



# Key Insights from the CENTEGIX and AHA Affinity Forum Series: Addressing Workplace Violence in Healthcare in 2025

Workplace violence in healthcare continues to escalate, posing significant risks to staff well-being, organizational effectiveness, and patient care. The AHA Affinity Forum Series featured healthcare leaders and safety experts exploring the multifaceted challenges of workplace violence and the strategies organizations can implement to create safer environments. This summary consolidates key takeaways from forum sessions:

## SESSION 1

**A Layered Approach to Addressing Workplace Violence**

## SESSION 2

**The Impact of Safety on Employee Well-Being and Patient Care**

## SESSION 3

**From Defense to Offense: Leveraging Data to Drive Continuous Improvement**

**This three-part series was led by:**



**Elisa Arespachochaga** | Vice President  
of Clinical Affairs and Workforce  
American Hospital Association



**Andrea Greco** | Senior Vice  
President of Healthcare Safety  
CENTEGIX

# A Layered Approach to Addressing Workplace Violence

## Understanding the Need

Workplace violence in healthcare is a complex issue that requires a **multifaceted, layered prevention strategy**. Panel members emphasized that true workplace safety stems from an **integrated approach** that combines physical security measures, staff training, and immediate alert systems, all supported by a commitment from organizational leadership.

## Assessment and Implementation

Forum speakers underscored the need for **customized strategies** based on an organization's unique risks and workplace culture. Kala Bettis, Vail Health Behavioral Health, described the assessments her clinic completed before discussing solutions. "We started scheduling security assessments, really recognizing what people had at their disposal versus what [we were] missing. And we decided to implement enhancements to our existing protocols to improve safety." Bettis also recounts their internal reporting audits. "It provided a lot of data [and] tracking to see what type of incidents were taking place."

**Involving frontline staff** in safety planning is key to identifying vulnerabilities and increasing engagement. Bettis describes concerns that were elevated by the front desk staff. "We recognized

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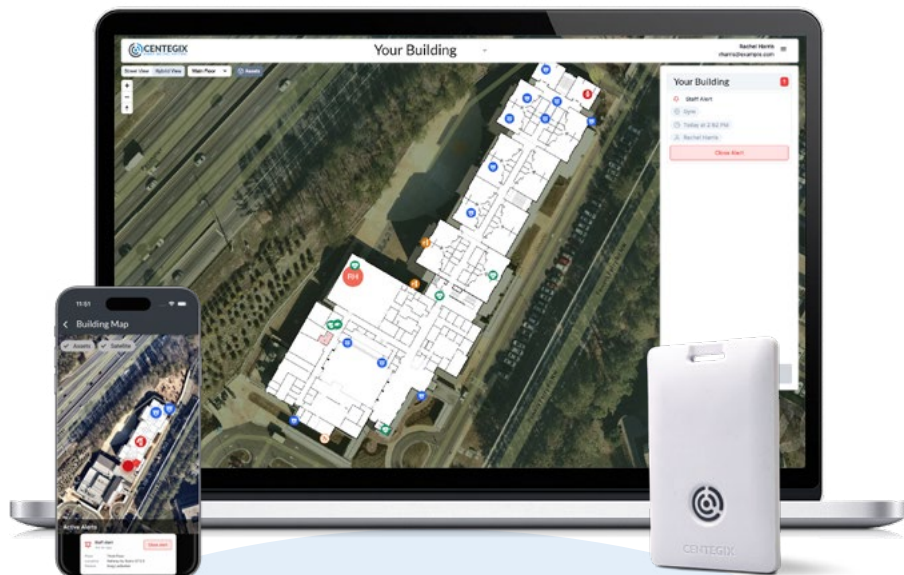


**Kala Bettis, MA, LSC, LAC, LPC**  
Integrated Behavioral Health Supervisor  
Vail Health Behavioral Health



that they didn't feel comfortable... anything could walk through our doors. And we just didn't have those things in place that could really protect them."

Many organizations have adopted **incident-tracking tools** to monitor security incidents and trends. Security cameras, electronic access control, wearable panic buttons, and visitor management systems help staff respond **swiftly** and **efficiently** when threats arise. Health systems can also leverage **collaborative partnerships with law enforcement** to better prepare for large-scale threats. "Meeting with law enforcement [helped us] see other things



that were happening in the community that could also affect our healthcare system,” shared Bettis.

## Improving Safety Campus-Wide

Vail Health was **mindful in their approach** to enhance safety without contributing to the stigma surrounding behavioral health patients. They wanted to ensure they were best serving everyone—patients and staff alike—and communicated so appropriately.

“It feels very resourceful knowing we have a team of responders attached to [the CrisisAlert] system...[they] know exactly what is needed and have that immediate response time; that makes us feel that much more protected for everyone on campus”, says Bettis.

