

Final Definition: Workplace Violence in Health Care Settings

PURPOSE

To provide scope and direction to statewide program development and data collection initiatives.

DEFINITION

An act or threat of violence involving an explicit or implicit challenge to personal safety, well-being or health, and/or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs within health care facilities.

Workplace violence includes the following.

1. The threat or use of physical force, sexual assault, harassment or intimidation against a caregiver or employee that results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, psychological trauma or stress, regardless of whether the employee sustains an injury.
2. An incident involving the threat or use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon, including the use of common objects as weapons, regardless of whether the employee sustains an injury.

ASSUMPTION(S)

- Health care providers recognize some patients, operating under a symptom of acute mental illness or significant cognitive impairment, may be unable to understand the effect of their actions.
- The term workplace violence shall not include lawful acts of self-defense or defense of others.

TYPES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but enter to seek drugs, or to commit robbery or another crime.
- Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, visitors, students, inmates or any others for whom an organization provides services. (Most common type in health care.)
- Violence against coworkers, supervisors or managers by a present or former employee.
- Violence committed in the workplace by someone who does not work there but has a personal relationship with an employee – an abusive spouse or domestic partner.
- Violence not involving a health care worker, but occurring in a health care facility or on its property. This may include patient/patient, visitor/patient or visitor/visitor violence.