

3 Key Components of an Effective
HEALTHCARE SECURITY PROGRAM



EMERGENCY EXIT ←



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International Risk Mitigation Partners

A Lowers Risk Group Company

A visit to a healthcare facility is an inherently vulnerable experience. Patients, visitors, and staff each have their own valid concerns as they walk through the door. Patients and visitors rely on caregivers and staff to provide accurate assessments and quality care. Staff must rely on their team and the hospital administration to keep operations efficient and effective. The safety and security of the facility is often assumed and expected, without a second thought.

Today, the experience of safety and security isn't as easily created as it may have been in the past. Today it takes foresight, intentionality, planning, and precise, consistent implementation to achieve. When the experience is a seamless one, it's a sure sign of an effective healthcare security program. Without it, the risks are high and the damage can be expensive, sometimes tragic.

For these reasons, it is of utmost importance for all healthcare facilities to design, implement, and maintain effective security programs. The risks today are many and call for specialized attention.

In this whitepaper, we will take an in-depth look at what it takes to create an effective healthcare security program.

You'll learn:

- ✓ **How the current state of healthcare impacts your security strategy**
- ✓ **Specific security issues that must be addressed in a healthcare setting**
- ✓ **How healthcare security is changing**
- ✓ **A three-pronged approach to an effective healthcare security strategy**
- ✓ **When and how to engage a third-party consultant**



THE STATE OF HEALTHCARE: A STACKED SCENARIO

The current state of healthcare is heavily laden with unprecedented challenges, indicating a need for more efficient security programs. The issues are compounding to create an environment in healthcare that lies in stark contrast to what's expected—a sense of safety and security—and is resulting in a growing cry for effective security solutions.

Growing Population

A large segment of the U.S. population (the baby boomer generation) is aging. As they mature, they require more medical care. These 76.4 million Americans are not only living typical lives as seniors, they are also enjoying medical and technological advances that are helping to prolong those golden years. Because of these advances, their years of *increased healthcare needs* are even further extended.



Another growing segment of the population is the millennials. The estimated number of U.S. millennials in 2015 was 83.1 million people¹. While they aren't yet seeking care for heart attacks or strokes, they are having babies and many are suffering mood disorders such as depression or anxiety², as well as weight issues or obesity and drug or alcohol addiction. **About 28 percent of millennials are on medication**, and of this group, 23 percent are taking antidepressants³.

The sheer number of people requiring health care is bigger than ever.

¹ Bureau, US Census. "Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse". www.census.gov. Retrieved 5 October 2015.

² www.BenefitsPro.com

³ www.Businesswire.com



Strained Economy

As a second factor, the economy is putting tremendous pressure on the healthcare systems from multiple perspectives. Reimbursements continue to decline year over year⁴ and are harder to collect within the increasingly complex insurance system.

In addition, consumers are more challenged than ever to afford their own care—sometimes resulting in an outright inability to pay for care. Many baby boomers are on fixed incomes and many millennials are struggling with employment.



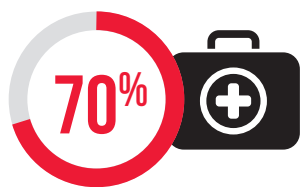
20%

While median incomes dropped on average by more than 8% 2000-2012, healthcare costs rose on average by more than 20% during that same period. This gap is creating stress for care providers and patients alike.

Economic factors on both sides—earnings from and paying for care—are straining the healthcare environment.

Rising Violence

Across the country, violence continues to explode. Healthcare facilities are facing a significant increase in multidirectional acts of aggression from personnel, patients, and visitors. In 2013, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported more than 23,000 significant injuries due to assault at work.



More than 70 percent of those assaults were in the healthcare and social service settings.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, healthcare and social service workers are almost four times as likely to be injured because of violence as the average private sector worker.

The answer to why is as multifaceted as the problems themselves. Society is more violent. More people than ever are addicted to alcohol and drugs and more people with health issues cannot afford medical care. An aging population means that healthcare facilities are treating more people for dementia and behavioral problems. Without proper security a healthcare facility can become a “hotspot” for violence.

Even doctors do not feel safe. 59% of doctors believe health care facilities are a setting for growing concern⁵. If violence is more common and the doctors are feeling unsafe, it's likely patients are also suffering from insecurity at their medical visits.

