Keeping Your Commitments:

- Remember that you are a guest in the community/agency.
- Make a commitment.
- Don't make a commitment you cannot keep.
- Show up; people are depending on you.
- If you are expected to be somewhere, be there on time—every time.
- Make your placement a priority by organizing your life and responsibilities so that you show up when expected.
  - If you were up late the night before because you were studying, our expectation is that you will still go to your placement.
  - The clients/mentees/tutees you are working with deal with many disappointments in their daily lives. You need to show them respect and extend your support by showing up.
- You should also give advance notice, if possible, if you will not be coming in at your regularly scheduled time
- If you are sick and can't go to your placement, you need to get in touch with your supervisor to provide as much advance notice as possible.

Be Clear About the Parameters of Your Placement:

- Your placement has a beginning, middle and end. It is very important to be clear with the client/mentee/tutee when you will be there for your volunteering and when you will finish your placement. In the field of social work, this is called "termination"; termination starts at the beginning of the placement by being clear about your role.
- Periodically during the placement you should remind the client/mentee/tutee when the placement will end; this helps frame and normalize the relationship. Do not wait until the last week to tell the client that you are not going to be working with them any longer.
  - If you have trouble with terminating relationships, practice what you are going to say beforehand and make sure you follow through.
  - Say, for example, "I have enjoyed working with you. You have made good progress in..." “I wanted to let you know that I will be working with you for four more weeks." Be specific in your recognition of their progress.
- Keep the focus on your work and commitment to them, not on details of your upcoming vacation or other aspects of your life.
- Realize that termination or breaks in the placement may bring up issues for the client. Listen and help them to express and process their feelings. A client/mentee/tutee's response may vary widely—from indifference to anger. Each of these responses has meaning behind
These responses are not about you as much as they are about other relationships and disappointments in their lives.

The Scope and Boundaries of Your Placement:

- Contact outside of the placement is not okay. Keeping terms clear shows respect for the person you are working with and models good, transparent practices and communication.
- You are a role model. You need to be friendly and supportive but also keep in mind that you are not friends with your client/mentee/tutee.
- You have a specific role and it is very important that you follow the particular parameters of your responsibility; your contact with the people you are working with is limited to the hours, times and scope of the placement.
  - For example, you should not continue to meet with a tutor/mentee after the placement is finished, in different settings or at an unsupervised location nor should you give them the expectation that you will stay in touch with them after the placement is completed.
  - Some mentoring relationships have contact outside the primary meeting built into the structure, but most client/mentee/tutee programs do not. Do not be in contact through e-mail, phone calls, Facebook, etc. unless you have specific permission from the agency.
- Because there may be economic disparity between you and your client and because it is essential to keep the focus on your client/mentee/tutee, you should not exchange gifts with him or her at the end of the placement. You can write the client a card about their progress and efforts.

Be Supportive:

- Be specific in your praise. Avoid the non-descript “good job.” Instead, state what you noticed and energize their success. For example:
  - “Your letters look very clear. I can now see the difference between this i and this l in your sentence.”
  - “I noticed you sharing your toy with (x); that was very generous of you.”
  - “You did wonderfully reading that story. You enunciated your words clearly.”
- You can provide proactive recognition to support healthy choices and rules being adhered to, such as:
  - "I heard your friend yelling at you. You could have yelled back but instead you remained calm. You gave your friend time to calm down and then discussed why she was upset. It takes emotional maturity to do what you did."
  - “I am noticing how safe you are being with the scissors today.”
  - “That sounds like a very healthy choice you just made for yourself.”
- Re-direct negative behavior in a positive direction. For example:
  - “I appreciate how you are collecting yourself to focus on the work at hand.”
• “(X), I need for students to concentrate right now, so please focus on your work. You can have your conversation after class.”

• (Children running down the stairs) “Wait. You are all going so fast. Let’s go more slowly and count how many stairs there are.” (You can turn this into a math game.) If we walk up and down these stairs 4 times today, how many steps have you taken?

- In client/mentee/tutee relationships, the primary goal is to meet the academic needs of the tutee. However, lives are complex and things will come up that don't directly have to do with learning math or English.

