

PROTECTING THE HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

Violence against health care workers is on the rise.

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

- During 2020, HAP supported several workplace safety victories in Pennsylvania:
- The [Health Care Facilities Act](#), which allows health systems to omit the last names of medical employees from photo identification badges
- Act 51, which amended the crimes code to add all health care practitioners to a protected class in the event of an on-duty assault, and increased the penalty against the perpetrator

Nationally, during June 2022, U.S. Representative Madeleine Dean (D-4) [introduced](#) the Safety from Violence for Healthcare Employees (SAVE) Act along with Representative Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN). HAP [supports](#) this important legislation that establishes federal criminal penalties for assaults and authorizes grant funding to reduce violence and intimidation in hospitals.

But the work is far from over.

While health care workers comprised only 12 percent of the United States workforce during 2018, **73 percent of nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence occurred in health care settings.**^{1,2}

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 analyzed workplace violence injury surveillance data from 2012 to 2015. The data shows that:

- There was a 72 percent increase in workplace violence injuries within the 105 Occupational Health Safety Network (OHSN)-participating hospitals
- 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 injury³



According to U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics:

- The 2011 rate of 6.4 nonfatal workplace violence per 10,000 full-time workers went up to 10.4 during 2018 for health care workers
- Health care and social service workers are five times as likely to suffer a workplace violence injury than workers overall
- Between 2011 and 2018, 156 health care workers died by an assailant in their workplaces⁴

In addition:

- A 2019 survey of emergency medical services (EMS) revealed that 67 percent of the EMS workers reported being physically assaulted and 91 percent reported being verbally assaulted while practicing EMS⁵
- A 2017 research study shows that hospital workers have higher rates of nonfatal workplace assault injuries compared to other industries. Emergency departments and mental health units are at higher risk for workplace violence as well as frontline staff such as nurses, physicians, and patient care associates
- According to the same study, workplace violence in hospital settings may result in physical injury which can be costly for the individual and the hospital, and can result in reduced job satisfaction, increased turnover, and depression⁶
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that, during 2018, 20,790 workers in the private industry experienced trauma from nonfatal workplace violence. Of these, 73 percent worked in health care and 41 percent of these incidents required days away from work to recover⁷

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 and advocate for the safety of health care workers.

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

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. [Health Care Employment as a Percent of Total Employment, 2018](#). Last Accessed: 02/09/2021

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Fact Sheet: Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018](#). April 2020. Last accessed: 02/09/2021.

³ 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. Last Accessed: 02/10/2021.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Fact Sheet: Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018. April 2020. Last accessed: 02/09/2021.

⁵ National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT). [Violence against EMS Practitioners, 2019 National Survey](#). 2019. Last Accessed: 02/09/2021.

⁶ Arnetz, J. E., Hamblin, L., Russell, J., Upfal, M. J., Luborsky, M., Janisse, J., & Essenmacher, L. (2017). [Preventing Patient-to-Worker Violence in Hospitals: Outcome of a Randomized Controlled Intervention](#). Journal of occupational and environmental medicine, 59(1), 18–27. Last Accessed: 02/10/2021.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Fast Facts: Injury Data](#). Last Accessed: 02/10/2021.