

# Taking Action Against Workplace Violence

August 2024

## Workplace Violence Continues to Rise

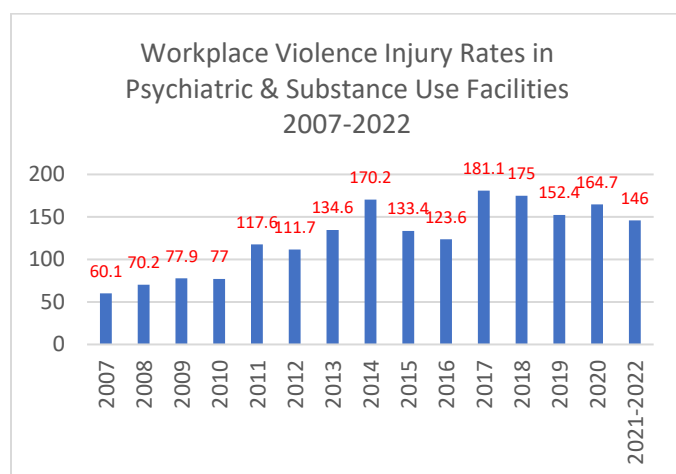
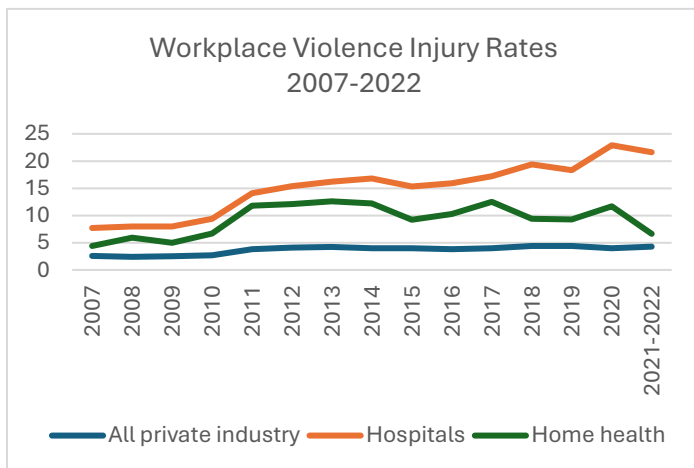
Workplace violence in healthcare continues to rise in conjunction with inadequate staffing and other effects of industry corporatization. Between 2007 and 2022, the rate of injuries from workplace violence rose 181 percent in private hospitals, 143 percent in psychiatric and substance use facilities, and 50 percent in home health agencies.<sup>i</sup> Our members and healthcare workers everywhere have suffered serious threats, broken bones, concussions, post-traumatic stress disorder and other injuries.

One study found that nurses and patient care aides experience physical or verbal aggression at least once every 40 hours worked.<sup>ii</sup> Dozens of healthcare workers are murdered while doing their jobs every year, including home health nurses like Washington State Nurses Association/AFT member Douglas Brant in 2022 and Joyce Grayson in Connecticut in 2023.

## We Are Fighting Back

The AFT has fought for enforceable protections from workplace violence on the federal level for many years, pressing Congress and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for action. OSHA has made significant progress toward issuing a workplace violence standard under the Biden administration, but we will not see a completed standard in 2024.

We therefore are focusing on state- and local-level protections for our members. Through the Code Red campaign, AFT Healthcare affiliates are addressing workplace violence by working for new or strengthened state laws and strong collective bargaining language. We're also doubling down on providing training for local safety committees to give members who participate in joint workplace-violence prevention committees the skills and knowledge they need to move a safety agenda.



Resources for state and local leaders are available through the Code Red Workplace Violence Prevention Toolkit. For more information, see the [HC Staffing Material Google Drive](#).

### Legislative and Bargaining Resources Include:

- Model legislative language.
- Statutory language and analysis from state bills and laws that require employers to develop comprehensive workplace violence prevention programs with genuine input from workers.
- Sample and model contract language requiring workplace violence prevention programs to be developed and implemented through joint labor-management committees.
- National guidance documents from OSHA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
- Joint Commission and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services requirements for hospitals.
- Resources for home health agencies.
- Examples of successful workplace violence prevention programs.
- Examples of OSHA citations against healthcare employers.
- Prevention program resources, such as program checklists, root-cause analysis instructions, and site assessment templates.

### Safety Committee Training Materials

AFT Healthcare is committed to helping locals improve safety and health through effective joint committee training. These sessions empower members and leaders who participate in labor-management safety committees. Training resources can also be found in the Code Red Workplace Violence folders. For more information on training, please email [4healthandsafety@aft.org](mailto:4healthandsafety@aft.org).

*Seven years ago, I was punched in the head and then kicked in the stomach. I was in a dark hallway during a night shift with no security nearby. I was semi-conscious and seizing when my co-workers found me. This patient hurt other staff badly as well. I've suffered long-term injuries—a traumatic brain injury, loss of range of motion of my neck, loss of vision, memory issues, and, of course, I have been diagnosed with PTSD—something none of us is proud to admit to. I am on medications daily for the headaches that have not gone away. I had to return to work three months after my assault or my employer would have replaced me.*

*One year later, I was attacked again. The patient told me I was going to die. He was a boxer, and he charged at me behind the nurses' station. He was twice my size and half my age. There was no security—only me to fight for myself.*

*—Barbara Walsh, AFT Nurses and Health Professionals psychiatric nurse*

<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2021-2022.

<sup>ii</sup> J.D. Iennaco et al., "The Aggressive Incidents in Medical Settings (AIMS) Study: Advancing Measurement to Promote Prevention of

Workplace Violence," *Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient*, 50, issue 3 (2024):166-176, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcjq.2023.11.005>.