



January 30, 2026

DAL: DHDTC 26-03
NH 26-06

Subject: Defining Workplace Violence

Dear Administrator:

I am writing to inform you of an important decision that will provide clarity and consistency in how workplace violence in hospitals, which include general hospitals, critical access hospitals, rural emergency hospitals and nursing homes, is defined and discussed in the New York State Department of Health.

Effective January 22, 2026, the New York State Department of Health will utilize a workplace violence definition developed by The Joint Commission for all departmental activities, communications, data collection, analysis, and reporting related to these issues.

The Joint Commission defines workplace violence as:

"An act or threat occurring at the workplace that can include any of the following: verbal, nonverbal, written, or physical aggression; threatening, intimidating, harassing, or humiliating words or actions; bullying; sabotage; sexual harassment; physical assaults; or other behaviors of concern involving staff, licensed practitioners, patients, or visitors. "

This comprehensive definition aligns with accreditation standards that have been implemented for general hospitals since January 1, 2022, and extends to behavioral health care and human services organizations as of July 1, 2024.

Why This Matters:

This standardized definition establishes a consistent framework for understanding and discussing workplace violence. By adopting this widely recognized definition, the Department ensures alignment with national healthcare accreditation standards and promotes clarity in future communications regarding workplace violence issues.

What This Means:

- The Department of Health will reference this definition in all future communications regarding workplace violence
- This establishes a common understanding and terminology for workplace violence discussions
- Healthcare organizations can align their internal definitions with this standard for consistency across the state

This unified approach supports consistency in how workplace violence is understood and discussed throughout the healthcare community.

The Joint Commission's definition of workplace violence is broader than the definition used by the Department of Labor. The Department of Labor definition remains the relevant definition for Department of Labor enforcement purposes in New York State. Employers must remain cognizant of their definition and continue to adhere to its regulatory requirements. This definition can be found at <https://dol.ny.gov/workplace-safety>. The Department additionally notes that this guidance is not intended to replace any applicable workplace violence regulations or guidance issued by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and as required by New York State law. Furthermore, this guidance does not change current reporting obligations for hospitals and diagnostic and treatment centers under the New York Patient Occurrence Reporting and Tracking System (NYPORTS) relating to Detail Code 921, which monitors events in which there was a "death or serious injury of a patient or staff member resulting from physical assault that occurs within or on the grounds of a healthcare setting," or Detail Code 963, which monitors events involving "sexual abuse/sexual assault of a patient or staff member within or on the grounds of a healthcare setting."

If you have any questions regarding this definition or need additional clarification, please contact WINN@health.ny.gov

Thank you for your continued partnership in promoting healthcare worker safety across New York State.

Sincerely,

Carrie A. Roseamelia, PhD
Director, Office of Healthcare Workforce Innovation
New York State Department of Health