

Local 196 SPOTLIGHT



Violence Against Nurses Is Rising – And It Must Stop

Violence – whether physical or verbal – is never acceptable. Yet for far too many nurses, it has become a regular part of the job.

Every day, nurses show up to provide skilled, compassionate care in hospitals, long-term care centres, and community settings. But their ability to deliver safe and effective care is compromised when they are placed in volatile and dangerous situations. A health care system cannot function properly if the people holding it together are not safe.

Recent events highlight just how serious this issue has become. On Christmas Day, a health care worker at Alberta Hospital Edmonton sustained serious injuries after allegedly being assaulted by two male patients. Incidents like this are not isolated – they are symptoms of a system under strain.

In many cases, violence faced by nurses and their health care co-workers could be prevented. Chronic understaffing, overcrowded emergency departments, long wait times, and a lack of community-based care all contribute to escalating tensions within health care settings.

When nurses are overworked and patients are waiting too long for care, the risk of violence increases – and everyone suffers.

In October 2025, UNA leaders joined representatives from other provincial nurses' unions to meet with provincial health ministers, including Alberta Health Ministers Adriana LaGrange and Matt Jones. Nurses' unions are demanding concrete solutions, including:

- Investment in training and prevention programs for workers and in-house security
- Mandated minimum nurse-patient ratios to reduce excessive workloads that heighten risk
- Strong enforcement of the Criminal Code and OHS legislation, including penalties for negligent employers
- Installation of violence-prevention infrastructure such as surveillance cameras, weapons detection systems, and personal alarms



According to UNA's 2025 annual membership survey:

- Four in ten Alberta nurses reported experiencing physical violence at work
- Six in ten reported experiencing non-physical violence, including verbal abuse, threats, and harassment

"In what workplace is it acceptable to be kicked, punched, pushed, spit at or strangled; where insults and threats are hurled at you but you are expected to continue working without support?"

– Ontario Nurses' Association. "Code Black and Blue"

If a nurse or health care worker faces an immediate hazard that could result in serious injury or death:

1. Contact onsite Protective Services immediately
2. Call local police or RCMP

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"Nurses and health care workers in every sector – from home care to acute care – face appalling levels of violence and harassment from coast to coast to coast. Our political leaders must urgently signal their intention to protect nurses and health care workers from this scourge, using every tool at their disposal."

- Linda Silas, President, CFNU

Employers Have a Legal Duty to Protect Workers

Employers are legally required to provide safe workplaces and to educate workers on how to report health and safety concerns, including workplace violence.

Part 27 of Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Code requires employers to develop and implement violence and harassment prevention plans, including reporting and investigation procedures. Workers also have a legal obligation to report incidents and hazards so that employers can be held accountable and corrective actions taken.

Reporting Matters

Reporting incidents of violence, injuries, and near misses is critical. These incidents must be reported through **MySafetyNet (MSN)**. For more information click [HERE](#)

Nurses can request a complete copy of their report, including identified corrective actions.

UNA members are also encouraged to complete a [UNA OHS Form](#) so the union, local, and Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee can advocate for solutions and accountability.

Alberta Is Not Alone: What Other Provinces Are Doing

Ontario

The Ontario Nurses' Association has launched high-profile public awareness campaigns, including the Code Black and Code Blue advertisements, to expose the reality of violence nurses face daily. These campaigns make clear that violence is not "part of the job" and call on the government to address unsafe staffing levels, inadequate security, and systemic underfunding that put nurses and patients at risk.

Manitoba

The Manitoba Nurses Union (MNU) has made workplace violence a central advocacy issue, providing resources, education, and strong public pressure on employers and government. MNU continues to push for prevention strategies, proper reporting, and accountability when violence occurs – emphasizing that awareness alone is not enough without enforcement and resourcing.

British Columbia

The BC Nurses' Union has been running its long-standing campaign, Violence: Still Not Part of the Job, calling for concrete action including improved staffing, better reporting systems, and stronger employer responsibility. BCNU has consistently highlighted that normalization of violence in health care must end.

UNA Is Here to Support You

Violence against nurses is not part of the job. Across Canada, nurses are speaking out and demanding better. Protecting nurses protects patients, and meaningful action cannot wait.

Nurses with concerns about threats or violence in their workplace can contact a UNA Labour Relations Officer or Occupational Health & Safety Advisor at 1-800-252-9394 or nurses@una.ca