

State-Based Legislation to Address Workplace Violence in Healthcare Settings: Trends, Strategies, and Policy Implications

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Workplace violence (WPV) against health care workers is a long-standing challenge that impacts the well-being of workers and patients. State legislative efforts to address WPV against health care workers have accelerated in recent years. This study provides a comprehensive review of WPV-related legislation in health care settings across all fifty states over the last 10 years. We conducted a comparative analysis of state-level legislation to address WPV towards health care workers to understand: 1) the focus of the legislation (i.e., penalty, prevention, remediation); 2) setting and type of health care worker protected; and 3) temporal trends in state WPV legislation. As of June 2024, 48 states had enacted at least one WPV policy, and some states have enacted two or more policies. State legislation was categorized into three categories: Penalties, prevention, and remediation. Forty-five states had laws that penalize perpetrators of WPV, 27 states enacted prevention policies, and 23 had remediation policies. Ten states had legislation combining penalties with either prevention or remediation, and 17 states had laws covering all three categories. Understanding variation in state-level WPV legislation is important to future efforts to evaluate the efficacy of different policy approaches and inform future legislation to protect health care workers.

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