Healthcare professionals and staff need to be extra vigilant in efforts to prevent violent crimes in hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The security team can play a larger and important role too.

⁴ Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) report

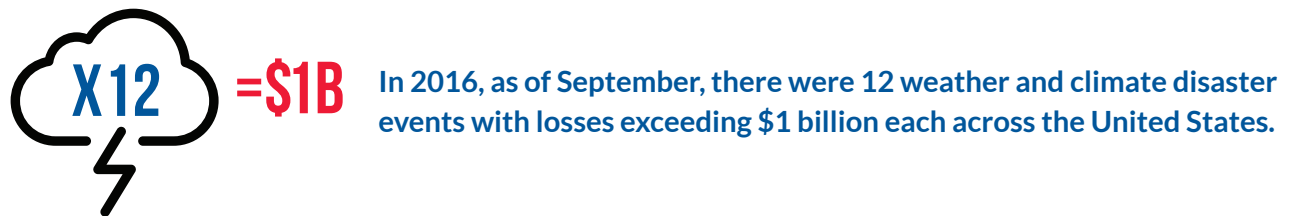
⁵ Truthoncall.com msnbc.com

Complex Regulations

Add to these factors, hefty regulations from corporate, insurance, local, state, county, and federal organizations. From patient privacy to fraud prevention protocols, from electronic medical records compliance to multi-level billing, the regulations are intensive. A complex system becomes nearly immobilized when all systems interlock to require extensive manpower just to ensure each requirement is met to the proper level of compliance.

Disaster and Disease

Whatever your position is on global warming, it is undeniable that the number of natural disasters is growing in America and across the globe.



The 1980–2015 annual average is 5.2 events; the annual average for the most recent 5 years (2011–2015) is 10.8 events⁶. Each time a disaster strikes, many people need care urgently and all at once, straining facilities and stretching a myriad of resources.

Considering the addition of other unpredictable disasters such as epidemics of communicable disease, the stack against ‘safe and secure’ is crystal clear and ever present. It’s a natural step for the security team to play a bigger role, for so many reasons.

⁶ National Centers for Environmental Information



SPECIFIC SECURITY CHALLENGES IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

While the current state of healthcare provides ample reason for a security team to be heavily involved on site at any healthcare facility, specific types of recurring incidents provide even more reasons. The presence of a security officer, security protocols, and security systems can discourage disorderly conduct, empower staff and community members, and generally cultivate a much-needed sense of safety. Prevention begins with understanding the environment.

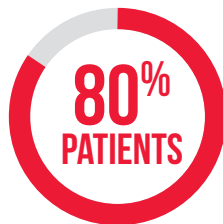
These are just some of the specific security challenges healthcare facilities face:

Increased Violence



Sadly, violence and violent crime continues to be on the rise in our country. U.S. homicides, rapes, robberies, assaults, and shootings are all up year over year. The mid-year violent crime survey released in July 2016, reports the Major Cities Chiefs Association shows **307 more homicides so far in 2016 as compared to the same period in 2015**. In addition to a large increase in homicides, major cities in the U.S. have experienced 1,000 more robberies, almost 2,000 more aggravated assaults, and 600 non-fatal shootings in 2016, compared to the same time last year⁷.

With workers from the social services and healthcare fields taking care of victims, it makes sense that these facilities become a hub for violence. The victims themselves may be engaged in some dispute creating the violent situation that culminated in requiring medical care, or they may have some degree of instability or addiction that creates a volatile environment.



In fact, 80 percent of serious violent incidents reported in healthcare settings were caused by interactions with patients. Other incidents were caused by visitors, coworkers, or other people⁸.

Some professions and settings are more at risk than others. Psychiatric aides experienced the highest rate of violent injuries that resulted in days away from work, more than 10 times higher than the next group, nursing assistants. Surveys show that high-risk areas include emergency departments, geriatrics, pediatrics, and behavioral health, among others. The most common causes of violent injuries resulting in days away from work across several healthcare occupations were hitting, kicking, beating, and/or shoving⁹.

So, while the general culture is seeing a rise in violence, healthcare is also seeing its own increase. This puts tremendous pressure on the healthcare facilities to be a haven in the community and increases the complexity of the role of on-site security.

