

# Module 3 – Personal Safety

## Introduction

The personal safety of the Home Care Aide must be considered in all aspects of their job. Whether the home care aide is concerned about work place rights or safety while traveling to/from or while in a patient's home, all concerns must be voiced and taken seriously. The home care aide must understand his/her rights and be encouraged to voice all safety concerns.

## Objectives

At the end of the module, the home care aide will be able to:

1. List the rights of the home care aide as an employee
2. Recognize unsanitary working conditions
3. Travel safely to/from the homes of patients
4. Avoid chemical hazards in the home
5. Demonstrate confidence in a potentially dangerous situation

## Instructional Resource Materials

- Power Point for Module 3 – Personal Safety.
- Handout and activity sheets.
- Check the OSHA web site for information specific to home health care workers at <https://www.osha.gov/home-healthcare>; familiarize yourself with this information.
- Check the OSHA website for any updates or changes to employee rights: <https://www.osha.gov/>
- The Safety Data Sheet (SDS), required by OSHA, has replaced the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). A free resource for SDS may be found at <https://chemicalsafety.com/sds-search/>. Search the web for other web sites offering free access to SDS.
- Contact local law enforcement for a guest speaker related to violence, gangs, and drugs; often a police department will have a special gang unit or member of the team specializing in gangs.
- Have a trained professional come in to the class and teach some basic self-defense techniques. The police department might direct you who to call, or many martial arts schools offer this class.

*Disclaimer: Before proceeding with this module, please be aware that students may have different experiences, from you and from each other. Please remember to be sensitive to the life experiences/situations of each student.*

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Slides	Instructor's Script	Notes
<b>Slide 1</b> Title Slide	<b>Script</b> <b>Module 3 – Personal Safety</b>	
<b>Slide 2</b>	<b>Script</b> <b>Objectives</b> - At the end of the module, the nurse aide will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List his or her rights as an employee</li> <li>2. Recognize unsanitary working conditions</li> <li>3. Travel safely to/from the homes of patients</li> <li>4. Avoid chemical hazards in the home</li> <li>5. Demonstrate confidence in a potentially dangerous situation</li> </ol>	
<b>Slide 3</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 3-A – Rights as an employee and harassment</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 4</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) governs most workplace safety standards.</li> <li>• The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) of 1970 ensures safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women throughout the country. This act is a law which requires that employers provide working conditions that are free of known dangers to their employees.</li> <li>• OSHA sets standards so that employees will be safe on the job and have an outlet to voice grievances should they not feel safe.</li> <li>• Under this law, employees are also able to view their own medical records, review records of one's exposure to toxic or harmful substances, review past safety grievances, and request that OSHA come and inspect their work environment should one feel it is not meeting requirements.</li> <li>• As well as asking OSHA to inspect their workplace, employees can also file grievances with OSHA, and remain anonymous.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 5</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSHA information specific to home health care workers may be found at <a href="https://www.osha.gov/home-healthcare">https://www.osha.gov/home-healthcare</a>.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information may be found at <a href="https://www.osha.gov/">https://www.osha.gov/</a>, or by calling 1-800-321-OSHA (6742).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 6</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying safe while in the office or the home of a patient includes being free from any kind of harassment.</li> <li>• Harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates the following laws:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Civil Rights Act of 1964.</li> <li>○ Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, (ADEA).</li> <li>○ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, (ADA).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.</li> <li>• Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.</li> <li>• The North Carolina law mirrors the federal law with the addition of an anti-stalking law.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 7</b></p> <p><b>Equal Rights website:</b>  <a href="http://www.equalrights.org">www.equalrights.org</a></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual harassment: Patients and their family members may cross the employee/patient boundary when care is being provided.</li> <li>• The legal definition of sexual harassment is any “unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment.”</li> <li>• Sexual harassment can be in various forms: verbal or written (sex-based jokes, comments about personal appearance, sexual innuendos, threatening a person); physical (assault, inappropriate touch such as kissing, hugging, stroking); nonverbal (looking up and down a person’s body, derogatory gestures or facial expressions of a sexual nature); and visual (posters, drawings or emails of a sexual nature).</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should report to your supervisor if you are being spoken to inappropriately or touched in a sexual manner.</li> <li>• It is OK to hold your patient’s hand or to care about them, but it is important to maintain the patient/employee boundary.</li> <li>• Sexual harassment can also happen in the office. Report any time anyone touches you inappropriately, makes inappropriate sexual comments, or offers incentives for sexual favors.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 8</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic and Religious Harassment: Harassment about your race, background, or religion is not permitted.</li> <li>• It is a good rule of thumb not to discuss/debate religious views or beliefs with patients. Remember that everyone’s beliefs are right for them. Do not impose your beliefs on your patient.</li> <li>• Report any time that a situation with a patient becomes uncomfortable.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 9</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 3-B – Unsanitary work environment</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 10</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfortunately, some of the homes a home care aide will visit will not be free of pests or other unsanitary conditions.</li> <li>• Report any of the following to your supervisor: rodents, maggots, snakes, fleas, or roaches.</li> <li>• These all create an unsanitary environment for both the patient and the employee.</li> <li>• The supervisor should work with the patient and family to ensure that the home is sanitary enough for care to be provided. Your supervisor may be able to obtain resources to help the patient with any rodent infestation. This would ensure that both the patient and aide are safe.</li> </ul>	
<b>Slide 11</b>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <p>Unsafe structural problems and other unsafe conditions may also be a factor for the home care aide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the floors move downwards when you walk on them?</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there holes in the floor?</li> <li>• Are there areas that are obviously rotten?</li> <li>• Do the bathrooms function properly?</li> <li>• Is there frayed wiring that is exposed?</li> <li>• These conditions create an unsafe working environment for you and your patient.</li> <li>• Notify your supervisor immediately if you answered yes to any of these questions or discover other structural problems.</li> <li>• Do not attempt to use heavy equipment, such as a Hoyer lift, when there are questionable safety concerns, if you do not feel trained to use a Hoyer lift or if you are not familiar with the specific type of lift a patient may have in the home.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 12</b></p> <p><b>Handout 1</b></p> <p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A home safety assessment is performed most often by the admitting professional. The purpose of a home safety assessment is to help the patient and family find and fix hazards in the home.</li> <li>• A home safety assessment and subsequent modifications or repairs ensures that both the patient and aide are safe while in the home.</li> <li>• <b>Handout 1 – Example of Home Safety Checklist for Older Adults</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Handout 1 is a home safety checklist for older adults. Have students turn to page 3-12 in the handout and look for the heading, Kitchen. Ask class which items on the checklist under Kitchen would help both the patient and the nurse aide remain safe while in the home.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Activity 1 – Class Discussion/Unsafe Situations</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 13</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 3-C – Travel Safety</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 14</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To remain safe while traveling to your patients' homes, there are some important safeguards to remember.</li> <li>• Do not deviate from your schedule. Your employer should know what patients you are seeing for the day. That way, if something should</li> </ul>	

