

Concealed Carry of Weapons in Healthcare Facilities

Question

To prepare for an active shooter situation or other violence, should healthcare facilities permit designated staff members to carry concealed weapons (concealed carry)?

Answer

The question of whether to allow concealed carry in healthcare facilities has no universal answer. The decision-makers in each organization have many factors to consider, and each facility should conduct a thorough evaluation to determine the appropriate strategy. In multisite organizations, qualified individuals should evaluate each individual site to determine the best approach.

Conducting a hazard vulnerability assessment (HVA) of a facility can assist in the decision-making process. An HVA should include an evaluation of the facility's structure, access points, location, available resources, and law enforcement response times. As part of the assessment, consider whether alternative approaches to concealed carry might be an option to enhance established security plans. For example:

- Schedule routine meetings with law enforcement agencies in the area (e.g., sheriff, local police, state police, highway patrol, etc.). Discuss response plans, incident command structure, and roles/responsibilities.
- Ensure that all local law enforcement officers have knowledge of the facility's physical layout. Label all exterior doors and some windows to aid responding officers.
- Provide a "police go bag" to local law enforcement that includes facility blueprints, information about major access points, laminated floor maps, a USB drive containing emergency point-of-contact information, and keys for a rapid entry system.

- Ensure that facility panic alarms directly alert local law enforcement.
- Evaluate whether local law enforcement can remotely access the facility's closed-circuit television security feeds.
- Determine whether off-duty police officers and/or auxiliary officers are available to respond to active shooter and other violence situations.
- Include local and state law enforcement, local emergency medical services, and local fire departments in any active shooter drills.
- Consider establishing a room adjacent to the emergency department (ED) that local and state law enforcement can use for writing reports, taking breaks, etc.
- Request that local or state law enforcement park a police vehicle in the facility's parking lot, if available. (Tip: Don't park the police vehicle in the same spot every day.)
- Have security/police routinely patrol parking lots at shift changes or when staffing levels are low.
- Assess facility security to determine whether a security officer or security force is needed 24/7 or during vulnerable times of the day and night.
- Formalize a critical incident response training program for staff.

Employing designated staff to carry concealed weapons might be an option after careful evaluation of the facility's security risks. If this option is pursued, proper safeguards should be in place before implementation. For example:

- Regularly review state/local laws to ensure compliance.
- Ensure proper vetting of potential candidates to carry weapons.
- Provide extensive firearms training (initial and ongoing) with local law enforcement.
- Incorporate concealed carry scenarios into active shooter drills.
- Periodically assess competency for individuals who are permitted to carry a weapon.
- Inform local and state law enforcement of any process changes.
- Implement a concealed carry permit auditing process.

- Develop policies and procedures to address weapon procurement, storage, safety, discharge, maintenance, cleaning, etc.
- Educate all staff members about concealed carry policies (e.g., only designated staff can carry a facility-issued firearm, etc.).
- Implement a process for accounting for and securing firearms and ammunition.
- Ensure investigation and debrief procedures are in place and consistently used following discharge of a weapon.

Resources

Additional resources are listed under “Active Shooter/Violence” in MedPro’s [Risk Resources: Emergency Preparedness and Response](#). MedPro’s [Checklist: Planning and Response for Active Shooter Situations](#) also offers helpful guidance.

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