⁷ CNN Politics, *Violent Crime Rising*

⁸ OSHA, *Workplace Violence in Healthcare*

⁹ OSHA, *Workplace Violence in Healthcare*

Abductions/Abuse

Two horrific challenges the security team must address are abductions and abuse. While no one likes to look at these circumstances, the need to protect our infants and our elderly and everyone in between from either of these instances is a sad reality.

Abuse in a healthcare facility can take many forms, from patient neglect to fraudulent billings. Some common forms of abuse in healthcare are:

- ✓ Harmful Neglect
- ✓ Assault and Battery
- ✓ Criminal Sexual Conduct
- ✓ Embezzlement/Theft ¹⁰

Infant abductions, the most common ones, can happen from various places within a healthcare facility: a mother's room, a nursery, a restroom, or other areas on premises. 8% of the time, the abduction occurs in conjunction with violence of some kind to the mother¹¹.

Security protocols can help to prevent and mitigate any of these risks when anticipated and properly put in place.

Drugs/Food/Medical Supplies Diversion and Property Theft

Healthcare facilities stock drugs and medical supplies. Whether it's a staff member stealing or theft by a robbery, these resources are at risk of being stolen or diverted. From the C-suite to the clinic floor, anyone with access can take supplies.

Beyond supplies, other property is also at risk of theft. One could likely make a complete A-Z list of items that get taken from healthcare facilities. From applesauce and air tanks, baby blankets, combs and diapers to towels, under-pads, washcloths, and zinc, the massive list of supplies is at risk 24/7 and it's not just things. Theft inside a healthcare facility can also include fraud¹².



“Incidents can—and do—range from a CFO embezzling funds through suspect accounting measures to a supply chain manager filing dummy invoices to a nurse pulling incremental inventory from the stockroom to help a neighborhood free clinic to a patient’s family taking home supplies because they feel they’ve paid for them courtesy of a hospital stay.”

— Rick Dana Barlow, *Healthcare Purchasing News*

Security protocols, staff, and systems are essential at healthcare facilities today. Without them medical care can be distracted or even disrupted and the safety of patients, visitors, and staff can be jeopardized.

¹⁰ Protecting Residents from Abuse and Neglect

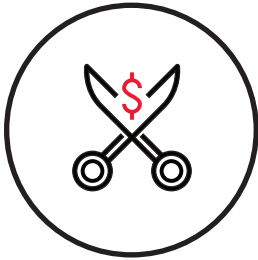
¹¹ National Center for Missing Children

¹² Healthcare Solutions Bureau

HOW SECURITY IS CHANGING

Changes in the healthcare security industry are also impacting how healthcare facilities are protected (or not). Budget cuts and technology developments represent only a portion of the evolution happening across the industry.

Pressure to Cut Costs



Economic strain goes hand in hand with efficiency. Cuts translate to smaller budgets, reduced services, and/or limited resources for installed systems, training, etc. When greater than ever need, as evidenced above, meets a tightening budget, resources do more than stretch – they can break down. The pressure to cut costs is one of the most devastating restraints to an effective security solution.

The good news here, if there is any, is like that old English proverb: “necessity is the mother of invention.” From reduced budgets, the opportunity to utilize and integrate technology arises.

High Technology



Tech improvements and additions are taking security to new heights. Automatic locking systems, badge readers, CCTVs, communication systems, and many other technology solutions are now basic components of a secure facility’s systems. These solutions make it possible for some tasks to be much more efficient and systematized.



More Data Collection



To be most effective in providing healthcare security, security departments need to focus on the prediction and prevention of crime as much as responding and managing incidents. In this way, an important part of crime prevention today is analytical and predictive.

Data collecting and analysis support more efficient security solutions as they can predict an incident before it happens. This protection happens when patterns and trends can be recorded, tracked, and translated into prospective future incidents. Once a pattern or trend is developed with a place, victim, or product, future crimes can be reduced.

Service Innovation



Innovation is an inherent part of our world today. As technology changes (frequently and rapidly) so do our service delivery systems, pretty much across the board. Security is no exception.

Security protocols must keep pace with other changes, so the actual implementation of a security system is one that shifts too. Innovations include equipment and gadgets that make systems work more efficiently—and they also include shifts around security staff and human involvement. Innovations include changes in how training can be delivered, integrating staff and community into security roles and integrating security staff as customer service.

However it evolves, what's important to remember is that healthcare security is one of the key components of making our healthcare system safe.



