

Working to Build a Safe Environment for Nurses in South Carolina



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DID YOU KNOW THAT as a nurse working in the Intensive Care Unit, The Emergency Department or in Labor and Delivery you are at more risk of experiencing violence, bullying, and/or incivility. Surveys conducted by the American Nurses Association (ANA) and recently by the South Carolina Nurses Association confirm that over half of nurses are assaulted, bullied, or treated with incivility while at work. The American Nurses Foundation reported that almost one third of respondents (11,800 respondents) in the Summer months or June 15-July 2022.

The astounding statistics that 1 in 4 nurses are assaulted and only 20-60% report these incidents with over 13% of missed workdays are due to workplace violence (ANA, 2022). The ANA defines violence as “an act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior from patients, patient’s family members, external individuals, and hospital personnel. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological assaults.”

The South Carolina Nurses Association

surveyed nurses in South Carolina (SC) and found 51% of the respondents had experienced increased violence, bullying, and/or incivility within the past year (Bouthillet, K. April 14, 2023).

Overwhelmingly most violence, bullying or incivility was from patients 60%, and patient family members at 58%, with nursing colleagues and physicians tied at 30% according to the ANA, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At this time, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) do not require employers to have a violence prevention program. Many states have put forth legislative changes with penalties for assaulting nurses: AL, AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IN, IL, IA, KS, LA, MS, MO, NE, NV, NM, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, and WI. Missouri even established a specific penalty of a class D for the first offense and a Class C when even creating a disturbance inside a healthcare facility or interfering with an ambulance.

No surprise SC has legislation filed with H. Bills 3033, 3175, 3480, and Senate Bill 432 but no sponsors for this terrible problem. Federal Legislation with House Bill 7961, The SAVE Act which is designed to protect hospital personnel is also

The South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) stands in support of preventing these acts of violence. As the Co-chair of the Robert Wood Johnson/AARP Health Action

Coalition along with Lara Hewitt from the SCHA we are advocating for a change. The coalition is working to prevent violence, bullying, and incivility to nurses, in nursing academic settings and to support needed legislation. SC is currently only one of two states that does not have a “Hate Crimes” Bill. With no legislative backing I am reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, “In the end it will not be the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.” Please consider writing your legislator and ask for support to prevent violence against nurses and other healthcare workers. Go to the ANA site Workplace Violence #ENDNurseAbuse or the SCNA Workplace Violence toolkit. The nurse you save maybe YOU! ■

References

- American Nurses Association (2022). Workplace Violence #EndNurseAbuse Retrieved December 15, 2023 from <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/end-nurse-abuse/>
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- Bouthillet, K. (April 14, 2023). Workplace violence in South Carolina: A Snapshot. Retrieved on December 15, 2023 <https://www.healthcareers.com/nurse-resources/south-carolina-monthly-update-april-2023/workplace-violence-in-south-carolina-a-snapshot>
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Violence Occupational Hazards in Hospitals. Retrieved December 15, 2023 from <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2002-101/>
- The South Carolina Nurses Association (2023). <https://www.scnurses.org/>

Membership In SCNA

SCNA welcomes the newest and resent reinstated members from November 16, 2023 to January 10, 2024. Review the list provided with the QR code and be sure to welcome your colleagues into membership. If you are reading this and are not a member of SCNA be sure to join by going to <https://www.scnurses.org/page/Membershipinfo>. Membership dues are only \$15.00 a month.

