

# Mitigating Healthcare Workplace Violence

Taking a data-driven  
approach



# Introduction

Workplace violence is defined as an act or threat of physical violence that can also include threatening or disruptive behavior. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.”

Workplace violence can occur in any organization or industry; however, it is four times greater in healthcare than any other industry according to OSHA. It can affect both the patient and employee’s well-being. There are costs associated with workplace violence where healthcare workers will quit their jobs as a result, the increased hours of sick, disability, and leave by workers who have experienced workplace violence, and absence from work due to workplace violence.

# Understanding Workplace Violence in Healthcare

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Workplace violence in healthcare is a serious concern and it encompasses various types and scenarios.

## 1. Patient-to-Staff Violence

- Verbal Abuse- Patients may use harsh language, threats, or intimidation against healthcare staff, including nurses, doctors, and administrative personnel.
- Physical Assault- Patients can physically assault healthcare workers, resulting in injuries.
- Psychological Violence- Patients may engage in psychological abuse such as manipulation, emotional blackmail, or harassment.

## 2. Staff-to-Staff Violence

- Verbal Conflicts- Disagreements, arguments, or conflicts among healthcare staff can escalate to verbal abuse. This may happen due to stress, workplace pressures, or personality clashes.
- Bullying- Staff members may engage in bullying behaviors, including spreading rumors, exclusion, or undermining the work of their colleagues.
- Physical Altercations- Rare but not unheard of, physical altercations between healthcare employees can occur.

## 3. Visitor/Family Member-to-Staff Violence

- Aggressive Visitors- Family members or visitors of patients may become aggressive and confrontational with healthcare staff if they are dissatisfied with patient care or frustrated with the healthcare system.
- Verbal Abuse- Visitors may resort to verbal abuse, making threats, or using offensive language towards healthcare workers.

#### 4. Staff-to-Patient Violence

- **Improper Restraints-** In rare cases, staff members might use excessive physical force or improper restraints when dealing with agitated or uncooperative patients.

#### 5. External Threats

- **Intruders-** Individuals who are not part of the healthcare facility may pose a threat, including disgruntled former employees, domestic disputes filtering into the workplace, or outsiders seeking to cause harm.
- **Robbery or Assault-** Healthcare facilities can be targeted for criminal activities, such as robberies, which lead to staff members being threatened or harmed.

## Workplace Violence Scenarios

**Emergency Departments-** High-stress environments where patients with varied medical conditions, mental health issues, or substance abuse disorders can become agitated, leading to violence in incidents.

**Psychiatric Units-** Treating patients with severe mental health conditions can sometimes result in violent outbursts.

**Long-Term Care Facilities-** Residents in long-term care settings may exhibit challenging behaviors due to dementia or other conditions.

**Home Healthcare-** Home healthcare workers may face unique risks when visiting patients in their homes.

**End-of-Life Care-** Emotional and stressful situations surrounding end-of-life care can sometimes lead to conflicts between family members and healthcare staff.

**Registration departments/front desk-** staff often come in contact with upset patients due to wait times, payment requirements, and billing concerns.

Understanding these types and scenarios of workplace violence in healthcare is essential for implementing effective prevention, reporting, and intervention strategies to protect both employees and patients. The symplr Quality Suite can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by providing a streamlined and confidential reporting system, promoting staff training, and facilitating data analysis to enhance safety in the healthcare setting.

## Reporting Challenges

Healthcare systems often grapple with several challenges when it comes to documenting and reporting workplace violence:

### Under-reporting

Workplace violence incidents which can include verbal abuse, physical assaults, and harassment, are often underreported due to fear, concerns about retaliation, or lack of clear reporting mechanisms

### Inefficient Documentation

Disparate electronic documentation methods can be time consuming and prone to errors, making it difficult to track and analyze incidents effectively.

### Compliance and Regulatory Requirements

Health systems must adhere to strict compliance and regulatory requirements related to reporting workplace violence incidents.

## Data-Analysis

Healthcare organizations struggle to analyze and gain insights from reporting incidents, hindering their ability to proactively address risks and improve workplace safety.

There has been an increase in workplace violence in healthcare over the last decade, however, since the pandemic incidents have increased even more. A key to reducing workplace violence is making sure the incidents are reported and action can be taken from the data received.

[symplr Quality suite can play a pivotal role in addressing these issues.](#)

The event reporting system is designed with the end user in mind to simplify the reporting process, from the submission of the event to the follow-up for the event.

**Streamlined Reporting:** Provides a user-friendly, confidential, and secure method for employees to report workplace violence incidents. This encourages reporting and reduces the fear of retaliation.

**Efficient Documentation:** Offers digital customizable forms and automated incident reporting workflows from the EMR. Streamlines the documentation process, saving time and reducing errors.

Ability to use iPad for mobility when reporting incidents that includes the ability to upload photos or videos.





