



OSHA Standards Needed to

PREVENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE



1 in 4 Nurses are ABUSED

in the workplace. Overall, the likelihood of health care workers being exposed to violence is higher than prison guards or police officers. Workplace violence in healthcare settings can be prevented, with collaborative approaches. However, few health care employers have engaged nurses and other staff to establish effective plans to prevent workplace violence, putting nurses and others at risk on a daily basis. The American Nurses Association (ANA) believes that public policy must therefore play a role to encourage employers to make meaningful commitments to prevent workplace violence.

*ANA prioritizes **development of enforceable federal standards** that establish active roles for health care workers to identify and address the risks of violence in their unique settings.*



General OSHA Authority is Not Sufficient.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) within the Department of Labor has general statutory authority to cite employers for unsafe working conditions. OSHA can use this authority to issue citations and assess penalties against healthcare employers that fail to address hazards that create unreasonable risk of workplace violence. Though useful in the most egregious cases, OSHA's general authority leaves healthcare employers without needed clarity on expectations for reducing risks of workplace violence.

ANA believes that developing enforceable standards would be a positive process engaging all stakeholders, and that uniform OSHA standards would encourage more employers to adopt preventive programs.

OSHA Guidelines Lack Enforcement Mechanisms.

In 2016, OSHA published comprehensive Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers.¹ The Guidelines are suggestions for healthcare employer action, including detailed provisions for ongoing worker involvement in planning and evaluating prevention efforts.

The Guidelines are useful tools for healthcare employers that voluntarily seek to prevent workplace violence. However, the Guidelines do not have the force of OSHA standards, and employers cannot be held accountable for failing to follow suggested steps. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has concluded that “additional efforts are needed.”²

ANA and other stakeholders have urged OSHA to develop enforceable standards based on the Guidelines.³ ANA also supports federal legislation to require OSHA to do so.⁴

For more information on how ANA advocates for safe nursing workplaces, visit [EndNurseAbuse.org](https://endnurseabuse.org) or contact us at gova@ana.org

¹ <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3148.pdf>

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-11>

³ <https://www.nursingworld.org/-/4ae16b/globalassets/docs/ana/anacomments-osha2016-0014-preventionworkplaceviolence.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/end-nurse-abuse/#enaaction>