



Understanding Workplace Violence

IN COLORADO HOSPITALS

Workplace violence (WPV) poses a significant threat to health care workers, impacting their safety, well-being, and productivity. Health care workers have the highest rates of workplace violence injuries – they are five times more likely to be injured than other workers.¹ In the spring of 2024, the Colorado Hospital Association (CHA) conducted a survey to understand the current WPV landscape, garnering a remarkable 96% response rate from 59 respondents, representing 102 hospitals across the state.

As hospitals strive to provide high-quality patient care, they are also committed to ensuring a safe environment for their staff, patients, and visitors. Despite being recognized as an occupational hazard for decades, recent increases in WPV incidents have been exacerbated following the COVID-19 pandemic. Per the CHA survey, this has led to substantial financial implications for hospitals, including costs related to injuries, psychological trauma, staff turnover, training, and increased security equipment and measures.

The safety of their patients and staff is the highest priority for all Colorado hospitals, which have been proactive in addressing WPV through comprehensive prevention and training programs. Hospitals strive to meet or exceed accreditation requirements by implementing security measures such as alarms, cameras, trained personnel, restricted access areas, and de-escalation training.

Examining the Data – Key Takeaways:

High Commitment to Training:

73%

of hospitals provide WPV training during onboarding, ensuring new staff are immediately equipped with the knowledge to handle potentially violent situations.

80%

offer annual WPV training, highlighting a sustained commitment to keeping staff updated on best practices and new prevention strategies.

Widespread Establishment of WPV Committees:

83%

The majority of hospitals (83%) have dedicated WPV-specific committees that develop prevention initiatives, review incidents, and make safety recommendations.

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Examining the Data – Key Takeaways:

Collaboration with Law Enforcement and External Stakeholders:



Hospitals engage in extensive collaboration with law enforcement when appropriate, especially through co-responder programs and coordinated patrols, to enhance the overall safety and security on hospital premises, showing the commitment to a community-integrated approach to WPV prevention.



Many facilities educate patients and visitors on expected behaviors through posted signage and documentation during admission to help maintain a safe environment and reduce WPV incidents.

Resource Limitations Represent Significant Challenges:



Despite various safety measures, 40% of hospitals do not provide de-escalation training due to training costs and limited access to security resources. This gap represents a significant challenge for hospitals and an opportunity for needed support, as de-escalation techniques are crucial for preventing and managing violent incidents.

Reporting is Crucial, but Follow Through Support is Essential:



An overwhelming majority of hospitals (98%) track incidents of workplace violence, demonstrating a strong commitment to monitoring and addressing WPV within their facilities. In 2023, on average, over 20 incidents of WPV occurred at Colorado hospitals per month.

Colorado hospitals are dedicated to safeguarding their staff and enhancing the quality of patient care. By leveraging WPV committees, improving security measures, and fostering collaboration with law enforcement, behavioral health entities, and other key stakeholders, hospitals can continue to mitigate the risks of WPV. Addressing the challenges and financial needs of hospitals can help to ensure a safer environment for health care workers and patients alike. Patients deserve a safe place to receive care, and health care workers deserve a safe place to deliver it. While hospitals are consistently implementing strategies that address the concerning rise of physical and verbal assault against staff, collaboration is essential – they cannot solve the problem alone.



¹ <https://www.bls.gov/iif/factsheets/workplace-violence-healthcare-2018.htm>