

## PROTECTING THE HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

Unfortunately, whether it's triggered by stress, pain, anger, fear, or the influence of drugs or alcohol, violence against health care workers is on the rise.

The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) supports legislation aimed in decreasing workplace violence in health care settings.

- [Senate Bill 351](#), Sen. Judy Ward (R-Blair) and [House Bill 1879](#), Rep. Keith Gillespie (R-York), which would add all health care practitioners to a protected class in the event of an on-duty assault, and increase the penalty
- [House Bill 39](#), Rep. Pam Snyder (D-Greene), [House Bill 1880](#), Rep. Keith Gillespie (R-York), and [Senate Bill 842](#), Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R-York), which allow health care workers to remove their last names from their facility identification badges

While health care workers comprise only 13 percent of the United States workforce, **60 percent of workplace assaults occur in health care settings.**

The data is compelling and unsettling, given that health care workers take care of people at their most vulnerable time, and work to keep them safe.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) analyzed workplace violence injury surveillance data from 2012 to 2015. The institute identified a **72 percent** increase in the rate of workplace violence injuries within the 105 Occupational Health Safety Network (OHSN)-participating hospitals.<sup>1</sup>

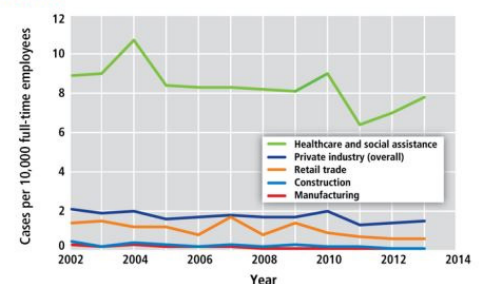
NIOSH found that:

- The 2012 rate of 4.4 injuries per 1,000 full-time equivalent workers went up to 7.2 during 2015
- That study also found that, on average, the overall rate of workplace violence injury among OHSN-participating hospitals increased by 23 percent annually during the three-year period, with nursing assistants and nurses at the highest risk for injury<sup>2</sup>

In addition:

- A survey of emergency departments revealed that 86 percent of the participants had been either threatened or assaulted at least once within the last 18 months<sup>3</sup>
- A 2014 research study shows that hospital workers have higher rates of non-fatal workplace assault injuries compared to other industries. Among hospital workers, nurses, mental health professionals, and security staff are at greatest risk of being assaulted by patients<sup>4</sup>
  - According to the same study, 90 percent of 2014 workplace violence incidents included physical violence, and 34 percent of these incidents required time away from work<sup>5</sup>

Violent Injuries Resulting in Days Away from Work, by Industry, 2002–2013



Data source: Bureau of Labor Statistics data for intentional injuries caused by humans, excluding self-inflicted injuries.



### What do hospitals do now to protect employees?

#### Hospitals follow workforce safety guidance, requirements, and best practices from The Joint Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Health.



- Specifically, The Joint Commission requires:
  - Environment of care committee for safety and security
  - Risk assessments
  - Written safety management plan and staff education
  - Written procedure for incidents of violence
- Individual hospitals may vary, but typical safety preparation measures can include:
  - Closed-circuit television
  - Security officers
  - Safety committees

#### Pennsylvania's hospitals are taking individual steps to improve safety for health care workers.

#### Assault is never okay. Stalking and harassment are never okay.

#### HAP urges the state General Assembly to enact Senate Bills [351](#) and [842](#), and House Bills [1879](#), [39](#), and [1880](#) during 2019.

#### References

- <sup>1</sup>Wax JR, Pinette MG, Cartin A. Workplace Violence in Health Care-It's Not "Part of the Job". *Obstet Gynecol Surv.* 2016 Aug;71(7):427-34.
- <sup>2</sup>Groenewold MR, Sarmiento RFR, Vanoli K, et al. [Workplace violence injury in 106 US hospitals participating in the Occupational Health Safety Network \(OHSN\), 2012-2015](#). *Am J Ind Med* 2018;61:157-166.
- <sup>3</sup>Gillespie, G. L., D.M. Gates, T. Kowalenko, S. Bresler, and P. Succop. "Implementation of a Comprehensive Intervention to Reduce Physical Assaults and Threats in the Emergency Department," *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, vol. 40, no. 6 (2014): 586-591.
- <sup>4</sup>Arnetz, J. E., L. Hamblin, L. Essenmacher, M. J. Upfal, J. Ager, and M. Luborsky. "Understanding patient-to-worker violence in hospitals: A qualitative analysis of documented incident reports," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 71, no. 2 (2015): 338-348.
- <sup>5</sup>Arnetz, J. E., L. Hamblin, L. Essenmacher, M. J. Upfal, J. Ager, and M. Luborsky. "Understanding patient-to-worker violence in hospitals: A qualitative analysis of documented incident reports," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 71, no. 2 (2015): 338-348.