

CODE BERT and REST support staff in the event of workplace violence

Workplace violence is on the rise and more assaults occur in health care and social services than any other industry. Washington Hospital has implemented a comprehensive approach to provide early intervention in the case of a violent incident, reduce the risk of injury to patients or staff, and support staff following the event.

Due to increasing patient and family disruptive behaviors, a multidisciplinary group including direct care nurses, social workers, case managers, security, and Hospital leadership recognized the need for an immediate team response. To augment our disruptive patient policy, the group developed “Code BERT” (Behavioral Emergency Response Team) to get the right resources to the right place at the right time.

When announced overhead, Code BERT provides a quick support response team for staff members and physicians. Their immediate goal is to de-escalate patients or their visitors who are exhibiting aggressive behavior by threatening themselves, other patients, personnel or Hospital property.

In addition to implementation of Code BERT, it was determined that additional support was needed for staff members after a traumatic workplace event. Again, a multidisciplinary group including nurses, social workers, Hospital administrators and representatives from human

resources and pastoral care worked together to develop the REST (Resilience and Emotional Support Team) program.

REST is an innovative approach that puts in place a cascading set of actions by support team members who provide timely emotional and physical support to staff following a traumatic workplace incident. Help may come in the form of relieving the employee for a break, a call from their supervisor or consultation with a spiritual care provider. REST support can be initiated by any staff member; the response depends on the specific needs of the individual affected and the nature of the event.

Code BERT and REST were uniquely designed around the needs of Washington Hospital. These programs have already proven successful in supporting staff before, during and after a traumatic event, so staff can continue to deliver high-quality, compassionate patient care in a comfortable, safe environment.



Members of our multidisciplinary Code BERT and REST teams include nurses, social workers and pastoral care professionals. (From left) Emily Cipola, BSN, RN; Steve Nguyen, BSN, RN, PCCN; Jeffrey Finley, MDiv; Michael Platzbecker, MSN, RN, CEN; Anne Fulton, BSN, RN, PCCN; Phillip Watley; Ailish Tasker, BSN, RN, PCCN; Theodore Solomon, LCSW; Laura Nguyen, BSN, RN, PHN; Jeremy Goodier, MDiv; Marissa Domingo, BSN, RN, PHN; Marites Wong, BSN, RN; Tammy Szeto, BSN, RN.