

Preventing Violence in Health Care Toolkit

Violence is a significant problem in health care and [accounts for most on-site injuries](#). Mitigating workplace violence requires that health care facilities and medical practices take preventive steps and follow specific plans of action.

Office staff and other team members in a family medicine practice should be trained to identify situations that commonly precipitate violence and respond appropriately. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) encourages health care facilities to have security protocols in place. New staff should be trained on these protocols during orientation, and existing staff should receive regular training updates. Routine security drills or simulations may also help ensure health care facility staff are appropriately prepared to respond to a violent incident.

Simple changes to practices, policies and staff training can dramatically improve responsiveness to potentially violent situations and help ensure the safety of both the health care team and patients.

AAFP Resources

Policies and Position Papers

[Violence Position Paper](#)

Family physicians and office team members have many opportunities to identify patients at risk of victimization or perpetration and to prevent or influence the outcomes associated with violence for patients. Many patients have strong relationships with staff within a primary care office and may disclose their experiences with violence to those staff members.

[Violence as a Public Health Concern](#)

Exposure to violence and abuse has been associated with death and severe physical and mental health outcomes. To support their patients who have experienced violence or are at risk, family physicians need to be aware of the various manifestations of violence, risk factors related to violence, and availability of resources and services for survivors of violence and their families.

[Prevention of Gun Violence Position Paper](#)

The AAFP recognizes gun violence as a national public health epidemic. The AAFP supports primary prevention strategies to reduce the injuries and deaths associated with gun ownership and violence. Physicians play an important role in counseling patients about injury prevention, including safe storage practices.

[Violence, Illegal Acts Against Physicians and Other Health Professionals](#)

The AAFP condemns violence and other illegal acts against physicians and other health professionals and urges prompt enforcement of laws prohibiting such activities. The AAFP supports classifying violent crimes against physicians and other health professionals as felonies.

[Intimate Partner Violence](#)

Family physicians should be aware of individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that increase the risk for experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). Family physicians who provide ongoing care for patients and communities have a unique opportunity to help break the cycle of abuse by working with families and within their communities to prevent abuse.

[Violence, Harassment and Bullying](#)

Violence, harassment, and bullying that takes place in any venue has significant and harmful physical and psychological effects and should not be tolerated.

[Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment in Medical Education and Clinical Settings](#)

The AAFP acknowledges that sexual and gender-based harassment is a serious public health issue relevant to physicians and medical trainees. Prevention and mitigation of this harassment should be addressed in both medical educational and clinical settings.

continued

AAFP Journals

[FPM: How to Prepare for and Survive a Violent Patient Encounter](#)

Workplace violence is most common in medical/health care settings, but having a detailed plan that is practiced regularly can make all the difference when the unthinkable happens. This *FPM* journal article offers tips on workplace safety, violence prevention, preparation, and more.

[American Family Physician: Violence in the Health Care Setting: What Can We Do?](#)

Violence in the workplace can take many forms, and physicians may not always know when it happens—even in their own practices. This *American Family Physician* article illustrates the importance of cultivating awareness of current recommendations to recognize and de-escalate potential violence, when possible, and to support staff who experience a violent episode.

[FPM Quick Tips Blog: Violence in the Office: Six Questions to Help You Prepare](#)

Physicians are most often threatened with physical harm by a patient or family members of a patient. This *FPM* journal Quick Tips blog post discusses how to prevent, train for, and react to violent patient encounters.

[FPM: Incivility in Health Care: Strategies for De-escalating Troubling Encounters](#)

Having a plan for handling situations in which incivility arises is a necessity in today's practice environment, and it can help ensure one's physical, emotional, and spiritual safety. This *FPM* journal article discusses abusive interactions medical professionals commonly face in the workplace and offers suggestions for handling these exchanges.

Additional Resources

[ECRI Health System Risk Management: Violence in Healthcare Facilities](#)

This guidance article from ECRI discusses violence in health care settings that is perpetrated by individuals other than patients, covering risk factors, assessment of objective indicators, consequences, case examples, and strategies for prevention. The article provides many practical resources to aid in developing a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program.

[The Joint Commission: Workplace Violence Prevention Resources](#)

This Workplace Violence Prevention Resources portal shares useful resources from The Joint Commission and other organizations regarding preventing workplace violence in health care settings.

[American Hospital Association: Workforce and Workplace Violence](#)

This American Hospital Association (AHA) webpage provides links to numerous resources from regional and national organizations that address the topic of workplace violence.

[Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems: Workplace Safety Initiative](#)

This toolkit will assist health care leadership, violence prevention committees and other stakeholders to evaluate their workplace violence program, enhance the workplace culture of safety, and develop or strengthen a workplace violence program.

[Crisis Prevention Institute: The Ultimate CPI Resource Pack](#)

This guide from the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) teaches the basics of de-escalating behaviors to improve workplace safety using content such as "10 Tips for Crisis Prevention," as well as practices that can help avoid physical altercations, like those discussed in its "7 Principles for Effective Verbal Intervention" section.

[Department of Homeland Security: Active Shooter Preparedness](#)

Anyone can play an integral role in mitigating the impacts of an active shooter incident. This webpage from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), provides products, tools, and resources to help prepare for and respond to an active shooter incident.

Links to external websites and guidelines are provided as a courtesy. They are neither a guarantee nor an endorsement by the AAFP of the guidelines, products, or services offered on these websites.

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