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	<p>happen, your employer at least knows where you might be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know where you are going. Plan your route and keep a map with you in case you get lost. You can use a cell phone to plan your route.</li> <li>• Keep doors locked when driving and keep windows rolled up.</li> <li>• If you have access to a cell phone, carry it with you.</li> <li>• Always maintain at least a half tank of gas.</li> <li>• If your car breaks down, turn on your emergency flashers, raise the hood, call for assistance if you have a cell phone, and stay inside your locked vehicle until help arrives.</li> <li>• When parking your car, roll up the windows, take the keys out, and conceal any valuables or patient information, and lock the doors. It is best to leave your own personal belongings (e.g. purse, wallet) locked in the trunk.</li> <li>• Always be alert. Be aware of your surroundings. Walk purposefully and confidently. Carry a whistle or a personal alarm in case you need to make a loud noise to deter an attacker.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 15</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 3-D – Safety in the patient’s home and chemical hazards</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 16</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a home care aide involves some risk. You work alone, you travel to different neighborhoods, you may have to work in high crime areas, and you work with stressed and sometimes unstable patients and family members.</li> <li>• When you are in a patient’s home, it is important to always be aware of your surroundings.</li> <li>• If a patient or family member becomes upset and starts escalating to a dangerous level (rapid breathing, flushed appearance, shouting, swearing, etc.), be sure to remain calm and alert. Let the person express his/her feelings and do not engage in a debate or intense argument.</li> <li>• Place yourself near an exit and try to remain assertive yet calm.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If at any time you do not feel comfortable or you feel threatened, leave the home and immediately call your supervisor.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 17</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As well as physical hazards, the home care aide should be aware of chemical hazards.</li> <li>• Home care aides may encounter hazardous chemicals in patients' homes. These chemicals may seem common but can cause serious side effects.</li> <li>• You need to be aware of the chemicals that you handle. Your agency should have an SDS book for you to review.</li> <li>• SDS refers to Safety Data Sheets that contain information about the safe use of chemicals. Note that cleaning products are considered chemicals.</li> <li>• If you are in the home and come across a product you have not used before, should have a policy that directs you to a contact at your agency to look up the SDS for that product.</li> <li>• It is also important to remember:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Never mix cleaning products.</li> <li>○ Never leave cleaning products unattended.</li> <li>○ Never work with cleaning products that are not labeled.</li> <li>○ Never work with cleaning products in a closed area. You need plenty of ventilation when working with cleaning products.</li> <li>○ Never mix bleach with ammonia.</li> <li>○ Never pour undiluted bleach on urine. It mixes with the ammonia in the urine and creates toxic fumes.</li> <li>○ Always read the label of the product that you are using. Do not use it if it's not labeled.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Report any problems that you experience to your supervisor.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 18</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activity 2 – Guest speaker – local law enforcement</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 19</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 3-E – Violence, gangs, and/or possible drug activity in the patient's home</b></li> </ul>	

