

N.C. HOSPITALS: STEPS TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

With violence against hospital workers surging, The Charlotte Ledger/NC Health News asked some of the state's largest hospital systems what steps they have already taken to protect their employees from the rising violence. Here's what they shared:

Atrium Health

Please attribute the following to Dr. Suzanna Fox, senior vice president and deputy chief physician executive for Atrium Health:

"At Atrium Health, we know health care professionals work around the clock to provide quality care to everyone who needs it and they deserve to be protected from violence while they do it. In addition to employing an effective and well-trained team of security officers, in recent years, we have:

- *Installed "No Harm" signage informing patients and visitors that assaulting a health care worker is a felony*
- *Installed metal detectors in emergency departments*
- *Standardized a system-wide visitor management platform, requiring check-in before entering patient areas*
- *Increased our security officer staffing at our facilities, including armed additional security guards with firearms and/or tasers; many have prior law enforcement or military background*
- *Provided training to our teammates in de-escalation techniques, personal safety, security awareness behaviors and active assailant awareness*
- *Provided personal panic devices and the ability to immediately secure the emergency department from entry and exit*
- *And, in recent months, we have been working more closely with law enforcement, prosecutors and magistrates to reach a common understanding of what types of circumstances can be most successfully prosecuted and diligently pursuing those in court, and its working*

Health care and law enforcement face similar challenges when it comes to the availability of a trained workforce – both professions face shortages. We look forward to working with law enforcement in the communities we serve, as well as ongoing collaboration with lawmakers, to achieve greater safety for our teammates, patients and visitors at our facilities."

Novant Health

1. What measures does Novant already have in place to protect its employees?

Providing a safe and healing environment for team members, patients, and visitors is a paramount focus for Novant Health. We believe that every team member deserves to feel safe, valued, and respected when they enter a Novant Health facility. Like organizations nationwide, Novant Health experienced an uptick in workplace violence during the pandemic. With a zero-tolerance policy for violence in place, Novant Health's approach has encompassed education, readiness, and response. Included below are a few examples of our safety initiatives.

- Although we've always had a focus on safety, we established a standing workplace violence committee in 2019.

- All team members receive mandatory annual training on workplace violence, along with all our resources catalogued on the front page of our internal team member web page.
- We engage in comprehensive training drills and exercises, including active shooter, lockdown and workplace violence.
- All our facilities utilize panic alarms that team members can use to alert immediate response by our protective services team.
- An anonymous phone or computer reporting systems known as the “alert line” is available for any team members to report a workplace violence incident.
- Our protective services division includes armed public safety officers at all our hospitals, in addition to a company police department at Novant Health New Hanover Regional Medical Center. We also have a community patrol division that supports our clinic locations.
- Novant Health also provides a leader resource guide with protocol that also includes post-incident care and support for team members.

2. And what steps have you taken in recent years to respond to higher numbers of incidents? (I’m looking for things like increasing security staffing, adding lighting, putting in an emergency call system for workers, etc.)

- Facility signage at main entrances, that states our policies on workplace violence and our zero-tolerance policy.
- Metal detectors at our largest and busiest facilities.
- We are piloting personal panic alarm devices for team members working in our busiest areas.
- We are shifting our training from crisis intervention to MOAB (Management of Aggressive Behaviors) training, which presents education directly related to recognizing, reducing and managing violent and aggressive behavior.

3. Do you already have law enforcement officers at all of your hospitals or will you need to add officers to some, per the legislation?

All our acute care facilities do have armed public safety officers staffing them. In New Hanover County, we also have company police officers in place alongside our public safety officers.

4. Can you please share any statistics you have about the number of violent incidents at Novant hospitals and how those numbers have changed in recent years?

We have observed a year-over-year downward trend in workplace violence, which we attribute to our robust training and safety measures.

Duke Health

Duke already has security officers in the emergency departments of the hospitals. We have taken a leadership role in measures to protect staff, patients and visitors, including:

- Adding weapons detection systems at public entrances to hospitals and clinics
- Evaluating and optimizing security presence at key hospital and clinic locations
- Providing additional emergency alert resources and support to care teams, notably those tending patients with behavioral health concerns

- Reviewing and revising the policies, procedures, and training requirements for the management of security-related events
- Posting signage that aggressive behavior will not be tolerated
- Making fewer entrances accessible to visitors
- Organizing strategic visibility of police and security officers
- Creating site-specific plans and scenario training in our ambulatory settings

UNC Health

UNC Health appreciates state leaders recognizing that we need more protections for health workers.

Our top priority is the health and safety of our patients and teammates, and violence has no place in our hospitals and clinics. We are still working through implementation of the legislation.

UNC Hospitals has its own police team, and we have expanded our security efforts in recent years, partly because of the nationwide increase in violent incidents. We constantly review our security policies and procedures and look to enhance them as necessary. We are also providing more training for our employees to help them prevent and identify threats.