In summary, a **layered approach is the most effective strategy** for mitigating workplace violence in healthcare. By implementing strong leadership policies, proactive prevention measures, and real-time crisis response, organizations can significantly improve safety in healthcare settings.

“We must invest in a culture where workplace violence is not tolerated. A zero-tolerance approach, backed by layered solutions, is critical to ensuring healthcare workers feel safe and supported.”



ANDREA GRECO

“There is no one answer. There are a whole series of layered solutions that work together to be effective. And that’s really where we need to focus.”



ELISA ARESPACHAGA



## ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



### No single solution can prevent workplace violence.

Pursue a layered approach, combining strategies tailored to your organization’s unique needs.



### Listen to the frontlines.

At Vail Health, employees voiced concerns and leadership responded. Engage staff when you conduct assessments and evaluate and implement solutions.



### Leverage technology as enhancements.

Tools like CrisisAlert™ help accelerate response times but must be integrated with human strategies to maximize effectiveness.



### You can balance safety and stigma.

Communicate that safety enhancements benefit staff and patients, and consider how your approach impacts everyone.



### Collaboration is critical.

Utilize staff meetings to foster alignment and clarity. Leverage law enforcement and safety experts to refine planning.

# The Impact of Safety on Employee Well-Being and Patient Care

## Safety as the Foundation for Healthcare Excellence

Healthcare workers **cannot provide high-quality care** if they fear for their safety. When employees feel unsafe, their stress levels increase, leading to **compromised patient outcomes, decreased job satisfaction, and higher turnover rates**.

Organizations prioritizing **physical and psychological safety** create an environment where employees can focus on patient care without distraction or fear. “We’d been on a journey with patient safety, error prevention, and high reliability since 2013,” described Jay Martindale from Infirmiry Health. At Infirmiry, workplace safety recently made its way onto the organization’s scorecard of priorities. “One of the first things we did was survey the employees specifically about workplace violence...from that, we formulated a plan.”

## The Direct Connection Between Staff Safety and Patient Care

Panelists shared compelling data on how **improved workplace safety correlates directly with better patient experiences**. Patients are more likely to receive high-quality care when their providers feel secure and supported.

At Vail Health Behavioral Health, a focus on staff well-being has **significantly impacted retention and morale**. After implementing

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**Kim Goodrich** | Community Mental Health Center Program Improvement Director | Vail Health Behavioral Health



**Jay Martindale** | Director of Organizational Development and Employee Engagement | Infirmiry Health



CrisisAlert™, employees reported feeling more secure, which translated to **better patient engagement**.

Kim Goodrich from Vail Health Behavioral Health described an unexpected benefit of enhancing safety with CrisisAlert™. “We found that it has become a really useful tool for when people feel a little out of their league in terms of the care that the person in front of them needs. We have seen a couple of scenarios where the person at the front desk perhaps





didn't feel threatened, but the person presenting was obviously in distress and needed a level of care that [employee] wasn't able to provide... So being able to discreetly use [CrisisAlert] and call for assistance really helped make sure that patient and the family members got the care that they needed."

## Promoting Your Efforts

Panelists also discussed the importance of a **strong communication plan** after investing in safety enhancements. "We encourage communication from the beginning because it pulls people in and invites them to become engaged in the adoption of solutions," explains Andrea Greco from CENTEGIX. "Explain 'why did we choose to make an investment in your safety? How are we doing this? How is this a part of our culture? How does this fold into our existing policies and procedures?' And so on."

Panelists concluded that by investing in workplace safety, organizations not only protect their employees, but also **enhance patient care and overall workforce resilience**.

"We have the opportunity to talk with organizations that focus their efforts on improving safety and ensuring that their organization feels like they have a culture focused on safety being a priority— safety for them, safety for their patients... We know that that translates to a happier, more engaged workforce. And when they're feeling happier and more engaged, that allows them to perform at the highest level."



ANDREA GRECO

"Employees want to feel safe at work. There are so many demands on healthcare workers now just from taking care of the patient and taking care of the families...the last thing they need to think about and worry about is their safety."



JAY MARTINDALE



## ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



### Employee safety drives engagement and retention.

Unsafe environments contribute to burnout, turnover, and poor patient care.



### Early orientation is key.

Both organizations introduce de-escalation training and tools like CrisisAlert™ during employee orientation. Calling for assistance is always supported.



### Safety tools can enhance patient care.

Staff leverage wearable duress buttons not just during physical threats, but also when clinical assistance is urgently needed.



### Communication builds trust.

Leaders encourage regular story-sharing and transparency to normalize the use of safety solutions and maintain a high sense of connectedness.