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<p><b>Slide 20</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The home care aide will at times go into homes and neighborhoods where violence, gangs, or drugs are a part of everyday life.</li> <li>• It is the goal of the home care aide to safely attend to the patient, while staying safe and unharmed in any way.</li> <li>• It is important to always act in a calm, confident, and observant manner.</li> <li>• Be aware of your surroundings. Know where the exits are and keep the path to an exit clear.</li> <li>• Be aware of any animals in the home. Talk with your supervisor if you feel threatened by the animals.</li> <li>• If you ever feel threatened or unsafe, leave. Call your supervisor as soon as possible and discuss the situation. Two aides may need to go together to see this patient, or a different time of day would be more conducive to receiving care. Worst case scenario, your patient will no longer receive care from your agency. Agencies cannot put their aides in unsafe situations; therefore, if there are no other alternatives to creating a safe environment, the agency will no longer be able to service the patient/family.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 21</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gang activity is on the rise, with gangs recruiting younger and younger members.</li> <li>• Some gangs thrive on drugs and violence, while other non-violent gangs express themselves through graffiti.</li> <li>• While your patient may or may not have gang connections, someone in the home with the patient may. Likewise, a neighbor or friend visiting may have gang ties.</li> <li>• It is important to be aware of the signs indicating possible gang activity.</li> <li>• For example, members of the Bloods always try to wear red, black, brown, and/or pink. They use numbers such as 031 or 021 to identify each other and have specific sayings and hand gestures. Their rival gang, the Crips, also use hand gestures and sayings, but their colors are blue, gray, orange, and purple. The Crips may</li> </ul>	

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	<p>use a 6 pointed Star of David as part of their identification as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violent Latino gangs are also growing and spreading across the country. The colors of the Latin Kings are black and gold and use a 3 or 5 pointed crown in their markings. They may even cut their eyebrows to form 5 points. MS 13 (or MS X3) is another Latino gang. They wear blue and black and are typically heavily tattooed.</li> <li>• If you are concerned about gang activity in a patient’s home, do not attempt to discuss this with your patient or their family members or try to talk them out of it. While it may be unfortunate that some feel the need to join a gang, it is not your place to judge them or discuss right and wrong. Instead, try your best to work around the problem if possible. For example, if you see a patient every day from 3pm – 4pm, and that is when the patient’s grandkids show up and start trouble, try changing the patient’s hours to morning hours, when no one else is there. It is possible that your agency will not be able to continue to provide services for that patient. Your safety as a home care aide must come first.</li> <li>• As always, discuss your concerns with your supervisor.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Slide 22</b></p>	<p><b>Script</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like gang activity, there could be drug activity in a patient’s home that may or may not directly involve the patient.</li> <li>• If a patient or family member acts suspiciously or bans you from certain rooms of the house, they could be hiding drugs or drug paraphernalia.</li> <li>• Likewise, if there are drugs being produced in the home (e.g., meth), there could be dangerous chemicals around the house that the home care aide could encounter. Meth labs are dangerous, and the chemicals used can explode easily. If you find any type of unlabeled pills, chemicals, or containers, avoid them, and report your concerns to your supervisor.</li> <li>• If your patient or patient’s family members are involved in drug sales or production, they may try to protect their home with unsecured dogs.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is a reasonable request to ask that any animals the patient may have at their home be crated or otherwise restrained while you are there. Your safety takes priority over a potentially dangerous dog; therefore, do not feel bad asking for an animal to be restrained for the duration of your visit.</li><li>• If you do suspect drug activity in the patient's home, report your concerns to your supervisor, and the two of you can discuss whether this patient will continue to receive services.</li></ul>	
<b>Slide 23</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Activity 3 – Case Scenario &amp; Class Discussion</b></li></ul>	
<b>Slide 24</b>	<b>Script</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Always be aware of your surroundings</b></li><li>• <b>Be safe!</b></li></ul>	