



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Chicago Shooting Underscores Need for Comprehensive Workplace Violence Prevention

Emergency plans like those in place at Mercy Hospital & Medical Center in Chicago can save lives in Texas health care settings

Austin, TX (Nov. 20, 2018) — Texas Nurses Association extends our deepest sympathies to the health care workers of Mercy Hospital & Medical Center in Chicago following the shooting on Nov. 19.

For many nurses, Monday's shooting is just another example of the threat of violence they face every day while trying to care for their patients. According to coverage in the Chicago Tribune, Mercy Hospital had emergency plans in place and conducted an active shooter drill just last month. Staff and authorities were able to evacuate the immediate area and barricade behind locked doors.

These plans certainly helped prevent additional injuries and loss of life. However, many workplaces in Texas do not offer the same level of emergency preparedness.

A 2016 study by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies shows that nearly half of all nurses will experience physical violence in the course of their careers, and over 40 percent of nurses don't receive any training on workplace violence. A large number of nurses only received awareness training, rather than preventative training.

To address workplace violence for nurses and other staff at health care facilities, TNA will introduce a bill this spring to amend the Texas Health and Safety Code to include workplace violence prevention.

This sweeping reform will require health care workplaces to prioritize the safety of their employees and patients by establishing a committee (or authorizing an existing committee) to develop a plan that includes:

- Training for providers and employees who provide direct patient care.
- A system for responding to and investigating violent or potentially violent incidents.
- Consideration of factors that may increase or decrease incidents of workplace violence.
- Examination of security risks in publicly accessible areas of the facility.



Press Release

To ensure the plans consider real-world situations and solutions, the committee would need to include a direct care nurse and solicit input from providers and other employees. Employers would need to provide a way for staff to report incidents of workplace violence. Employers would also need to provide for adjustments to their staffing plan in a situation where an employee faces a threat of violence from a patient.

The bill would also mandate that facilities offer post-incident services for any health care worker directly affected by workplace violence, including psychological support.

Longstanding regulations already require hospitals to have safety plans, and 2013 legislation enhanced penalties for assaulting emergency room personnel. Our lawmakers have already shown interest in this issue with a 2017 bill establishing a grant program for organizations to implement violence prevention programs.

This bill would be the most comprehensive step yet to address the issue for all workers in all types of facilities, not just hospitals. We ask all health care workers to urge their lawmakers to support this bill to prevent workplace violence in Texas.

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About Texas Nurses Association

The Texas Nurses Association (TNA) is a statewide membership-based professional association of registered nurses. Our vision is to empower Texas Nurses to advance the profession. Founded in 1907, TNA is the oldest and largest nursing association in Texas.