

Advantages of home-visits:

- Reach families who wouldn't come to your office
- Work with more of the family members
- Work with families in their own setting where they are more at ease
- Gain greater understanding of the family's life and strengths

What other advantages can you identify?

Relationships between home-visitors and families are less clear cut. The people you visit may not know whether to treat you like a guest, a repair person who has come to fix their problems, a trusted friend or an enemy. They are probably just as nervous as you and eager to make a good impression on you. If you are visiting families in their homes, you are in a unique relationship. You will need to establish the purpose of the visiting relationship, set a mutually respectful tone, and help the family set and reach the goal for the visits.

Your first visit establishes the tone for your ongoing relationship with the family, so it is worth some advance thought. A family may be expecting your visit after meeting you at a clinic, group meeting or place they go frequently.

It sends an important message of respect when you arrive on time. Every home-visitor hopes the family will remember the appointment, be at home and welcome them in. Experienced home-visitors know that doesn't always happen. You may need to remind the family member of the purpose of your appointment or re-introduce yourself.

When you enter the home, ask where the family would like you to sit. Pay attention to body-language. They may motion toward a particular spot or indicate that anywhere is fine. Paying attention to where people sit in proximity to you may also communicate their comfort with physical closeness, which can vary in different cultures.

Family members often apologize for the messiness of the house. You can say something to put them at ease such as mentioning something positive about the family home; mention family pictures or the coziness of a room.