

Vaaler Senior Care Educational Post

Active Shooter

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A Gun Shot Is Heard...

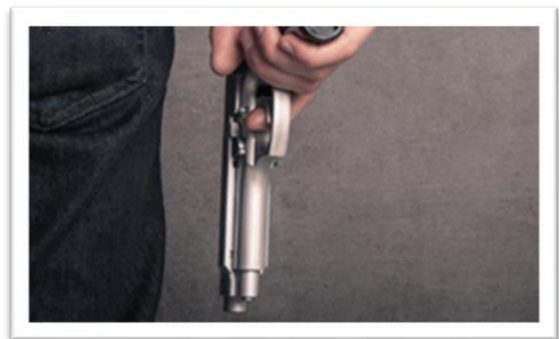
(This story was created by the author for illustration purposes only and does not represent an actual event or people.)

Mary has worked in your dietary department for the past seven months. She is known to be quiet and reserved with a warm and caring personality. Today Mary comes to work with significant bruising on the right side of her face and she has a black eye. She is wearing a long-sleeved turtleneck shirt, which is unusual for Mary because the dietary department is often very warm. You ask Mary if she is OK, and she tells you that she slipped down the stairs at home carrying a basket of laundry and hit her face. She assures you that her face looks worse than it feels, and she is prepared to complete her work shift. You encourage her to let you know if there is anything that you can do for her.

About two hours into the shift, Mary asks to see you in private. She explains that her husband is planning to eat lunch with her today. Mary tells you that her husband has been angry at home lately and she is hoping that he does not yell at her while they are together. You ask Mary if her husband is violent at home. She says he has a short fuse and often has angry outbursts, but he is not physically violent.

You suggest that perhaps it would be better if he came another day. Mary quickly tells you that changing the plans will make him very angry. You thank Mary for sharing this information with you, knowing that sharing personal information such as this can be very difficult. You remind Mary that safety is a priority at the organization—her safety as well as the safety of other staff, residents, and family members. Mary is asked to immediately notify a supervisor if she feels unsafe or concerned about her husband being in the facility.

Mary's husband arrives and signs in as a visitor. He is pleasant and has a casual conversation with the person at the desk. Mary is notified that her husband has arrived. As Mary approaches the front entrance, her husband pulls a handgun out of his coat pocket and shoots Mary. The team member at the welcoming desk is also shot as she screams and picks up the phone to call the police.



Preparing for an Active Shooter

Gunshots are heard in a resident's room, the dining area, or the front entrance. Are your staff trained to respond? Will their actions include recognition and response to save lives, providing first-aid and triage in a safe and secure area, notifying key emergency response providers, and providing clear and actionable directions to residents, families, and staff before emergency personnel arrive?¹ Many active shooting incidents end before law enforcement officers are on the scene.²

And the Headlines Read...

- ***“Rochester Man, 83, Fatally Shoots Lifelong Partner, 89, in Nursing Home Murder-Suicide, Say Police”***
- People. September 12, 2021³
- ***“MCSO investigating deadly double shooting at Sun City assisted living facility”*** - abc15. Arizona. January 16, 2022⁴
- ***“Maryland senior housing shooting kills 2; suspect held”***
“Two staff members were fatally shot Friday at a Maryland apartment complex for seniors just outside of Washington, D.C., and a suspect was taken into custody, police said.”
- WBLT3. October 8, 2021⁵
- ***“Man, 95, accused of fatally shooting assisted living center employee”***
“A 95-year-old man living at an assisted living facility in Colorado was arrested Wednesday after allegedly shooting an employee who owed him money, authorities said.”
- New York Post. February 3, 2021⁶



Saving Lives Requires Facility Preparation and a Plan

The key elements of preparation include assessment, planning, training, incident response, post-incident response, debriefing, psychological first aid, and response evaluation. Consider the following as a starting point when developing an emergency management plan for an active shooter incident:

- Conduct an annual vulnerability and security assessment of the facility. Ask healthcare team members what concerns them about the security of the facility. Regularly review and analyze security incidents and reports of suspicious behavior. Report event trends and action plans through the safety committee.
- Train staff to recognize and report escalating and suspicious behavior and incidents of workplace violence
- Develop a written plan for active shooter response that includes, but is not limited to⁷
 1. How to report an active shooter incident
 2. Local/area emergency response agency phone numbers

