency supervisor, your instructor, and/or the Service-Learning Coordinator (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 CEL’s Service-Learning Incident Report form within 48 hours. The form is available on the CEL website at www.LUC.edu/experiential and can be completed online or on paper.

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

*** * * * ***

Learn more about safety and the surrounding Rogers Park and Edgewater neighborhoods by taking a Hot Spots Tour, lead by a crime prevention specialist, who discusses personal safety and gives students a 45-minute ride through the neighborhood after dark in the comfort of a campus van.

To schedule a Hot Spots Tour, contact Loyola’s Campus Safety Department at: 773.508.2463; or e-mail: asksafety@luc.edu.

For other safety updates and information, check out: www.luc.edu/depts/safety.

To read crime reports about Chicago, visit the City of Chicago Website: www.cityofchicago.org, and type “Citizen ICAM” in the search finder to access the database that distributes Chicago crime reports.