

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.

On a bike...

- Always use a bike lock.
- Make sure the lock is looped through the tire and the frame, and secured to something that does not move.
- Go to the City of New Orleans’s webpage for additional information on biking in the city (here’s the link: <http://www.nola.gov/dpw/bicycling/>).
- 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 New Orleans has designated bike lanes/shared lanes for bikes and cars on many major streets. Use them! The website for the City of New Orleans also provides a [Bicycle Network Map](#).
- 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.
- Do not listen to earphones while biking – your full attention should be on the road, cars, and pedestrians around you.
- Cyclists must obey the same laws as cars. Remember to stop at red lights, stop signs, and use hand signals when turning.
- Always wear a helmet!
- Visit the Louisiana Bike Guide here: <http://labikeguide.org/> for more information on rules, safety and cycling in LA.

In your car...

- Always lock your car and take your keys.

- Close windows and lock storage compartments.
- Do not leave packages and valuables visible.
- Do not put your purse in your trunk when you arrive at your destination – do it before you leave! This way, no one can see that your purse is in your trunk.
- Drive carefully! Neither the university nor your service learning agency/community based federal work study employer 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 NOPD at 911 to report a crime/suspicious activity.

On Public Transit...

- When riding a bus, use a stop that's well-lit and near a coffee shop or store that's open whenever possible.
- Travel with a friend or co-worker whenever possible.
- Know the bus or streetcar schedule ahead of time, so you aren't forced to wait longer than necessary. (NORTA offers numerous pre-planning resources on their website, www.norta.com; real-time tracking is also available on their website. You can also use the Text feature located on bus stop signs – take a picture of the number when you arrive at your destination so that you can text the number when you're getting ready to leave. This way, you won't have to stand outside and wait for a bus – you'll know when it's supposed to arrive. The WDSU Transit Tracker App may also be helpful.)
- Don't sleep on the bus or train.
- Sit near the bus driver.
- Have your money or Jazzy Pass in hand when entering the bus or streetcar. 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/listening to music 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 waiting for another bus/streetcar.
- Don't share a cab or Uber 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.
- Come to the Office of Community Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (Bobet 113) if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with your current site. We can help you work something out. If you feel you are in immediate danger, call the NOPD at 911.

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! If any activities make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy, talk to your supervisor. If you cannot talk to your supervisor, please come to the Office of Community Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (Bobet 113).
- Plan to go to your service site in pairs if you will be visiting clients in private homes, working after dark, 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 someone in the Office of Community Engaged Learning, Teaching, and Scholarship (OCELTS).

- Do not engage in any type of personal 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.
- Try not to be alone with clients without adequate supervision.
- If you are traveling or going to a different location for your community based federal work study job, keep your agency supervisor informed of your plans and itinerary and check in by phone on a prearranged schedule.
- TRUST YOUR GUT. If something does not feel right, leave immediately. Talk to your agency supervisor about your concerns.

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.

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 Office of Community Engaged Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (OCELTS), 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 to OCELTS via email or in-person within 48 hours.

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

Additional safety information can be found on LUPD’s webpage here:
<http://finance.loyno.edu/police>.