

# CONDUCTING RESEARCH AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN THE HOME/COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT: Guidelines for School of Rehabilitation Science Students

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Glossary:

**Community members - individuals** or organizations within the community  
**Department** - School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS)

McMaster University is committed to providing and maintaining healthy and safe conditions and practices for all graduate students. This is achieved by meeting or exceeding the standards to comply with the legislative requirements as contained in the [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#). Students should familiarize themselves with the [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), work in compliance with statutory requirements and prescribed safe work procedures and report any unsafe work conditions to their supervisors.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to SRS graduate students to ensure their safety as far as reasonably possible with regards to risks associated when conducting research or completing course requirements in the home or community environment. In most cases, these will be safe. These guidelines have been developed to help assure the safety of students.

## Before the Visit:

- When scheduling your visit:
  - Remember that the individual may feel vulnerable inviting someone they don't know into their home.
  - Some telephones have call display, which displays the caller's phone number to the person being telephoned. If you do not want to share your cell phone number, please block the number.
  - Ask that pets be restrained or kept out of the room during the visit.
  - If being in an environment where someone is smoking is a concern, ask that they not smoke during the visit, or if you can conduct the visit at another location (if possible).
- The student should plan his or her route the location using main routes, avoiding isolated shortcuts. Students should obtain directions beforehand and can confirm the directions with the community member/participant.
- **If you are conducting the visit alone**, you should provide the supervisor/designate with the list of people you intend to visit, including the following:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Telephone number of the person being visited
  - Your telephone number

- Date and time of the visit, including anticipated time of completion
  
- Establish a plan with your supervisor / a housemate / friend to check in at the end of the visit, once you have left the participant's location and are safely travelling away from the appointment
- If you are lost, telephone the participant for directions and/or seek assistance.
- Dress professionally, avoiding low cut tops, and / or pants.
- Only bring necessary items to the visit..
- Make sure that you have your cell phone in your pocket in case you need to use it in an emergency.

#### **Upon arrival:**

- Park your vehicle on the street, where it is easily accessible, and be attentive of your surroundings.
- If an animal is outside the home and you feel uncomfortable, call the person you are meeting and ask that the animal be restrained.
- Exercise caution in hallways, stairwells and elevators. If you are uncomfortable about any other passengers traveling the elevator wait for the next elevator. Stand near the control panel, and if you feel uncomfortable, push the button for the next floor or press the alarm.
- Be clear to explain the purpose of your visit and obtain permissions from the person to enter their home.
- Have your student ID badge or name tag out and visible when you arrive at the door. Identify yourself and your role.

#### **During the Visit:**

- Make a quick sweep with your eyes to assess for any obstacles and escape routes, in the event you have to leave in a hurry (e.g., a fire).
- Leave your shoes on during the visit. In winter, you may choose to bring a pair of indoor shoes.
- Let the client lead you into the house/apartment or through corridors/stairs.
- Think about where you choose to sit. For instance, sit where you have a good view of the surroundings

- If they ask you to do something that you are not comfortable with (e.g., transfer in/out of a wheelchair), politely say no. Please consider the physical safety of yourself and of the individual.

### **Reasons to leave the participant's home:**

A student should immediately leave the participant's home if any of the following are observed:

- Upon arrival you feel unsafe and uncomfortable.
- The participant is inappropriately dressed and upon your request refuses to dress appropriately.
- The participant appears intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.
- Other individuals are present who pose a threat.
- The participant becomes aggressive, threatening or abusive,
  - remain calm be supportive and direct but do not ignore the individual.

When leaving always facing the participant. Drive away in your vehicle and inform your supervisor/course coordinator.

### **After the visit:**

- Leave the vicinity and choose another locale to park / pull over if you wish to discuss/review your assessment.
- Do not sit in your vehicle and go over the results of the assessment in front of the participant's location
- **If you completed the visit by yourself**, call and /or email your supervisor / a friend/housemate upon completion of the home visit to notify him/her that you are safe. The particular plan for notification should be clearly agreed upon between you and your friend/housemate.

Students must read and adhere to the guidelines discussed above and must contact their supervisor/course coordinator if they encounter any difficulties during the home visit.