

Improving safety and security in Victorian hospitals

Factsheet – January 2015

Overview

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing violence in health care settings and reducing violence against hospital staff. Priority areas for the Victorian Government in achieving this commitment include:

- Establishing a simplified mechanism for hospital staff to report violence
- Compelling hospitals and boards to publically report violent incidents
- Introducing consistent code grey and code black security responses
- Auditing security staff in public hospitals
- Considering risk assessments, behavioural contracts, client alert systems, training and post-incident response
- Establishing a \$20 million Health Service Violence Prevention Fund to improve hospital and mental health facilities to make them safer for staff, patients and visitors

The 2012-13 Victorian State Budget allocated \$5.8 million over four years to support safety and security and reduce violence in Victorian health services. With these funds, health services across Victoria have implemented initiatives to improve safety and security including:

- improvement of security systems, including installation of effective duress alarms and CCTV throughout emergency departments (EDs)
- minor capital works to improve staff safety and patient satisfaction through access control systems, improved waiting room and triage area design, and secure entrances and exits
- new and revised policies and procedures on preventing and managing violence and aggression, including Code Grey
- improved communications with patients and visitors to relay possible wait times and expected standards of behaviour

In addition, this funding has supported work addressing the following key areas:

- standards for Code Grey responses to incidents of violence and aggression
- standardisation of violence and aggression training for hospital clinical and security staff
- information to patients and visitors on the standard of behaviour expected of them within healthcare facilities
- duress alarms for at-risk staff working in EDs and mental health facilities
- improved police and ambulance liaison with health services.

Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Improving Hospital Safety and Security Ministerial Advisory Committee (established in 2013) provide advice and oversight on this work. Membership includes community representatives and senior representatives from nursing, medical, security, health service management, human resources and Victoria Police. To find out more about this committee, go to: www.health.vic.gov.au/emergency-care/hospital-safety.htm

Government Inquiries

The work to support health services to better address violence in health care settings has been informed by the following inquiries:

- The Parliamentary Inquiry into violence and security arrangements in Victorian hospitals (2011), which made 39 recommendations to prevent or manage violence in Victorian hospitals, all of which were supported or supported in principle by the Victorian Government.
- The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) performance audit into Occupational Health and Safety Risk in Public Hospitals (2013),
- The Victorian Taskforce on Violence in Nursing (2005)

Key Initiatives

New Standards for Code Grey

New standards for organisational responses to violence and aggression (Code Grey) were released in May 2014. All Victorian public health services are required to have a Code Grey response that is separate from a Code Black response, in place by June 2015.

The standards acknowledge that aggression can be instigated by patients, staff, visitors, volunteers or anyone on the premises. The standards are based on evidence regarding the management of clinical aggression but are relevant to informing responses to non-clinical aggression.

The new standards will raise awareness of this issue and an increase in the use of Code Grey alerts is considered to be a measure of success, and reflects that good practice is being implemented.

To find out about the new standards go to:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/emergency-care/hospital-safety.htm>

Improving reporting of OHS incidents

The department has established a working group of health service OHS managers to review identified issues with reporting of OHS incidents. This group is working to simplify the process for reporting OHS incidents, inclusive of occupational violence, for health service staff.

A purpose-built reporting interface has been developed and this has been reviewed across 18 health services in 2014.

In 2015, the department will work with health services to support integration of this new reporting interface for improved reporting of OHS incidents and occupational violence.

Hospital, police and ambulance liaison

The ongoing collaboration between health services, local police, ambulance and other key agencies is vital to strengthening the interface between these services and to developing and implementing strategies for preventing and managing occupational violence.

The department encourages health services to form security liaison committees with representation from police and ambulance to support implementation of joint agreements, policies and procedures to reduce violence and aggression in health services.

Consistent training for clinical and security staff

There are a range of training programs currently available for clinical staff to support the prevention and management of violence and aggression.

The department will release a guide for training in 2015. The aim of the guide is to assist health services by informing local training programs and enabling a consistent level of training for all staff whose role involves contact with patients and the broader public.

Enhancing communication in hospitals

Long waiting times in EDs can be a main contributor to frustration and aggression. In 2014-15 two health services are piloting improved communication technology, including regular updates of ED waiting times and improved hospital signage and wayfinding.

Clear and positive communication between healthcare workers, patients and visitors is vital to reducing frustration and decreasing incidents of violence and aggression. Outlining the expected standards of behaviour in Victorian hospitals is an important aspect of this communication.

The department will continue to support health services to improve communication methods and technology to enhance interactions with patients and visitors.

Improving the legal protection of health care workers

Two pieces of legislation were introduced in 2014 to improve the legal protection of Victorian healthcare workers:

- The *Sentencing Amendment (Assaults on Emergency Workers) Act 2014* creates a statutory minimum sentence for assaults on emergency workers. This legislation applies to any offender who attacks a nurse, doctor or other staff member who delivers emergency care.
- The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Confiscation and Other Matters) Act 2014* creates an offence of assaulting a registered health practitioner engaged to provide care.