A 3-PART SOLUTION

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A MODERN HEALTHCARE SECURITY PROGRAM: PRESENCE, VISIBILITY, AND RESPONSE

The need is clear, crystal clear.

But how does a facility cultivate an effective security program given the limitations so naturally accompanying the need. There are three key components to a modern healthcare security program that make all the difference: Presence, Visibility, and Responsiveness.

1. Strong Security Presence



Tangible Presence

Sometimes, it is enough just to be there. Whether an officer is at an entrance or a camera is recording the scene, a tangible security presence of some kind can be enough to be considered a presence.



Intangible Presence

Even without a camera on every corner or an officer at the door, a facility can create a strong security presence. Having tight protocols that are strictly followed provides a sense of structure and stability, key intangibles to security. This kind of intangible presence comes through even in the subtlest ways, such as badges worn in the same place by everyone, or a consistent check-in and check-out protocol for absolutely everyone entering or exiting the building or service area, or standard procedures for handling medical records. Consistency is key, and is a prime example of an intangible way to convey security/control. Inconsistency can translate into an insecure feeling that a facility is just going through the motions and isn't secure.



Training

For a system to work effectively, all players need to follow the same protocols in the same way. For consistency, staff must be trained. Also, for the most effective program, training doesn't just mean learning the requirements of one role, but rather many or even all of them. Today's security system often requires cross departmental monitoring, reporting, or communication—a considerable degree of cooperation which requires cross training. Today's healthcare security system often includes staff or even community members. For an effective system, each department needs to know what's expected of them as well as others. Collectively the team can create a more informed and secure environment.



Access Control

Effective access control is quite possibly the strongest component of a healthcare security system. Restricting who is allowed into certain areas to play certain roles can be a fundamental and critical step in preventing crime and managing safe care. This also includes who has access to medications, patient data, and patients themselves. Minimizing the risk of violence within a facility starts with the control and restriction of access.



Physical Barriers

The actual structures that create physical barriers also support access control. Walls, desks, locked doors, and windows can promote safety. Control can be preventing an incident by preventing access. It can also mean containing an incident to one area. Having locked doors between one service area and another creates a secondary or layered access control points, multiplying the levels of protection on premises.

However, more barriers mean more areas to patrol, as well as routine checks and maintenance to be sure they are working as intended. While there is tremendous benefit to barriers, all considerations must be evaluated for barriers to be an effective part of a security program. If any aspect of the program fails, the perception can cause more harm and more insecurity than if the barrier wasn't there at all.



Background Screening

Because every security component is ultimately somehow supported, controlled, or at the very least maintained by a human resource, selecting and screening personnel is another critical component to a successful security program. Screening is essential not only for patrol officers on site but for every single staff person in a healthcare facility.

Background screening is not going to uncover every potential threat, but it will give an applicant pause if he/she has a criminal record, and it will tell management a story they can get ahead of when necessary. Knowledge is power, combined with monitoring data and trend tracking, background screening can be a powerful tool to manage staff placements and, ultimately, the facility environment.



2. Security Visibility



The Patient's Perspective

While the security program in a healthcare environment affects many different groups of people, the most important ones affected are the patients. When the patient experience is a positive one, the facility or program can be successful. Without patient satisfaction, it is nearly impossible to do so.

Even some reimbursement schedules are now subject to patient ratings¹³. This is intended to inspire facilities and organizations to go the extra mile to provide great care. Security is a big part of a good experience. Security officers are often the first person to greet patients as they enter a building. The success of this first impression can make or break a patient experience. The consistency of care throughout the facility at every single stage creates a feeling of security. Again, consistency is key.

With patients at the center it's important for every aspect of care, including security, to be seen through the eyes of the patient. What is it like for a stressed, hurt, or scared patient to enter, check in, receive care, fill out papers, receive visitors, be discharged? The patient experience needs to be at the center of the security program design.



Signage

As simple as it may sound, having clear signage can help a customer relax. Whether it's a patient, employee, clinician, or visitor, having clear signs that explain security protocol and point out various security features can be a welcome relief and can provide a sense of comfort. Any sense of control in an otherwise uncertain situation can be a relief.



Visible Cameras or Guards

We are here and ready to act. This message from a patient perspective means "I'm safe." Being able to say "we're looking out for you," "you're being protected," "we've got your back" is direct access to a positive patient experience. When patients and other facility customers feel safe, they can shift their attention to their care, the most important reason they are here.



