

RISK Q&A

Concealed Carry of Weapons in Healthcare Facilities



Question

In an effort to prepare for an active shooter situation, should we allow designated staff in our healthcare facility to carry concealed weapons (concealed carry)?

Answer

Unfortunately, this question does not have a “one size fits all” answer. Decision-makers have many factors to consider. Thorough evaluation is essential to determine the appropriate strategy for each facility. Further, keep in mind that multisite organizations should evaluate each individual site for appropriateness.

Conducting a security risk assessment of your facility can assist in the decision-making process. A risk assessment should include an evaluation of the facility structure, access points, location, available resources, and law enforcement response times. As part of the 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 your 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 your 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 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 report writing, taking coffee breaks, etc.
- Request that local or state law enforcement park a police cruiser in the facility’s parking lot, if available. (TIP: Don’t park the cruiser 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 your facility's security risks. If this option is pursued, proper safeguards should be in place prior to 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

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Active Shooter Preparedness — www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness
- Department of Veterans Affairs: Physical Security Assessment for Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities — www.cfm.va.gov/til/physicalSecurity/VAPhysicalSecurityReportNIBS20020906.pdf
- ALICE Training Institute: ALICE Training Healthcare Program — www.alicetraining.com/our-program/alice-training/healthcare/
- The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence: Concealed Weapons Permitting Policy Summary — <http://smartgunlaws.org/concealed-weapons-permitting-policy-summary/>

This document should not be construed as medical or legal advice. Because the facts applicable to your situation may vary, or the laws applicable in your jurisdiction may differ, please contact your attorney or other professional advisors if you have any questions related to your legal or medical obligations or rights, state or federal laws, contract interpretation, or other legal questions.

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