



October 2022

Code Silver

Violence in health care settings

It is an unfortunate reality that active attacker events at workplaces are becoming more common, and health care workplaces are no different. In British Columbia we have heard of [violent attacks](#) and [threats of violence](#) in emergency departments and hospitals across the province. Indeed, across the country we have heard [similar stories](#) on the news. Staff have been threatened, people have been harmed and others have been killed because of an individual or individuals actively engaging in attempting to harm or kill with a weapon.

The nursing profession has [signaled the alarm](#) on violence for many years, with nurses often bearing the brunt of attacks. These stories are well-documented, deeply upsetting and have led to changes to the ways in which health care settings prepare for and mitigate against these attacks.

According to a Canadian Federation of Nurses Union (CFNU) [national report](#) on workplace violence it was noted that 61% of nurses reported a problem with violence at their work sites over a 12-month period and that violence related lost-work claims had increased by approximately 66% over a nine-year period. The report also noted that this rate of violence is roughly three times greater than the rate for police or correctional offices combined.

What is Code Silver?

Health Emergency Management of British Columbia (HEMBC), the program responsible for emergency management that supports all of BC's health authorities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health has developed a 'Code Silver' alert which will be implemented across health authorities over the next year.

Code Silver provides the foundation on which the principles of safety during an active weapons attack are based. The code outlines policies and procedures that staff at health care facilities should follow in the event of an active weapons attack. Ensuring that staff, residents, patients, and clients are protected from harm is of paramount importance and understanding how to protect people in what are often evolving situations is critical.

How to sign up for training

- Training is now open for clinical and non-clinical staff in any health care or corporate setting.
- Offered through the Learning Hub, this potentially life-saving training is quick to complete.
- Learn more about how to [register for online education](#) and [click here](#) to learn more about HEMBC.

Key Messages

- Active attacker events have occurred at health care work sites not only within British Columbia but across Canada.
- These active attacker events have resulted in harm and even death.
- As a profession, nursing has sounded the alarm on violence, of all manners, in health care settings for decades.
- Stories of nurses across this province who have suffered violence at work are well-documented.
- Code Silver, a collaboration between HEMBC and the Ministry of Health, is a program that outlines policies and procedures in the event of an active weapons attack.
- Code Silver will be rolled out across all health authorities over the next year.
- Registration for [online 'Code Silver' education](#) is now open.