

Kansas Advocacy Issue

Addressing Workplace Violence

Action Needed

The Kansas Hospital Association supports the passage of legislation to make it a crime to interfere with the conduct of a hospital – whether that is impeding employees from leaving or entering the facility, performing their duties or threatening hospital employees.

Workplace violence in health care is a significant problem. The rate of serious workplace violence incidents is more than four times greater in health care settings than in private industry, according to the General Accounting Office's 2016 report.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, approximately 75 percent of nearly 25,000 workplace assaults reported annually occur in health care and social service settings. Workers in health care settings are four times more likely to be victimized than workers in private industry. In addition, KHA studies show 46.2 percent of hospitals report workplace violence.

Health care workers are four times more likely to be victimized than workers in private industry.



Health care workers and social service workers face an increased risk of assault primarily from violent patients, clients and/or residents. Settings of particular concern include inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services, geriatric long-term care units and emergency departments. Training health care workers to prevent and handle workplace violence is imperative, as is giving them a legal remedy to address these issues.

The Kansas Legislature should build upon the legislation for increased penalties related to the battery of a health care worker by opening the increased penalties requirement so that all hospital workers, including volunteers, may pursue enhanced penalty charges. Hospitals should be allowed to bring charges so staff do not have to go through the legal process alone.

Bottom Line:

Health care workers are at four times greater risk of encountering workplace violence.

Steps to mitigate violent encounters include training, partnerships with law enforcement and increased penalties.

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