

Concealed Carry of Weapons in Healthcare Facilities

Question

In an effort to prepare for an active shooter situation, should designated staff members in a healthcare facility be permitted to carry concealed weapons (concealed carry)?

Answer

Unfortunately, this question has no “one-size-fits-all” answer. The decision-makers in healthcare organizations have many factors to consider, and each facility should conduct a thorough evaluation to determine the appropriate strategy. In multisite organizations/facilities, each individual site should be evaluated for appropriateness.

Conducting a security risk assessment of a facility can assist in the decision-making process. A security risk assessment should include an evaluation of the facility’s structure, access points, location, available resources, and law enforcement response times. As part of the security assessment, consider whether alternative approaches to concealed carry might be an option to enhance established security plans. For example:

- Schedule routine meetings with law enforcement agencies in the area (e.g., sheriff, local police, state police, highway patrol, etc.). Discuss response plans, incident command structure, and their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensure that all local law enforcement officers have knowledge of the facility’s physical layout. Label all exterior doors and some windows to aid responding officers.
- Provide a “police go bag” to local law enforcement that includes facility blueprints, information about major access points, laminated floor maps, a flash drive containing emergency point-of-contact information, and keys for a rapid entry system.

- Ensure that facility panic alarms directly alert local law enforcement.
- Evaluate whether local law enforcement can remotely access the facility's closed-circuit television security feeds.
- Determine whether off-duty police officers and/or auxiliary officers are available to respond to active shooter situations.
- Include local and state law enforcement, local emergency medical services, and local fire departments in any active shooter drills.
- Consider establishing a room adjacent to the emergency department (ED) that local and state law enforcement can use for writing reports, taking coffee breaks, etc.
- Request that local or state law enforcement park a police vehicle in the facility's parking lot, if available. (**Tip:** Don't park the police vehicle in the same spot every day.)
- Have security/police routinely patrol parking lots at shift changes or when staffing levels are low.
- Assess facility security to determine whether a security officer or security force is needed 24/7 or during vulnerable times of the day and night.
- Formalize a critical incident response training program for staff.

Employing designated staff to carry concealed weapons might be an option after careful evaluation of the facility's security risks. If this option is pursued, proper safeguards should be in place before implementation. For example:

- Regularly review state/local laws to ensure compliance.
- Provide extensive firearms training (initial and ongoing) with local law enforcement.
- Incorporate concealed carry scenarios into active shooter drills.
- Inform local and state law enforcement of any process changes.
- Implement a concealed carry permit auditing process.
- Develop policies and procedures to address weapon procurement, storage, safety, discharge, maintenance, cleaning, etc.

- Educate all staff members about concealed carry policies (e.g., only designated staff can carry a facility-issued firearm, etc.).
- Implement a process for accounting for and securing firearms and ammunition.

Resources

For more information, see the resources listed under “Active Shooter/Violence” in MedPro’s [Risk Q&A: Emergency Preparedness and Response](#).

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