



Security Checklist

Security at community centers has always been an issue that centers have addressed for years. With recent incidents of active shooter and violence directed at center staff, security is receiving even closer scrutiny. The following checklist of security items has been developed through the process of doing several security assessments for member centers over the last three years. The list is not comprehensive, nor does it necessarily address specific security issues at your center. You can always contact the Fund's Risk Management Consultant or Risk Control Consultant for more specific responses.

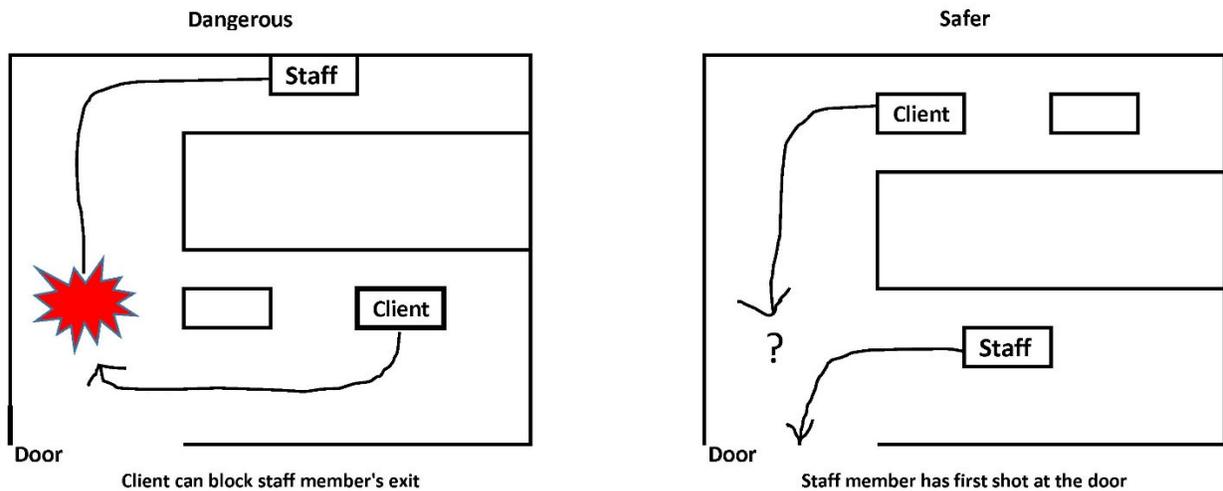
The first section reviews security measures for overall building security.

- Door security is important because most threats to center staff and clients enter through the doors. All outside doors, some internal doors from clinic lobbies, and medical records should have badge or code access. This will prevent most unauthorized access and help the center monitor and control who is actually inside.
- In conjunction with door security is visitor sign-in and badge assignment so that any wandering visitors can be recognized and helped to get where they are supposed to be or escorted out of the building.
- Cameras, both inside and outside, can be effective for monitoring who is outside the center and may be in unauthorized places inside. Monitors for the camera system should be visible to on-duty staff so something can be done if there is uncertainty about someone or an act of violence is taking place. Camera feeds that aren't monitored are only good for viewing events after they happen and can't be used for intervention or prevention in real time.
- Lighting outside the buildings is important for effective camera systems and providing a sense of security for staff arriving or departing the center when it's dark.
- Vegetation around buildings and parking lots can provide places of concealment and endanger staff or clients entering the center. Especially at night, center staff should be accompanied as they walk to their vehicles to leave during winter months as it gets dark earlier.

The second section provides a checklist of internal security recommendations. One of the recent active shooter events took place in a center office. The concentration of clients in lobbies or inside a clinician's office also increases the potential for violence.

- Entrapment potential in an office almost killed a clinician last fall. The office was set up so the client was between the clinician and the office door. The shooter was so shocked that he remained seated as the staff member rushed past him to the door. All center offices where clients and family members are seen should be set up so the center staff member has an unimpeded path to the door (see diagram). Personal preference or where computer or phone cables run can literally get someone killed or

severely injured. If office rearrangement is not feasible, clinicians should use a conference room or other place where entrapment potential is reduced.



- Glass partitions at reception in lobbies or service desks provide protection for first point of contact staff who welcome clients or serve patients in crisis or respite units. The flimsy plexiglass partitions that became commonplace during the pandemic do not protect staff from angry or violent clients or family members. Glass partitions should be well designed, strong, and capable of providing easy and clear communication through the partition.
- A comfortable lobby waiting area can help reduce discomfort that can lead to frustration and acting out.
- Regular, professional staff oversight of the clinic lobby can help detect clients who may be showing signs of frustration, anger, or decompensation.
- Clinics should have staff response plans for lobby disturbances and interventions.
- Staff should escort consumers from the lobby to offices or treatment areas and escort them back to the lobby after services.
- A consumer history of violence should initiate team recognition and updating of status on a periodic basis.
- Panic buttons for reception staff, isolated workers, and some offices are an effective alert signal.
- Buzz-in capability for clinic doors should be installed if card or keypad access is not in place.
- Law enforcement presence can be a powerful influence for the safety and security of center facilities. Their presence in lobbies can be particularly effective.
- Metal detectors may not be as expensive as you think. If a busy lobby needs additional security measures, investigate the cost of a metal detector.
- Security associates or guards can be effective if they are well trained and supervised. Develop a posting and responsibilities plan for their use and negotiate your expectations with the security service.

- Action codes for emergency response should effectively alert your staff in the event of an emergency. Resist the urge to have a different code for any emergency to avoid confusion and prevent delay in response.
- Public address coverage is vital in the event of an alert. Make sure you have the ability to reach every area in a building.
- An effective response to active shooter events requires planning, preparation, and drills.
- Incident reporting and tracking of security events will help staff allocate security resources, anticipate security events, and prevent them.
- Transportation of consumers can create serious risk to drivers. If the client has a history of violence or is in crisis, two team members should be in the car or van. If possible, use a service to do the transport.

Cyber-crime is a violation of center security that can have disastrous consequences and endanger the health and safety of clients, families, and staff. Your IT departments and senior management should endorse and implement a full suite of protective and preventive measures.

All of the measures cited in this article are in place at community centers in Texas. Each center has its own needs and resources to address security. If you need help, please contact the Risk Management Consultant or your Risk Control Consultant for assistance.