3. Lockdown procedures
4. An evacuation plan with policy and procedures, including when primary routes are unusable
5. Emergency escape procedures and route assignments (i.e., floor plans, safe areas)
6. Incident command responsibilities and location, law enforcement may request a separate command center
7. Incident communication plan (internal and external) including residents, family members, and staff. Provide plain language communication and directions. Include a plan for individuals with language barriers⁷
8. Select “effective shelter in place locations (optimal locations have thick walls, solid doors with locks, minimal interior windows, first aid emergency kits, communication devices, and telephones or duress alarms)”⁸
9. Availability of current building information for first responders (e.g., floor plans, elevator shut-down locations, location of security cameras)
10. Responsibility for building access control and building access parking for emergency vehicles (e.g., first responders, family and visitors, media)

- Develop and review the response plan with external emergency response agencies at least annually
- Train for an active shooter incident with emergency response agencies
- Identify an Active Incident Response Plan for staff and Key Communication Language – two examples are noted:

Run, Hide, Fight –

1. Run – is to immediately evacuate the area
2. Hide – seek a secure place where you can hide and/or deny the shooter access
3. Fight – where your life or the lives of others are at risk, you may make the personal decision to try to attack and incapacitate the shooter to survive⁹



4 A's Active Shooter Response –

1. Accept that an emergency is occurring.
2. Assess what to do next so that you can save as many lives as possible, which depends on your location.
3. Act: Lockdown (lock and barricade the doors, turn off the lights, have residents get on the floor and hide, as able) or evacuate or fight back (last resort)
4. Alert law enforcement and security¹⁰

- Establish a formal plan and responsible person for staff, residents, family, and media communication during and after the event
- Identify a formal process for staff debriefing and psychological first aid
- Develop a formal process for resident and family support post-incident
- Evaluate the response plan post-event and establish action steps as needed

Security Plan

A security assessment is completed annually. The facility security plan reflects security vulnerabilities and proactive recognition, reporting and response for security events. Staff are trained on orientation and annually regarding their responsibilities.



A facility security plan includes:

- All staff and vendors properly display an approved identification badge
- Visitors, volunteers, and vendors sign-in and sign-out when entering and exiting the facility
- Staff are asked to report any unusual or suspicious activity
- Regular, documented security rounds are conducted
- Security events are reported, investigated, and trended with appropriate corrective action
- Locked doors remain closed and locked at all times
- Codes on doors with keypad access are changed at specified intervals and codes are only given to employees with a need for access
- The organization maintains a culture of respect with guidelines for workplace behavior
- “Empower employees who come in contact with individuals who seem lost or are obviously not familiar to their surroundings to be helpful and ask if they can be of assistance”
- “The plan should include information security processes, including compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.”

“Modern health care settings can be the site for unusual and dangerous activities. Some facilities have opted to construct safe rooms. Such rooms are designated spaces where staff, patients and even visitors can retreat to in the event of an immediate threat of danger. A designated safe room should be equipped with a duress button, telephone, and reinforced doors.”

Source - Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council. Active Shooter Planning and Response in a HealthCare Setting. [2017] [Active shooter planning and response in a healthcare setting](#) — FBI [Accessed July 13, 2023]

Resources for Healthcare Organizations

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- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. [Active Shooter Preparedness Workshop/Webinar and Resources | CISA](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
- Department of Homeland Security. Hospitals & Healthcare Facilities Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places. [Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities: Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places \(cisa.gov\)](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
- Joint Commission. Quick Safety. Preparing for active shooter situations (Updated June 2021) [quick-safety-4-active-shooters-update-5-19-21.pdf \(jointcommission.org\)](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]

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2. U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation; A Study of Active Shooter Incidents Twenty Year Review 2000 – 2019 (May 2021) <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-20-year-review-2000-2019-060121.pdf> [Accessed July 13, 2023]
3. Naledi Ushe. Rochester Man, 83, Fatally Shoots Lifelong Partner, 89, in Nursing Home Murder-Suicide, Say Police. (September 12, 2021) [Rochester Man Fatally Shoots Partner in Nursing Home Murder-Suicide | PEOPLE.com](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
4. abc15.com staff. MCSO investigating deadly double shooting at Sun City assisted living facility. (January 16, 2022) [MCSO investigating deadly double shooting in Sun City \(abc15.com\)](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]

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6. Elizabeth Elizalde. Man, 95, accused of fatally shooting assisted living center employee. (February 3, 2021). [Man, 95, accused of shooting assisted living employee \(nypost.com\)](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency. Incorporating Active Shooter Incident Planning into Health Care Facility Emergency Operations Plans. [2014]. [Incorporating Active Shooter Incident Planning into Health Care Facility Emergency Operations Plans \(phe.gov\)](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
8. Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council. Active Shooter Planning and Response in a HealthCare Setting. [2017] [Active shooter planning and response in a healthcare setting — FBI](#) [Accessed July 13, 2023]
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

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