

Care for the Common Good

Commitment to Safety

Confront Violence & Improve Health of Communities



Trinity Health is one of the largest not-for-profit, Catholic health care systems in the nation, serving diverse communities across 26 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good and advance our mission, including fair payment, a strong workforce, coverage for all that bridges social care, and total cost of care payment models.

Trinity Health's Mission is to be a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities. Our core value of safety calls us to embrace a culture that prevents harm and nurtures a safe environment for all. The goal at Trinity Health is to leverage our skill, scale and learning to be the safest health care system in America. To do so, we must confront the violence that is increasingly affecting individuals, health care workers and our communities.

Health Care Workers Are at an Increased Risk for Workplace Violence and Injury

Workplace violence is a serious problem in health care settings that has been on the rise in recent years, including a noticeable increase since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health defines workplace violence as, "violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, directed toward persons at work or on duty." Workplace violence can take the form of physical assaults that can result in serious physical harm or verbal violence such as threats, verbal abuse, hostility and harassment which can cause significant psychological trauma and stress, even if no physical injury takes place.

Addressing Workplace Violence is a Priority

Trinity Health has employed a variety of strategies and tactics to combat escalating violence toward colleagues. Currently, Trinity Health is finalizing logistical plans to launch standardized de-escalation training for security professionals. While this training has existed in various forms, these behavior-based trainings—focused on leveraging nonviolent crisis intervention and verbal intervention techniques—will be deployed to ensure front-line security staff are trained using industry-recognized practices designed for the health care environment.

Additionally, Trinity Health is developing a three-tiered workplace violence program that will support implementation of the new and revised The Joint Commission workplace violence standards, that was effective January 1, 2022. These standards were developed in response to the high incidence of workplace violence being experienced in health care settings and are intended to provide a consistent framework to address this issue across health care entities. Trinity Health built into our electronic medical record a risk scoring tool that allows for early identification, continuous awareness and communication about high risk of violence patients.

Specific hospitals across Trinity Health have partnered with local police departments to place officers in highly volatile areas of the hospital such as emergency departments; created emergency response teams that include clinical and leadership support; established canine programs; posted signage indicating that violence will not be tolerated; aggressively pursued prosecution of violators of the no tolerance for violence policies; and engaged in other strategies and tactics to stem violent incidences.

"Health system partnerships with law enforcement help close the gap between in-house security and municipal police, strengthening the response to workplace violence incidents and making staff feel safe."

- Wesley Light, Director of Security and Emergency Management, Trinity Health Mid-Atlantic

Health Care Workplace Violence Statistics¹

- Studies indicate that 44% of nurses reported experiencing physical violence and 68% reported experiencing verbal abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The health care and social service industries experience the highest rates of injuries caused by workplace violence and these workers are five times as likely to suffer a workplace violence injury than workers overall.
- Health care workers accounted for 73% of all nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses due to violence in 2018.

¹Byon, H. D., Sagherian, K., Kim, Y., Lipscomb, J., Crandall, M., & Steege, L. (2021, August 3). Nurses' Experience With Type II Workplace Violence and Underreporting During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Workplace Health Saf.* <https://doi.org/10.1177/21650799211031233>, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics "Fact Sheet Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018 2020."

Commitment to Safety

Increasing Community Violence Requires Action

Community violence is defined as violence “between unrelated individuals, who may or may not know each other, generally outside the home.” Research indicates that youth and young adults (ages 10-34), particularly those in communities of color, are disproportionately impacted. Community violence impacts millions of people and can cause mental health conditions, like depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Exposure to community violence is also associated with increased risk for chronic disease.² It is a public health and safety crisis that impacts individuals, families, clinicians, health care workers, hospitals and communities across the nation.

Every day, health systems are responding to the trauma caused by violence, including gun violence. In 2020, gun-related injuries led to 45,222 fatalities, an increase of nearly 15% over the previous year.³ In fact, gun-related injuries have surpassed motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of death for children and adolescents (ages 1-19).⁴ More than half of gun-related deaths were suicides and more than 4 out of every 10 were homicides.⁵ Trinity Health recognizes that gun violence is a national public health and safety crisis. A public health model and approach is needed to effectively address this crisis that includes data collection and surveillance, research into effective interventions and cross-sector collaboration.

What Can Policymakers Do?

- Establish enhanced penalties for assault against health care workers.
- Support policies and programs that encourage partnerships between health systems and law enforcement.
- Provide funding for health care violence prevention and infrastructure programs.
- Provide funding for research and demonstration programs related to health care worker wellbeing.
- Increase access to behavioral health services.
- Provide funding for gun violence research.
- Support the development and distribution of gun safety educational materials, including in clinical settings.
- Increase access to supports for individuals who have experienced trauma, including gun violence.
- Establish Medicaid reimbursement for violence prevention professional services.
- Require universal background checks before all gun purchases.
- Support policies that temporarily restrict access to guns for individuals identified by law enforcement as posing a threat, also known as red flag laws.
- Limit access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines to those who use in the capacity of their official duties.
- Support requirements for concealed carry permits and policies, and honor gun-free zones in hospitals in order to nurture peace and healing.

Addressing Violence Across Trinity Health

Workplace Violence & Education Consultant

Saint Alphonsus Health System in Idaho and Eastern Oregon has placed violence prevention as a top organizational priority. Leadership has demonstrated its commitment by creating a full-time role unique within Trinity Health. The Workplace Violence & Education Consultant's focus is violence prevention. It is staffed by a licensed professional counselor who collaborates with security, clinical staff and leadership to bridge the gap between these areas. This individual facilitates de-escalation training for colleagues, provides behavioral health expertise in managing disruptive patients and visitors and manages the violence prevention program.

Hartford Communities that Care

Trinity Health Of New England's partnership with Hartford Communities That Care (HCTC) has been on-going for more than 14 years. HCTC and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Conn. formed a violence-based intervention and prevention program, immediately connecting gunshot victims and their families in the emergency department (ED) to needed services. The goals of this partnership are to begin the process of healing, to provide support to families and victims, and to prevent further violence. To date, more than 1,800 victims of violent crimes and their families have come through the St. Francis ED. Victims and families are connected to services including medical, mental health and social services, with special attention to culturally responsive therapies to assist these patients.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 2021.

⁴ Goldstick, J., Cunningham, R., Carter, P. "Current Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States," New England Journal of Medicine 2022; 386:1955-1956.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Experiencing Poverty • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity