
Preventing healthcare violence



A new California law that became effective only recently is welcome news to many healthcare professionals, especially nurses who often become victims of violence in the workplace. The new law requires healthcare employers to have workforce protection plans in place, including violence prevention training for all employees.

As soon as the new law took effect, National Nurses United, the largest nurses union in the U.S., joined the California Nurses Association to call for the law to be used as a model for federal efforts aimed at preventing violence against health workers.

"In my years in the hospital, I shared the experience that too many nurses have been encouraged to see as just 'part of the job' of being kicked, hit, spat at and threatened," said Bonnie Castillo, executive director of National Nurses United. "These experiences are terrifying but they are not uncommon."

Castillo said the group is urging nurses to hold all California "healthcare employers accountable for following the law."

Workplace violence in healthcare is a pervasive problem. As FierceHealthcare has reported, 75 percent of workplace assaults between 2011 and 2013 occurred in healthcare settings and 80 percent of emergency medical workers will experience physical violence at some point in their careers.

Meanwhile, the California Hospital Association has expressed their support for the new law but is concerned about certain requirements, such as a rule that would make hospitals assess patients and visitors for violent behaviour without offering guidance of how to appropriately do that. A spokeswoman also raised concerns about enforcing training requirements when doctors are often not directly employed by hospitals.

There appears to be growing support on Capitol Hill and among employers for workplace violence prevention programmes in light of headline-grabbing active shooter situations like the recent attack on YouTube employees, according to Randy Spivey, CEO of the Center for Personal Protection and Safety in McLean, Virginia.

His company provides training to companies and individuals. Spivey told FierceHealthcare the cost for a typical health system to license content for such training is typically less than \$50,000 a year.

Workplaces need to create a policy that identifies who takes responsibility for the programme, such as a human resources manager or head of security, Spivey explained. They must spell out acceptable behaviour and what employees should do if they see a problem.

In addition, workplaces need to be willing to tackle some sensitive issues, but people are often reluctant to talk about a scenario like an active shooter situation or domestic violence.

The prevention of violence, however, is all the more important in a healthcare environment. "They have to have survivor/protector mindset because there are patients involved and not just employees," Spivey said.

Source: [FierceHealthcare](#)

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