

An Act requiring health care employers to develop and implement programs to prevent workplace violence

November 18, 2025

Background

Every 38 minutes in Massachusetts health care facilities someone, most often a clinician or an employee, is physically assaulted, endures verbal abuse, or is threatened.¹ Responding to the high prevalence of workplace violence and harassment this bill strengthens protections for health care workers, establishes preventive and protective standards to reduce the risk of violence, improves health care facility incident reporting, enhances interagency coordination to safeguard privacy, and creates legal protections for certain employees harmed in the line of duty.

Frequent incidents of attack endanger health care workers, undermine workforce stability, compromise the delivery of high-quality care and exacerbate the strain on essential health care facilities. This bill provides a comprehensive and unified approach to support a culture of safety and respect. It reflects the coordinated work of the Legislature, the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), and 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East.

Workplace Violence Prevention Plans, Training and Reporting

- Establishes a statewide requirement for health care employers to address workplace violence through a standardized framework, requiring annual and facility-specific risk assessments conducted with employees and labor representatives to identify factors that place staff at risk.
- Mandates a written violence prevention plan, that includes hazard mitigation strategies, employee training, post-incident debriefing and a crisis response program.
- Requires annual reporting of workplace violence incidents to DPH and district attorneys, supporting statewide and county-level statewide data tracking while maintaining data privacy; Data to be publicly published publicly and categorized by occupation and incident type.
- Imposes civil penalties against a health care employer for noncompliance (up to \$2,000 per violation) and protects employees from retaliation.

Criminal Protections and Penalties for Assault Against a Health Care Worker

- Codifies graduated penalties for assaulting a health care employee the line of duty, including:
 - Assault causing bodily injury: Up to 5 years in state prison, up to 2.5 years in a jail or house of correction, a fine of \$500 - \$5,000, or combination of imprisonment and fines.
 - Assault causing serious bodily injury: Up to 10 years in state prison, up to 2.5 years in a jail or house of correction, a fine of \$500 - \$5,000 fine, or combination of imprisonment and fines.

¹ Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association, *Workplace Violence at Massachusetts Healthcare Facilities: An Untenable Situation & A Call to Protect the Workforce* (Jan. 2023), <https://www.mhalink.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/A-Call-to-Action-MHA-Workplace-Violence-Report.pdf>

An Act requiring health care employers to develop and implement programs to prevent workplace violence

November 18, 2025

Paid Leave for Employees

Violence against health care workers most often occurs in emergency rooms, inpatient units and psychiatric units. With unified stakeholder agreement, this bill establishes that employees directly employed by a health care employer, who experience workplace violence that results in bodily injury or serious bodily injury, are entitled to paid leave without using any accrued time (vacation, sick or personal). Although the paid-leave benefit applies specifically to individuals directly employed by a health care employer, all contracted employees remain fully included in the bill's comprehensive safety measures, incident reporting requirements, training, and criminal protections.

Privacy Protection for Employees and Union Members

- Victims of workplace violence employed directly by a health care facility, or who are a union members, including MNA and 1199SEIU members, may provide either the address of their health care facility or that of their labor organization instead of their personal home address for all court documents related to a workplace violence incident.

Alternative Pathways for Behavioral and Mental Health and Data Protection

- Mandates a statewide report from EOHHS and EOPSS to improve care and alternative treatment options for those with mental or behavioral health diagnoses and criminal justice patients.
 - Requires identification of new, non-arrest pathways to reduce unnecessary criminal justice involvement for high-acuity behavioral health patients.
 - All recommendations must include strong safeguards, penalties for misuse, and full compliance with federal confidentiality laws, including heightened protections for behavioral health and substance-use information.
 - Ensures that improving data sharing of workplace violence incidence to improve safety, does not come at the expense of any patient or health care worker's privacy.
-