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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HOSPITAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE  
PROTECTION ACT

Introduced By: Representative Katherine S. Kazarian

Date Introduced: February 26, 2021

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety" is hereby amended  
2 by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 17.28

4 HOSPITAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT

5 **23-17.28-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Hospital Workplace Violence  
7 Protection Act."

8 **23-17.28-2. Definitions.**

9 When used in this chapter:

10 (1) "Director" means the director of the Rhode Island department of health.

11 (2) "Hospital" means any institutional health service provider, facility, or institution, place,  
12 building, agency, or portion thereof, whether a partnership or corporation, whether public or  
13 private, whether organized for profit or not, used, operated, or engaged in providing health care  
14 services.

15 (3) "Workplace violence" means any act of violence or threat of violence that occurs at a  
16 hospital, as that term is defined in chapter 17 of title 23, except for a lawful act of self-defense or  
17 defense of another. The term includes, without limitation, the use or threatened use of physical  
18 force against an employee or other provider of care, regardless of whether the employee or other

1 provider of care is physically or psychologically injured.

2 **23-17.28-3. Notification of incident.**

3 (a) Any hospital employee may notify their employer of any violation of law, regulation or  
4 standard pertaining to safety and health in the place of employment, at any time an employee learns  
5 of a violation.

6 (b) Alternatively, any employee or representative of the employee may complain to the  
7 director, or any authorized representative of the director, regarding any violation of law, regulation  
8 or standard pertaining to safety and health in their place of employment, regardless of whether or  
9 not the employee has also notified or notifies their employer.

10 (c) Upon receipt of an employee complaint, the director shall make inquiries, inspections,  
11 and investigations that the director considers reasonable and appropriate. When an employee or  
12 representative of the employee has complained in writing of an alleged violation and the director,  
13 after investigation, determines that no action will or should be taken against the employer, the  
14 director shall furnish to the employee or representative of the employee, upon written request, a  
15 statement of the reasons for the decision.

16 (d) The director shall establish procedures for keeping confidential the identity of any  
17 employee who requests protection of their identity in writing. When a request for confidentiality  
18 has been made, neither a written complaint from an employee, or representative of the employee,  
19 nor any memorandum, report, or any other writing containing the identity of a complainant may be  
20 disclosed.

21 **23-17.28-4. Retaliation prohibited.**

22 It is an unlawful employment practice for any person to bar or discharge from employment  
23 or otherwise discriminate against any employee or prospective employee because the employee or  
24 prospective employee has:

25 (1) Made any complaint or instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or  
26 related to this chapter, or has testified, or is about to testify in any such proceeding; or

27 (2) In good faith reported an assault that occurred on the premises of a hospital.

28 **23-17.28-5. Safety assessments – preventive programs.**

29 (a) All hospitals licensed in the state of Rhode Island shall:

30 (1) Create a workplace safety committee which shall conduct periodic security and safety  
31 assessments to identify existing or potential hazards for assaults committed against employees;

32 (2) Develop and implement an assault prevention and protection program for employees  
33 based on assessments conducted under subsection (a)(1) of this section; and

34 (3) Provide assault prevention and protection training on a regular and ongoing basis for

1 employees.

2 (b) An assessment conducted under subsection (a)(1) of this section shall include, but need  
3 not be limited to:

4 (1) Keeping track of the frequency of assaults committed against employees that occur on  
5 the premises of the hospital; and

6 (2) Identifying the causes and consequences of assaults against employees.

7 (c) An assault prevention and protection program developed and implemented by a hospital  
8 under subsection (a)(2) of this section shall be based on an assessment conducted under subsection  
9 (a)(1) of this section and shall address security considerations related to the following:

10 (1) Physical attributes of the hospital setting;

11 (2) Staffing plans, including security staffing;

12 (3) Personnel policies;

13 (4) First aid and emergency procedures;

14 (5) Procedures for reporting assaults; and

15 (6) Education and training for employees.

16 (d) Assault prevention and protection training required under subsection (a)(3) of this  
17 section shall address the following topics:

18 (1) General safety and personal safety procedures;

19 (2) Escalation cycles for assaultive behaviors;

20 (3) Factors that predict assaultive behaviors;

21 (4) Techniques for obtaining medical history from a patient with assaultive behavior;

22 (5) Verbal and physical techniques to de-escalate and minimize assaultive behaviors;

23 (6) Strategies for avoiding physical harm and minimizing use of restraints;

24 (7) Restraint techniques consistent with regulatory requirements;

25 (8) Self-defense, including:

26 (i) The amount of physical force that is reasonably necessary to protect the employee or a  
27 third person from assault; and

28 (ii) The use of the least restrictive procedures necessary under the circumstances, in  
29 accordance with an approved behavior management plan, and any other methods of response  
30 approved by the hospital;

31 (9) Procedures for documenting and reporting incidents involving assaultive behaviors;

32 (10) Programs for post-incident counseling for employees affected by the assaultive  
33 behavior and follow-ups as needed;

34 (11) Resources available to employees for coping with assaults; and

1           (12) The hospital's workplace assault prevention and protection program.

2           (e) Hospitals shall provide assault prevention and protection training to a new employee  
3 within ninety (90) days of the employee's initial hiring date.

4           (f) A hospital employer may use classes, video recordings, brochures, verbal or written  
5 training, or any other training that the employer determines to be appropriate, based on an  
6 employee's job duties, under the assault prevention and protection program developed by the  
7 employer.

8           (g) At least once every two (2) years, a hospital shall establish, in coordination with the  
9 hospital's workplace safety committee, a process by which the committee shall review the  
10 hospital's assault prevention and protection program developed and implemented under subsection  
11 (a)(2) of this section in order to evaluate the efficacy of the program and consider any changes to  
12 the program.

13           **23-17.28-6. Retention of records.**

14           (a) A hospital shall maintain a record of assaults committed against employees that occur  
15 on the premises of the hospital. The record shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

16           (1) The name of the hospital and address of the premises on which each assault occurred;

17           (2) The date, time and specific location where the assault occurred;

18           (3) The name, job title, and department or unit assignment of the employee who was  
19 assaulted;

20           (4) A physical description and identity, if known, of the person who committed the assault,  
21 and whether the assailant was a patient, visitor, employee or other category;

22           (5) A description of the assaultive behavior as:

23           (i) An assault with mild soreness, surface abrasions, scratches or small bruises;

24           (ii) An assault with major soreness, cuts or large bruises;

25           (iii) An assault with severe lacerations, a bone fracture or a head injury; or

26           (iv) An assault with loss of limb or death;

27           (6) A description of the physical injury;

28           (7) A description of any weapon used;

29           (8) The number of employees and witnesses in the immediate area of the assault when it  
30 occurred; and

31           (9) A description of actions taken by the employees and the hospital in response to the  
32 assault.

33           (b) A hospital shall maintain the records generated as a result of compliance with  
34 subsection (a) of this section for no fewer than five (5) years following any reported incident.

1           (c) Upon the request of an employee or of a workplace safety committee conducting a  
2 review, the hospital shall generate and make available to the requesting party a full report including:  
3           (1) The information in the record required under subsection (a) of this section; and  
4           (2) Information regarding work-related injuries and illnesses recorded by the hospital to  
5 comply with applicable federal health and safety recordkeeping requirements.  
6           (d) The director shall adopt by rule a common recording form for the purposes of this  
7 section.

8           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HOSPITAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE  
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1           This act would establish procedures for employees to file complaints with a hospital or the  
2 director of department of health, for any assaultive behavior or other violation of law occurring on  
3 hospital grounds and require hospitals to institute safety training for employees.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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