



Safety in the Healthcare Workplace: Know Your Rights

*Patients and caregivers won significant improvements in safety **with** the Safe Patient Handling Act, and the Violence Prevention in Health Care Facilities Act was **enacted** in January 2008.*

Healthcare workers deserve a safe workplace free from preventable injuries and violence. New Jersey laws protect caregivers and patients through two key acts:

The laws apply to all NJ hospitals, nursing homes, State developmental centers, and State and county psychiatric hospitals. By mandating that programs be developed by committees comprising at least 50% frontline staff, the laws provide covered employers and their employees with the opportunity to collaborate on reducing injuries to caregivers and their patients, enhancing the recruitment and retention of frontline staff, and lowering healthcare costs.

The Safe Patient Handling Act

Healthcare workers often face serious, even permanent injuries, when lifting or moving patients without equipment. This law ensures facilities take steps to prevent these injuries.

What Employers Must Do

- Develop and post a Safe Patient Handling Policy visible to staff, patients, and visitors.
- Create a Safe Patient Handling Committee with at least 50% frontline healthcare workers to plan and oversee the program.
- Provide training during paid work hours on safe patient handling practices.
- Maintain mechanical lift equipment and a 3-year plan to purchase new devices as needed.
- Establish protocols for assessing each patient's handling needs.
- Educate patients and families about safe handling procedures.

Your Rights

- Work in a facility that minimizes unassisted patient handling.
- Get a copy of your employer's Safe Patient Handling Program.
- Participate in the Safe Patient Handling Committee.
- Have a union voice in committee representation (where applicable).
- Refuse unsafe handling tasks without fear of retaliation.

The Violence Prevention in Healthcare Facilities Act

Healthcare workers face physical and verbal threats daily, from patients, visitors, or even coworkers. This law protects your right to a safe and respectful workplace.

What Employers Must Do

- Establish a Workplace Violence Prevention Committee (50% frontline staff).
- Conduct an annual violence risk assessment covering facility layout, security, lighting, and incident records.
- Develop and enforce a Violence Prevention Plan addressing training, staffing, and safety devices.
- Provide annual training on prevention, de-escalation, and reporting.
- Offer crisis response and counseling for affected employees.
- Keep detailed records of all violent incidents and follow-up actions.

Your Rights

- Work in a facility that minimizes violence and assault risks.
- Participate in the Workplace Violence Prevention Committee.
- Access your facility's risk assessment and prevention plan.
- Receive violence prevention training.
- Report violent incidents without fear of retaliation.
- Receive support and counseling if you experience or witness workplace violence.

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