### A culture of safety must be hardwired.

Make duress badges part of everyday attire, policies, and culture to ensure long-term adoption.

# From Defense to Offense: Leveraging Data to Drive Continuous Improvement

## The Role of Data in Workplace Safety

It's important that healthcare organizations prepare to prevent, rather than **react** to, workplace violence. This session emphasized the **power of data analytics** in shifting from a reactive to a **proactive approach**.

Eddie Jones leads this approach at CHRISTUS Health, including combating underreporting. "Because of our program and how we train, this is really getting rid of that underreporting notion... we've seen an increase in reporting, which is what we want."

Once you establish accurate reporting, you can paint a clear picture of what your organization is facing in terms of workplace violence. By collecting and analyzing data from incident reports, wearable alert systems, and security logs, hospitals can **identify patterns, predict high-risk situations, and deploy resources strategically**.

Andrea Greco explained how CrisisAlert™ wearable duress buttons gather trend data. "**45% of all the alerts that come across our platform are behavior-related** in some way, meaning either a patient, family member, or staff are involved in some kind of unwelcome behavior," Greco explains. CrisisAlert™ data

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**Eddie Jones**  
Director of Security Operations  
CHRISTUS Health



indicates the **highest number of alerts nationally were sent on Fridays, Saturdays, and Wednesdays**, and most frequent alert times fell **between 1:00-3:00 PM**.

Jones validates that trend, saying it "absolutely lines up with our own internal tracking data." By identifying this, Jones was able to reallocate staff to cover high-risk times. "It went a long way with proving that our security team and clinical partners are **one big giant team**, and we're **here to support each other**."

## Leveraging the Data to Drive Proactivity

Panelists discussed several ways leaders can use their data in workplace violence prevention efforts,



including **tracking incident locations, times, and trends**. This helps organizations **predict where workplace violence is most likely to occur** and **adjust resources accordingly**. Making **proactive adjustments**, such as modified security schedules and targeted de-escalation training, can lead to a tangible reduction in incidents. Jones added that his team has recommended changes to their prevention training program to address newly observed high-risk behaviors, like hair-pulling—a trend identified through incident audits.

Forum leaders also shared best practices for reviewing collected data. They agreed **monthly and quarterly reviews are ideal**, with monthly meetings intended to **review incident data and emerging trends** and quarterly meetings to **address confirmed trends and response efforts**.

Jones shared three additional items the CHRISTUS team is evaluating in the spirit of continuous improvement:

- An **Incident Checklist**, so after a traumatic event, there's an easy way to ensure all proper steps are taken for recording and support.
- **Wearable Staff Duress Badges**, to accelerate response times and help the clinical team feel safer while on shift.
- A **Workplace Violence Coordinator** role to streamline reporting and analyze safety trends.

“Even after you implement a safety plan, you have to continuously be monitoring it, evaluating it, and improving and addressing the challenges you face. To do that, you need to know where the opportunities are, and that takes data.”



ELISA ARESPACOHAGA

“There’s no one solid answer to workplace violence, but tracking those trends has really helped us to identify a couple of areas where we can strengthen our program and training.”



EDDIE JONES



## ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS



### Reporting must be easy and encouraged.

Make reporting accessible to ensure accurate incident data, which is critical for building impactful safety strategies.



### Near-misses matter.

Tracking these insights have helped leaders identify areas of concern and agitation patterns.



### Use data to inform resource allocation.

CHRISTUS restructured security shifts after data showed violence spiked during off-hours, allowing for timely security presence without increased budget.



### Continuous review drives improvement.

Workplace violence committees should meet monthly and quarterly to review all data and make system-wide adjustments.



## Building a Long-Lasting Culture of Safety

The AHA Affinity Forum reinforced that **healthcare organizations must move beyond compliance-based safety measures and invest in long-term cultural change**. By combining a layered security approach, staff empowerment, and data-driven decision-making, healthcare leaders can create safer environments for employees and patients alike.

### Next Steps for Healthcare Leaders:

- Develop and reinforce a **zero-tolerance policy** for workplace violence.
- Prioritize **both physical and psychological safety** for employees.
- Invest in building a **layered and comprehensive approach** tailored to your needs.
- Leverage **data analytics** to continuously refine safety strategies.

By making workplace safety a **strategic priority**, healthcare organizations can reduce violence, retain skilled employees, and improve patient care overall.

To explore how CENTEGIX can help you create a culture of safety, visit [www.CENTEGIX.com/healthcare](http://www.CENTEGIX.com/healthcare).

To watch the Affinity Forum on demand, [click here](#).



*The American Hospital Association (AHA) Associate Program connects the business community with AHA members, encouraging the exchange of ideas and exploration of new solutions. AHA Associates have a shared commitment to the AHA's mission of advancing care in America.*

