

Assessing Environmental Factors to Reduce Violence in Hospitals

Healthcare and social service workers experience the highest rates of workplace violence injuries and are five times as likely to be injured because of workplace violence than workers overall.¹ Violence can occur in all areas of a hospital, but it happens most frequently in behavioral health units, emergency departments, waiting rooms, and geriatric units.² The risk factors for workplace violence vary from facility to facility.

Since no universal strategy exists to address these risk factors and prevent violence, hospital leaders can protect their patients, employees, and visitors by developing comprehensive violence prevention programs, evaluating those programs regularly, and providing safety training for employees.

Part of a prevention program includes assessing and addressing any issues in the environmental design of a hospital. Hospitals can use this checklist to assess environmental factors, identify deficiencies, and make modifications to enhance safety for patients, employees, and visitors.

	Yes	No
Security Measures		
Are emergency signaling systems used (e.g., portable or fixed panic buttons, paging systems at workstations, or personal alarm devices)? Are they tested on a regular basis and repaired promptly when necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are video surveillance systems (e.g., security cameras or closed-circuit monitors) present inside and outside of the building(s)? Are they tested on a regular basis and repaired promptly when necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there security mirrors (e.g., convex/curved mirrors) in the building(s) for better surveillance? Are they present in dead-end corridors and cross corridors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Security Measures (continued)		
Are there security screening devices (e.g., metal detectors) in the building(s)? Are they regularly maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do buildings have secured entry (e.g., cameras and buzzers)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do all visitors and contractors sign in and wear visible identification?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assuming all employees are required to wear identification badges or cards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are only employees' first names shown, especially for employees working in behavioral health units? • Are tear-away options used for identification worn around the neck? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Do all doors in the building(s) have locks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all organization phones, including the internal telephone system, programmed for 911 and/or local emergency security numbers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do employees have easy access to telephones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are two-way radios available? Are they tested on a daily basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all broken windows and doors in the building(s) repaired promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do exterior hospital windows only open 4 to 6 inches to prevent access or elopement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exterior Building Areas		
If open or concealed carry of weapons is not allowed (due to state laws or hospital policy), are signs posted on the facility campus that indicate no guns or weapons are permitted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are entrances to the building(s) clearly visible from the street?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the area surrounding the building(s) free of bushes and other hiding places?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are exterior walkways visible to security personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are security personnel stationed outside the building(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Exterior Building Areas (continued)		
For hospitals that have a secured/attended parking lot for employees:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the parking lot area free of blind spots? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the landscaping trimmed back to prevent hiding within? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the lighting adequate to see clearly in the parking lot and when walking to the building(s)? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do security personnel escort employees to and from the parking lot when it's dark or when requested? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entries/Exits		
Do buildings have sufficient exits and adequate escape routes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do all exit doors only open from the inside to prevent unauthorized entry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are security guards present at the main entrances and exits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a security device (e.g., metal detector) placed at the building(s) entrances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are reception and work areas designed to prevent unauthorized entry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are security devices, such as cameras, located in the hallways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a "safe room" available for employees to go to in case of an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is furniture arranged so that employees can have a clear exit route?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regarding behavioral health units:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a place to lock visitors' valuables before entering the unit? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all visitors to the unit checked for contraband before entering? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do counseling rooms have two exits? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do staff counseling and treatment rooms have doors with locks? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are windows locked to prevent access or elopement? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
<i>Barrier Protection</i>		
Are reception desks enclosed and do they have bullet-resistant glass?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are counters designed (deep and elevated) to prevent patients from jumping over or reaching over to unlock the gate into any nurses' stations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all unused doors locked to limit access in accordance with local fire codes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do facility travel vehicles have physical barriers to separate drivers from forensic patients?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Waiting and Work Area Hazards</i>		
Are waiting areas designed to accommodate and assist visitors and patients who may have a delay in service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are hallways and work areas clear of obstacles that may block pathways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are chairs and furniture in waiting and work areas secured to prevent them from being used as weapons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is furniture arranged in waiting and work areas to prevent employees and visitors from being trapped?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Lighting</i>		
Is bright, effective (not harsh) lighting installed inside the building(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is appropriate lighting used in patient care areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are burned out lights reported and replaced immediately?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is bright, effective lighting installed at the entrances, on the grounds, near the sidewalks, in the courtyards, in the parking areas, and on the walkways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are landscaping materials cut back from lights and light standards so as not to affect their coverage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are exterior lights numbered to help identify broken ones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Patient Areas		
Are open hinges on doors replaced with continuous hinges to reduce hazards and improve safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do cabinets and syringe drawers have working locks installed on them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are sharp-edged objects, such as metal table frames, padded or replaced?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are sharp surfaces covered or smoothed down?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are handrails, drinking fountains, and any other protruding items recessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can employees observe patients in waiting areas and rooms from workstations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has an area been established for patients to de-escalate? Does this room have camera observation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employee-Only Areas		
Is a designated employee-only work area available that is separate from the public area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do employees have a designated secure place to store their personal belongings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there lockable (for keyless door systems) and secure restrooms for employees (with locks on the inside) that are separated from patient and visitor facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources

- [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Addressing Workplace Violence and Creating a Safer Workplace](#)
- [American Association of Critical-Care Nurses: Preventing Workplace Violence in Healthcare](#)
- [American Hospital Association: Workforce and Workplace Violence Prevention](#)
- [American Society for Healthcare Risk Management: Workplace Violence Toolkit](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Violence Occupational Hazards in Hospitals](#)
- [MedPro Group: An Uncomfortable Reality: Dealing With Domestic Violence in the Workplace](#)

- [MedPro Group: From Verbal Insults to Death: The Reality of Workplace Violence in Healthcare](#)
- [MedPro Group: Risk Q&A: Concealed Carry of Weapons in Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [MedPro Group: Risk Resources: Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)
- [MedPro Group: Risk Resources: Violence Prevention in the Emergency Department](#)
- [MedPro Group: Tips and Strategies for De-Escalating Aggressive, Hostile, or Violent Patients](#)

Endnotes

¹ Gooch, K. (2021, October 11). Healthcare workers push to address workplace violence. *Becker's Hospital Review*. Retrieved from www.beckershospitalreview.com/workforce/healthcare-workers-push-to-address-workplace-violence.html

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (2002). *Violence Occupational Hazards in Hospitals*. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2002-101/default.html

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