



To: Local Union Presidents and Rapid Response Coordinators
From: Rapid Response
Date: April 17, 2019
Re: Rapid Response Action in Support of Safe Jobs

Kicks, punches, verbal abuse, choking, shoving, and broken bones. These things should never be “all in a day’s work.” Yet, this is often the reality for the tens of thousands of nurses, support staff, home care workers, behavioral health staff, emergency medical technicians, and others in our union who work in health care and social services.

While workplace violence is a serious and growing problem for all workers, in the last decade, incidents in these industries have far outpaced any other. The increasingly profit-driven nature of health care providers and a combination of social factors are driving the trend. This foreseeable and preventable problem impacts those of us who work in health care or social services, any of us who are ever a patient, and any of us who visit or accompany a patient. Given that workplace violence compromises quality of care, **everyone is ultimately impacted.**



Workplace violence prevention plans that incorporate appropriate training, staffing levels, resources, and other strategies can make a difference. The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309/S. 851) would direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an enforceable standard so these workplaces are covered by plans. While the U.S. House and Senate both must act, we anticipate the Senate and Department of Labor will require the most pressure.

Action Instructions

1 – Circulate the Enclosed Cards. Use your Rapid Response network or designate someone to handle. Please encourage every member to complete postcards – retirees too! Every card matters in this effort. If you need additional cards, contact your District Rapid Response Coordinator or call 412-562-2291.

2 – Collect and Return. Please return the completed postcard sheets without tearing the cards apart to:

USW Rapid Response
 60 Boulevard of the Allies
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222

3 – Delivery and Timeline. Cards will be combined with others from your USW District and delivered in a variety of ways to Senate offices and the Secretary of Labor. Please help us keep a steady flow by turning in cards as you complete the action. Right now we do not have a firm end date for this effort, but we urge your local to get started right away.

Questions? Contact your District Rapid Response Coordinator, Congressional District Coordinator in Pennsylvania, or our national office at 412-562-2291. Thanks in advance for taking part in this important action!

Quick Facts on Workplace Violence in Health Care and Social Services

- Workplace violence can be the headline-grabbing stories like the cardiologist murdered in a hospital by the son of a deceased patient or a physician shot for refusing to prescribe opioids to the killer's wife. But, it is more regularly the assaults, hits, threats, slaps, punches, and other violence that health care and social service workers experience on a daily basis. It can come from patients and clients, but also other visitors or family members.
- While workplace violence is a serious and growing problem for all workers, the rate of serious injuries in these industries increased by 69 percent in the past decade. The injury rate from workplace violence is 13.7 per 10,000 workers compared to 2.9 for all other workers.
- Tens of thousands of USW members work in these industries and are directly impacted. Patients, clients, and their loved ones are also at risk.
- Because workplace violence compromises quality of care, everyone is ultimately impacted.
- This problem is foreseeable and preventable.
- Fifteen years ago, OSHA issued voluntary guidance to employers on violence prevention, but the problem has only become worse. The guidelines are not sufficient. Some states and employers have acted, but more must be done.
- The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act was introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate (H.R. 1309/S. 851) this year.
- The bill would direct OSHA to issue an enforceable standard. The required violence prevention plans would be tailored to specific workplaces and situations; contain input from workers, unions and employers; require identification and control of hazards, reporting, and investigations; and ultimately lead to improvements such as emergency response systems, safe staffing levels, and other strategies needed to keep workers, patients, clients, and their loved ones safe.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017 data.