

HEALTH CARE HEROES VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACT – NEW LEGISLATION

According to a 2023 National Survey, 40% of all healthcare workers have reported at least one incident of workplace violence within the past two years¹. Many more are threatened or exposed to verbal aggression.

In light of World Health Day on April 7th, it is important to highlight recent New Jersey legislation entitled the "Health Care Heroes Violence Prevention Act." The full legislation can be found [here](#).

The act makes it a criminal offense to intentionally threaten healthcare professionals or volunteers to intimidate or interfere with their work. The act also establishes additional penalties against individuals who assault healthcare workers or volunteers.

Enhanced penalties are now established for any person who commits an assault against a worker employed by a licensed healthcare facility or a healthcare professional.

A "Healthcare facility" is defined as a general or special hospital or nursing home licensed by the Department of Health, a State or County Psychiatric Hospital, or a State Developmental Center.

A "Healthcare professional" is defined as a person licensed, certified, registered, or otherwise authorized by any principal department of the Executive Branch of State government or any entity within any department or any other entity hereafter created to license or otherwise regulate a healthcare profession.

Finally, the bill requires healthcare facilities to display a written notice stating the following: **"It is a crime to assault a healthcare worker. Any person who assaults a healthcare worker shall be subject to a fine, imprisonment, or both under the New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice, N.J.S.2C:1-1 et seq."**

In light of this new legislation, the below considerations might be valuable for the Chief of Police:

1. Evaluate existing policies and procedures to determine any necessary changes.
2. Determine if changes should be undertaken concerning the agency's training program, including the agency Field Training Program (FTO).
3. Ensure that officers who are likely to encounter a violation are aware of this new legislation.
4. Establish a community outreach program to ensure that "Healthcare facilities" such as, but not limited to, hospitals, mental hospitals, public health centers, diagnostic centers, treatment centers, rehabilitation centers, extended care facilities, skilled nursing homes, or nursing homes post the required warning notice as stated in the legislation.
5. Consult with the Municipal Attorney and, as appropriate, the County Prosecutor as necessary.

Resource Considerations:

1. The legislation, which includes full definitions of "Healthcare Facility" and "Healthcare Professional," can be found [here](#).

¹ Healthcare Finance, (2023, June 7). *Forty percent of healthcare workers experienced workplace violence in the last two years.*

<https://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/40-healthcare-workers-experienced-workplace-violence-last-two-years#:~:text=A%20new%20survey%20from%20Premier%20has%20found%20that,incidents%20were%20at%20the%20hands%20of%20combative%20patients.>