#### Procedure: Managing Situations in which Clients are Disruptive/Inappropriate

**Purpose:** To ensure safety of staff, clients and others in the vicinity

***Disruptive behavior*** is defined as any behavior which may compromise the integrity of the services we provide or the safety of staff, clients and others. Such behavior may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Verbal abuse including use of profanity or aggressive words, making threats, and being disrespectful.
2. Physical abuse including inflicting harm or intent to harm.
3. Emotional abuse including name calling and belittling.
4. Sexual abuse including elicitation or solicitation of a sexual nature or making sexual overtures/innuendos.
5. Possession of illegal substances and/or drug paraphernalia, presenting under the influence and/or in an altered state.
6. Possession of an unlawful/unauthorized handgun or other lethal weapons.
7. Behaviors that promote a negative atmosphere including unnecessary or excessive phone calls, emails and other forms of negative communication.

The following processes provide guidance regarding how you should manage client disruptive behavior:

Phone Calls:

When a client exhibits disruptive/inappropriate behavior over the phone follow these steps:

1. State to the client that the specific behavior is inappropriate and ask the client to stop the behavior. Example: “Your use of profanity and the tone of your voice is not appropriate and I ask that you stop.”
2. If the behavior continues, state to the client, “If you continue to speak to me in this way, I will need to end this conversation and we will talk again when we are able to communicate in a more productive manner.”
3. Should the phone call need to be ended because the behavior continues, state to the client, “I am going to end this phone call now and we will talk again when we are able to communicate in a more productive manner ***or*** when you are more calm. You may contact me but please wait for 24 hours.”
4. If the client continues to call during the ’24-hour period’, have the calls routed to your immediate supervisor or an available supervisor. (See front desk procedure)
5. Do not contact the client during the 24 hour cooling down period unless there is a true emergency.
6. After a phone incident set up an appointment with your immediate supervisor to debrief regarding what occurred and procedures to be followed in the future related to home visits/offsite visits and other relevant topics.

Home Visits/Offsite Visits - General:

When conducting a home visit/offsite visit, use the following procedure:

1. Always sit closest to an exit door and visualize a path between you and the exit.
2. Be aware of your surroundings.
3. Carry with you only a few items such as your case file and a pen, car keys, and cell phone; use one bag that allows you to carry all your items leaving your hands free.
4. Avoid parking in places that do not allow you to exit quickly. Pay close attention to prohibited parking.
5. Do not accept food or beverages from a client. There are instances when you may feel that it will offend the client if you refuse - use your best judgment and discretion.

Home Visits/Offsite Visits – Client Disruptive Behavior

If a client exhibits disruptive/inappropriate behavior during a home visit, follow these steps:

1. Attempt to redirect the behavior.
2. If the behavior continues, end the visit. Consider saying:
   1. “We are not making progress so I shall leave now; I’ll call to set up another appointment.”
   2. “We are having difficulty staying on track so I am going to end our visit and I will contact you soon to discuss the plan of care.”
3. After you end a home visit/offsite visit due to disruptive/inappropriate behavior, schedule an appointment with your supervisor to debrief regarding what occurred and procedures to be followed in the future related to home visits/offsite visits, and other relevant topics.
4. When you next make contact with your client, discuss the reason why you needed to end the home visit/offsite visit. Depending on the decision that was made regarding future home/offsite visits, tell the client that: a) if (s)he continues to be disruptive or inappropriate, you will not be able to see the client in the home or offsite but just in the office, ***or*** b) You will not be able to conduct home/off site visits and only see the client in the office.

Office Visits – Client Disruptive Behavior

If a client exhibits disruptive/inappropriate behavior during an office visit, follow these steps:

1. Attempt to redirect the behavior.
2. If the behavior continues, end the visit. Consider saying:
   1. “We are not making progress so I shall end our visit now.”
   2. “We are having difficulty staying on track so I am going to end our visit and I will contact you soon to discuss the plan of care.”

3) After you end an office visit due to disruptive/inappropriate behavior, schedule an appointment with your supervisor to debrief regarding what occurred and procedures to be followed in the future related to office visits, and other relevant topics.

4) When you next make contact with your client, discuss the reason why you needed to end the office visit. Make it clear that you will not tolerate the behavior in the future.

Front Desk Procedure

If a client is being verbally aggressive and/or harassing you or the front desk, take the following steps:

1. Inform the client that the employee asked for is unavailable at this time; (s)he may

a) leave a voice mail and wait for a return call, or

b) speak with the employee’s immediate supervisor.

For example, “I can tell that you need to talk to someone urgently; however, at this time, Ms. X- *name of employee* is not available. I can give you two options right now to help meet your immediate needs. You can leave a voicemail for Ms. X and I will also let her know you need to speak with her urgently, ***or*** you may speak with her supervisor and I shall locate her/him for you.”

1. If the client continues to call excessively and/or is verbally abusive, and the immediate supervisor is not available, ask client to hold so that you may find another supervisor or the Chief Program Officer.

Cell Phone Procedure

1. When calling a client from your cell phone, ***you must always*** utilize the \*67 function prior to dialing the number. This will block your cell phone number. For example, you would dial \*67-XXX-XXX-XXXX.
2. If the client gains access to your cell phone number and calls, at the very first encounter tell the client that agency policy prevents you from using your cell phone to talk to clients and that (s)he must only call the main PHNTX phone number to contact you.
3. Personal cell phone numbers/email addresses should ***not*** be given out to clients under any circumstances. Clients may use the PHNTX business line for professional communication.
4. If the client continues to contact you via your personal cell phone after you have told the client not to, inform your supervisor immediately. The supervisor will provide guidance regarding next steps.

*This publication is part of a series of manuals that describe models of care that are included in the HRSA SPNS Initiative* Building a Medical Home for HIV Homeless Populations*. Learn more at* <http://cahpp.org/project/medheart/models-of-care>