**Compliance support:** Ensures that incident reports adhere to legal and ethical standards.

**Data Analytics:** Software collects and centralizes incident data, enabling healthcare organizations to analyze trends, identify risk factors, and make data-driven decisions to improve workplace safety. One of the keys is the ability to identify trends in the events being reported so that leadership can better understand the organizations process gaps that may be contributing to the events.

**Notifications and Escalations:** Email event hyperlink and email notification includes automated notification and escalation features, ensuring that the right individuals are informed promptly when an event is reported, facilitating faster response and resolution. For example, if an employee is injured there can be flags set up for management. In addition, if a patient has a history of violence staff can be alerted when that patient has entered the health system.

**Integrations:** The ease of a reporting mechanism from the EMR allows front-line staff to report patient safety events and patient experiences quickly and easily through EMR Event linking. This integration capability eliminates the need for additional patient lookup and reduces the number of screens users

must open to complete events. In addition, the overall integration of the health systems disparate systems allows for a more holistic view of the patient.

## *Key Challenges healthcare organizations and employees may encounter when reporting workplace violence.*

**Lack of Awareness:** Employees may not be fully aware of the reporting mechanisms in place or the importance of reporting workplace violence incidents. They may not know how to access or use the reporting software effectively.

**Variability in Reporting:** Different departments or facilities within the healthcare system may use different reporting systems or software, leading to inconsistencies and difficulties in aggregating data for analysis and intervention.

**Under-reporting:** Reluctant to report due to fear of retaliation, concerns about privacy, or lack of confidence in the reporting process or reporting system, and lack of agreement on the definition of workplace violence.

*Overcoming challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes not only the implementation of user friendly and secure reporting but also a cultural shift that encourages reporting, training, effective data management and analysis. symplr Quality Suite aims to address these challenges and provides a robust platform for reporting workplace violence.*

**Data Security and Privacy:** software must adhere to strict data security and privacy regulations.

**User-friendly Interface:** the software needs to be user-friendly and intuitive to encourage employees to use it for reporting.

**Integration with existing systems:** ensuring seamless integration between reporting software and other systems is crucial for efficient data management.

**Cultural Barriers:** Workplace cultures can impact reporting. There may be a culture of silence or reluctance to acknowledge workplace violence issues.

## The Role of Technology

Technology in healthcare plays a critical role in addressing workplace violence by offering software solutions that enhance reporting and responses to incidents. symplr Quality Suite enhances reporting and responses to incidents.

Streamlined reporting methods provides an easy-to-use platform for healthcare employees to report Workplace Violence incidents. This encourages reporting and reduces barriers due to complex reporting procedures.

Confidential Reporting can alleviate concerns about retaliation or privacy breaches. This promotes a culture of open and honest reporting.

Real-Time Reporting, enabling immediate documentation of incidents as they occur. This timeliness can facilitate quicker responses. (EMR Event linking, Email Hyperlink)

Automated Notifications are key in getting timely notifications to the appropriate personnel, such as security, management, or HR when an incident is reported.

Data Centralization makes it easier to track and analyze trends. This data-driven approach can help identify high risk areas or recurring issues.

Compliance and Documentation ensures that incidents reports adhere to legal and ethical standards. This helps organizations meet regulatory requirements and maintain accurate records for audits.

Incident Triage can be tracked by severity of the incident, helping organizations prioritize responses and allocate resources effectively.

Evidence Collection is important for software to be able to collect photos, videos, witness statements. This helps strengthen the documentation of the incident.

# Overview of the symplr Quality Suite

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## Key Features and Functionalities of the Software

The symplr Quality Suite easily incorporates data from diverse information systems to manage, measure, and monitor against years of curated benchmark data. It provides consolidated views, advance reporting, seamless integration, and trend tracking.

Analyze clinical utilization and provide practice patterns, collect outcomes-based quality metrics, and share actionable insights based on performance results. Improve patient safety and outcomes by efficiently measuring and managing risk, quality, and compliance.

The Risk module is an automated and efficient risk event data collection, reporting, and analysis tool that provides users with a holistic view of risk across the organization. Patient or non-patient occurrences such as workplace violence can be easily documented using customizable forms. They can be attributed to individual physicians, employees, visitors, location, departments, and facilities.

Remote Data Entry (RDE)-used for incident and event reporting through the hospital intranet or through EMR Event linking to increase reporting of incidents and events while decreasing the time needed for entry.

DataVision helps evaluate performance and benchmark it against peer organizations, using one of the nation's largest concurrent comparative databases. It's a robust analytic platform that not only access reliable comparative and ranked data, but also distills it into engaging visual dashboards for improved outcomes.

Statit provides a simple, powerful way to access, track, analyze, compare, and contrast patient safety and quality data. Intuitive dashboards offer a highly interactive experience, enabling ongoing views into, and analysis of, trends and performance measurements – right down to patient-level details. Learn more at [symplr.com](https://symplr.com).



# About symplr

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