- You and the client/mentee/tutee may come from different or similar circumstances, cultures and types of communities. Remember to put your preconceived judgments aside about their culture, community, or reasons why they need tutoring support. Look for strength in their ability to persevere under challenging circumstances.

- When your client/mentee/tutee brings up something that is challenging for them in their family or school, listen carefully.

- Do not try to make their situation better by attempting to "balm" their feelings or make things right. The issues and complexities they grapple with on a daily basis are challenging and you are only working with them for a short period of time.

- Be an attentive listener. Sometimes people just need to tell someone how they are feeling or talk about how they are experiencing a difficult situation. If you show you are listening and engaged, they will feel affirmed.

  - Keep the focus on them and their expressions. Rather than telling them about a similar experience you may have had and how you managed it, demonstrate that you are "following what they are saying" or encouraging them to come up with responses to their situation.

- Be open, attentive, and curious about what they share with you or bring up in a tutoring session.

  • Ask, "How come?" not, "Why?"
  • Ask, "How so...?" or "What was that like?" instead of, "How did that make you feel?" or "What do you think?"
  • Ask, "What do you want to do about that?" or, "Is there someone at school or home you could talk to about this?"
  • Use phrases such as "Can you give words to that...", "What do you imagine...?", or "Can you say more about that...?"
  • Repeat their phrasing to show that you are listening. For example, "So you are upset because your Dad doesn't visit you...?" Let them finish the sentence and take it where they want to go.

- At times when you reach an impasse in tutoring or during a difficult conversation, it is ok to sit with the silence to let them take the lead.

- If they bring up concerns about abuse or neglect, their personal safety, depression, bullying or other at-risk behaviors or significant problems, you want to let the on-site supervisor and someone within the CSO know about the situation that day – do not leave the site without talking with the on-site supervisor who will inform you of any next steps.
Community Engagement Safety Policies for Students
Smith College Jandon Center for Community Engagement (JCCE)

In every community setting, whether rural, urban, or a small town, you need to pay careful attention to your personal safety. There are ever-present risks to safety, and we strongly encourage you to follow at all times the “best practices” listed below. Contact the JCCE or the CSO with questions at jcce@smith.edu or 413-585-3060 or cso@smith.edu or 413-585-2793.

Personal Safety:

➢ Pay careful attention to your surroundings at all times of the day and be alert at all times.
➢ Let friends and colleagues know where you are going, what you are doing, and when you plan to return.
➢ If possible, travel with another person or in a small group.
➢ Carry a cell phone for emergencies.
➢ Do not wear headphones or be so busy texting that you are unaware of your surroundings.

Safe Travel:

➢ Only certified drivers may drive college vehicles. Drivers must follow all safety guidelines listed in the CSO van regulations. Additionally, when transporting placement program participants, all regulations concerning permission slips and volunteer/participant ratio must be followed:
   • For more information and to review guidelines, go to: https://www.smith.edu/academics/jandon-center/community-service/volunteers
➢ In the event of an accident or breakdown, follow the safety instructions in the key packet.
➢ When traveling to and from a placement, be aware of your surroundings. Have your key ready to open the car door; keep the car locked and your valuables out of sight. Do not label keys with your name or other identification. Reduce exposure to risk by taking the shortest distance and the safest route.
➢ Always park the van in a well-lit and well-traveled location. In general, avoid parking in an underground parking garage, where it can be difficult to remove yourself from a situation. Remain visible to others around you.
On-Site Safety Considerations:

- All of our partner organizations have emergency policies to respond to fire, assaults, hostage situations, or other safety issues. Ask them to review these policies with you, so you will know how to respond should a situation occur.
- Violent situations can happen quickly anywhere at any time, so be alert. They can be home-based (domestic violence), school-based or site-based (peer-to-peer violence, an attacker coming into the school), street violence (gang- or drug-related, an assault or robbery).
- Our partner agencies are aware of incidents in the community and want to ensure your safety. Check in with agency staff to find out if anything has happened recently of which you should be aware and what steps have been taken. For instance, at times agencies have requested increased police patrols or designated specific travel routes or entrances to use when coming and going.
- Ask agency coordinators for the contact information and locations of Community Policing Substations in the community where you are working, so that if you are concerned for your safety you can contact them or go there.
- If someone confronts you in anger or you observe an escalation in tension, do not try to manage it yourself. Immediately inform agency staff so that they can respond. Do not hesitate to get agency staff involved; part of what we are teaching program participants is how to behave appropriately to ensure their safety. If you are out in the community, immediately go to a safe location, such as a store or business.
- If accosted, do not engage in a confrontation about your personal possessions. They are not worth the risk of getting hurt.
- Trust your intuition or gut. If you feel unsafe, do what you need to do to ensure your safety. Leave the situation and go to a place that is safe, then let someone in authority know about the situation.
- Keep JCCE staff informed of any situations that occur, so we can support you and provide you with additional resources, if needed.

Working with Children:

- If you are working with children up to the age of 17, you need to be aware of Smith College’s Child Safety Policy and Guide. To review, please go to: https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/risk-management/child-safety

Additionally, you will need to meet specific requirements by taking the following online assessments through the Five College Child Safety Certification:

- “Safety and Well-being of Minors” (program is less than 1 hour)
- “How Teachers and Other Educators Can Protect Our Children” (program is 1 hour)

Community Service Office
Jandon Center for Community Engagement
www.smith.edu/academics/jandon-center/community-service
To start the process, go: https://riskmgmt.mtholyoke.edu/child_cert/login.php and create a profile. If you can't find your program/agency on the list, register for the program titled "unaffiliated students, staff or volunteers."

If you are working on-campus, then you will be required to submit a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check through the college. If you are working off campus, the partnering agency will have you complete one if they so choose.

The point of reviewing the policy and guide and taking the on-line courses is to give you the skills to be a thoughtful observer who is able to identify warning signs of suspected child abuse. “You are eyes and ears on the scene” in protecting children from sexual misconduct.

Suggestions for Working with Children after a Traumatic Situation has Occurred:

- For some children, violence is a regular occurrence with which they must cope. They may respond in a variety of ways. Their experience does not have to mirror your experience. Wait until a child brings up the subject.
- Use active listening skills to understand the child. Let the child express the experience. Do not insert yourself or your opinions into the conversation. Be attentive and focused. Do not make judgments about what happened. For example, if a child brings up a situation, the tutor should listen to the child's concern and confirm the child's feelings. If a child says, "Somebody shot at a school bus" the tutor can say, neutrally, “I heard that happened.” If the child says, "I would have been scared," the tutor can say, "Yes, I think I would have been scared too.” Letting the child lead the discussion is key; avoid letting the tutor’s fears compound the child’s.
- Remember, you are not a counselor and that is not your role. As a mentor and role model, you can be a listener and a support. Do not attempt to serve as a therapist.
- Children may not be fully aware of a situation, so do not frighten them by making a big deal about it if it is not a big deal for them.
- If a child brings up the subject be attentive and focused. Let the child know that you are willing to listen. Let the child talk, and just follow along. Rather than ask how the child feels, say “Tell me about that,” “So how is this for you?” and “What do you think?” Repeat back what the child said, to show that you are listening.
- Affirm and validate the child’s experience and feelings about the situation. Tell the child it is okay to think and feel whatever the child thinks and feels. Tell the child that these thoughts and feelings make sense, that they are normal, and that it is normal to have a wide range of responses.
- Encourage the child to speak with program staff or other trusted adults, such as a teacher, neighbor, parent, or school counselor.
- If you have had such a conversation with a child, let program staff know.

Community Service Office
Jandon Center for Community Engagement
www.smith.edu/academics/jandon-center/community-service

FOR VOLUNTEERS: Please follow the link to sign the agreement, stating that you will do your best to adhere to CSO’s best practices and safety procedures:
[https://goo.gl/forms/koO622EkPFeAaILh2](https://goo.gl/forms/koO622EkPFeAaILh2)

Thank you for your interest in community service!