

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 25 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

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. We recognize that gun violence has become a national public health and safety crisis.

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

Employing a variety of strategies and tactics to combat escalating violence toward colleagues, Trinity Health is launching standardized de-escalation training for all security professionals. While this training has existed in various forms, these behavior-based trainings—focused on leveraging nonviolent crisis intervention and verbal intervention techniques—are being 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 Joint Commission on Accreditation on Healthcare Organizations workplace violence standards. 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 is also building into our electronic medical record a risk scoring tool that will allow for early identification, continuous awareness and communication about high risk of violence patients.

Several 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 behavioral emergency response teams; 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.

H *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 report experiencing physical violence and 68% report 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.

¹Defined as nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses involving days away from work caused by the intentional injury by another person. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics "Fact Sheet Workplace Violence in Healthcare, 2018 2020."

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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—like Trinity Health—are responding to the trauma caused by violence, including gun violence. In 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, 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 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 workplace violence prevention training programs, risk scoring tools and behavioral emergency response teams.
- 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.
- Establish grants for hospital-based violence prevention programs.
- 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 discharge 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 Community Violence at Trinity Health Of New England

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 St. Francis 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. Additionally, case managers follow up with victims for six months to a year after an incident, providing wrap around assistance such as healthy foods and safe housing. HCTH also facilitates accessing of funds through the Victims Crime Act to support funeral expenses and other costs of living. St. Francis has expanded partnerships with other community-based organizations to meet the ever-growing demand for services which now includes the Compass Youth Collaborative and the Greater Hartford Family Advocacy Center.

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

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

⁴Goldstick, 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.

⁵Centers 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 Who Are Poor • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity