

# Securing Your Agency Keys



A consumer took the keys to the agency's minivan. After searching, it was assumed that a staff member had misplaced them. Since there was a spare set, there was no follow-up. Six weeks later, the consumer took the vehicle for a ride, crossed a major intersection at 60 miles per hour, and hit another vehicle. The occupants of both vehicles suffered severe and permanent injuries. Another true scenario occurred when staff failed to secure keys to food supplies. A consumer died 36 hours after ingesting frozen meat and baking soda he found in the kitchen.

## *A good key system can protect access to:*

- Vehicles
- Medications
- Cleaning chemicals and other poisons
- Foodstuffs that may be dangerous if eaten in large quantities or without suitable preparation
- Consumers' money
- Facility's money, petty cash, etc.
- The facility itself

## *Best Practices:*

- ✓ Designate at least one staff person to maintain an inventory of all keys and review it on a regular basis. Particular emphasis should be placed on keys from the motor pool and medication cabinets.
- ✓ Replace the lock (and ignition switch if it is a vehicle key) if any key is missing and cannot be found, even if there is a spare key on hand.
- ✓ Keep keys in a locked key box and follow a sign in/sign out system for keys that are not routinely kept by a specific staff member.
- ✓ Maintain a list that indicates who has access to what keys, and who is authorized to order replacements and duplicates.
- ✓ Implement a policy that treats keys as if they were medications.
- ✓ Maintain two sets of keys for every lock and label them accordingly. One is a 'loaner set' and the other is a 'master set.'
- ✓ Never leave keys out, in a drawer, purse or coat pocket.
- ✓ Ensure that employees treat the keys to their own vehicles with the same level of care as company vehicles.



- ✓ Turn off engine and remove keys when loading and unloading vehicles.
- ✓ Never leave keys in a vehicle unless the driver is sitting in the driver's seat.
- ✓ Lock cabinets that contain medications, cleaning chemicals and other poisonous substances, and routinely ensure that such cabinets are locked.
- ✓ Follow storage directions for all medications (e.g. some controlled substances are required to be under double lock).

- ✓ Secure substances not usually considered dangerous, e.g. foodstuffs, plastics and other substances, if your facility serves a population prone to uncontrollable eating (e.g. Prader-Willi).
- ✓ Train staff to be alert to unlocked cabinets, to correct oversights, and to give any keys they may find to a designated person.
- ✓ Secure money belonging to your organization or consumers in a safe. If the safe is small enough to be carried away, lock it in a closet or secure it to the floor.
- ✓ Have your Safety Committee give periodic reviews of best practices regarding key safety.

Loss Control is the daily responsibility of your staff. This bulletin is not to be considered a substitute for your own Loss Control Program. This bulletin does not include every possible loss potential, code violation or exception to good practice. We encourage you to copy this bulletin and share it with staff members.

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