Consistent Access Control Protocol

When the same rules apply for everyone coming and going, a sense of stability and safety is created. This overt exercise of power clearly communicates control. When everyone follows the same rules of dressing, wearing badges, being signed in or out, opening or closing locked areas—these simple protocols can send a strong, wide-reaching implicit message—"we have control."

3. Security Response



Once systems are in place, patient perspective is considered and security is visible, the next consideration is response. To be effective, a healthcare security system must include prompt and complete response to any issue, no matter how big or small. If a lightbulb is out, this could mean a compromised exit route, or a fear of walking to their car alone at night. For a patient, this translates to a compromise in security.

Every single issue around patient care and effective operations is a security issue and must be included as a priority response issue for the security team. For the program to work, all hospital personnel must be on the team and be willing to collectively create a culture of security, attentiveness, responsibility, and responsiveness. When this can happen, the security team can be successful and the experience for the customer can be a highly satisfying one.



THE ROLE OF A **THIRD-PARTY RISK MANAGEMENT PROVIDER**

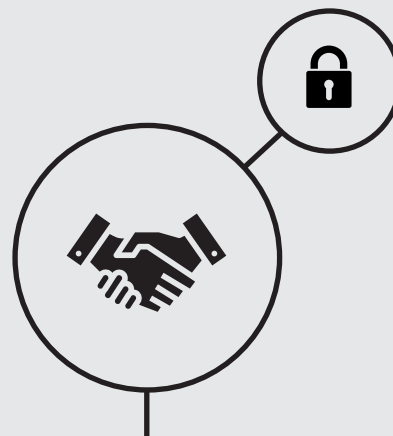
In today's high risk environment marked by violence, budget cuts, rapidly changing technology and a high level of need for a sense of security, it may be necessary to call in an outside partner for some support. A third party risk management provider can be helpful to perform a thorough assessment, to make a prioritized list of recommendations, and even to help find and implement the right solutions. If you are in a situation where you don't have the resources to take your security to the next level, but you know it's the right thing to do, considering an external support partner may be a prudent solution.

Benefits to the organization can extend far beyond avoiding violence or theft. For patients who experience a high quality of care, their experience can be remembered as an exceptional one. When surveyed (or if they are happily inspired to share), this positivity can result in a superior reputation, word of mouth referrals, attracting and retaining high quality staff, and even higher reimbursement rates. The benefits can ultimately apply to every customer of the healthcare organization from patients to the C-Suite and can be extensive.

Where to begin? If you're left with this question the answer is: with an assessment. Look at what is in place regarding Security Presence, Visibility, and Responsiveness. Here are some questions to ask to begin the inquiry:

Here are some questions to ask to begin the inquiry:

- ✓ Who is involved and engaged in protecting patients, patient data, and the care environment?
- ✓ How are those people or resources involved? Are they engaged? Are they consistent?
- ✓ Evaluate the environment from the patient's perspective. Does it feel stable and secure?
- ✓ What is the technology used and how is it used? To what end, for what purpose, by whom?
- ✓ Schedule regular reviews of any security protocols including: strategic evaluations, implementation evaluations and operational review of equipment, staff knowledge and training procedures.



CONCLUSION

Together **Presence, Visibility, and Responsiveness** demonstrates to the C-Suite along with patients, visitors, and staff that a successful security program is in place, healthy, and functioning within the healthcare organization.¹⁴

Security translates into a positive environment, a positive experience, positive ratings, and a positive bottom line. From the top of an organization to the basement, a successful security program can impact all aspects of a healthcare facility or organization. Prioritizing a healthcare security program makes dollars and sense. If you're ready to take the next step and need support, Lowers & Associates ("L&A") is here for you.

Headquartered in Northern Virginia, Lowers & Associates ("L&A") is an independent, internationally recognized risk management consulting firm. We offer a wide range of loss prevention/control, risk assessment, loss/claims investigation, audit, compliance, and related risk management services. For more than 30 years, we've helped companies manage risk and have even become an acknowledged authority on matters of crime and fidelity related risk mitigation.

For more information about L&A, please visit our website at www.lowersrisk.com.



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¹⁴ Do you speak C-Suite? The Language of Credible Healthcare Security, Ben Scaglione

