

Preventing Workplace Violence



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WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (2016), workplace violence rates among healthcare workers between 1993 and 2009 were 20% higher than that for other industries.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic increased factors leading to workplace violence such as staffing shortages which led to a decrease in the amount of staffed (available) beds, a high workload causing stressed staff, and frustrated patients and families who felt as though their needs were not being met. A memo to State Survey Agency Directors from November of 2022 indicates that Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) continues enforcing regulatory expectations that patients and staff have an environment that prioritizes their safety while effectively delivering healthcare.² To effectively maintain a safe environment for healthcare delivery, hospitals can develop policies and procedures to mitigate the risk of workplace violence.

BACKGROUND

Defined as “violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed toward persons at work or on duty,” workplace violence (WPV) is a growing concern.³ An April 2020 Bureau of Labor Statistics Fact Sheet revealed that healthcare workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence in 2018.² Compared to private industry, workers in hospital settings were eight times more likely to experience nonfatal violence-related injuries from other persons (22.8 vs. 2.9 incidents per 10,000 full-time workers).⁴ This number has been steadily growing since tracking these specific events began in 2011.² According to surveys by the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Emergency Nurses Association, almost half of emergency physicians report being physically assaulted at work, while about 70% of emergency nurses report being hit and kicked while on the job.⁵

The high prevalence of workplace violence episodes highlights the critical need for quality improvement in healthcare. By addressing root causes, providers can develop targeted strategies to mitigate risks. Implementing evidence-based guidelines, enhancing patient monitoring and ensuring continuous education for healthcare professionals are essential steps to reduce these events and promote safer, more effective care.

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

The [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\)](#) cycle provides a sound framework for quality improvement. Plan by mapping the current process to identify gaps, identifying who will be involved, and confirming what resources may be needed. Do the work by implementing a change or intervention and collecting data on the results as you go. Study the data – were the desired results achieved? Act on the results – accept or adjust the implemented change. Alongside this framework, Telligen recommends utilizing its comprehensive [Quality Improvement Workbook](#) which provides valuable resources to support your team's quality improvement efforts. Additionally, Telligen quality improvement facilitators developed the change pathway tool – a topic-specific, step-by-step guide to quality improvement, created using evidence-based practice resources and guidelines.

¹ <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/osha3148.pdf>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/guidance/sites/default/files/hhs-guidance-documents/QSO-23-04-Hospitals.pdf>

³ <https://oshce.uw.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Caring%20for%20Caregivers%20Report.pdf>

⁴ https://www.aonl.org/system/files/media/file/2022/10/AONL-ENA_workplace_guiding_principles.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ena.org/quality-and-safety/workplace-violence>

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

CHANGE PATHWAY

The change pathway tool is a topic-specific, step-by-step guide to quality improvement. The change pathway is created using evidence-based practice resources and guidelines. Key quality improvement activities such as formulating an aim statement, conducting a root cause analysis and identifying interventions are included in each guide. Interventions are outlined as beginner, intermediate and expert so that you may explore opportunities for improvement that meet your needs.

- [Change Pathway: Workplace Violence Prevention](#)

RESOURCES

[AONL & ENA – Mitigating Violence in the Workplace](#)

[Crisis Prevention Institute – How to Set Limits](#)

[AONL & ENA – Toolkit for Mitigating Violence in the Workplace](#)

[Crisis Prevention Institute – Top 10 De-Escalation Tips for Health Care Professionals](#)

[AONL Foundation – Promoting Workplace Safety and Preventing Violence Through the Nursing Leadership Lens](#)

[ENA – Workplace Violence Prevention Course](#)

[CDC – National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#)

[Workplace Violence Mitigation and Prevention Resource Compendium](#)

RECORDINGS AND SLIDE DECKS

Hospitals in Action – Promising Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies for Safer Care: [Slides](#)

Key Components of an Effective Workplace Violence Prevention Program: Leadership Engagement and Communication: [Slides](#)

Texas Medical Liability Trust: [How to Identify and Prepare to Meet with a Disruptive Patient \(Video\)](#)

Uncovering Bias for Safer Healthcare Interactions: [Slides](#)

University of Colorado - School of Medicine: [Verbal De-Escalation of the Agitated Patient \(Video\)](#)

Workplace Violence Prevention: Best Practices for Safer Care: [Slides](#)

EFFECTIVENESS CHECKS

1. Audit for the specific change you were aiming for.
2. Collect and analyze the data.
3. Share findings, opportunities and successes with staff, leadership and if possible, with patients.

Based on your data findings, if the change seen did not lead to the desired improvement, re-evaluate the root cause and consider launching another PDSA cycle.

For additional information and resources, visit Telligen's [Hospital Resources page](#).