

Healthcare Security: Understanding Roles, Responsibilities, and Situations in a Hospital Setting



Healthcare security personnel and registered nurses (R/Ns) often work hand-in-hand in hospital settings to ensure the safety and well-being of patients, staff, and visitors. While both roles are crucial, it's important to understand the delineation of responsibilities. This training article outlines ten common situations where healthcare security may be called to assist, breaking down what security patrol guards are authorized to do and what registered nurses can ask of them.

Security Patrol Guards: Authorized Actions

1. Handling Discharged Patients

When a patient has been discharged and security is called, guards have the authority to escort the patient out of the patient room. Clinical staff do not have the authority to instruct security to remove the patient from the hospital premises. Security may allow the patient to wait in a designated area if they are calm, compliant, and waiting for transportation or other reasonable circumstances.

2. Assisting with Restraints

Security guards are authorized to assist clinical staff with restraining patients when requested. This often involves applying 4-point or other restraint systems under the guidance of a registered nurse.

3. Emergency Room Disturbances

Security can intervene and manage disruptive behavior in the Emergency Department, isolating the individual causing the disturbance to prevent harm to staff and patients. However, security is **not authorized** to refuse care to a patient or make a patient leave the hospital who has not been officially discharged by a doctor. Additionally, if a patient wishes to register in the Emergency Department, security is not authorized to refuse the registration.

4. Enforcement of Visitor Policy

Security guards are responsible for enforcing visitor policies such as visiting hours and the number of allowed visitors per patient. They have the authority to ask non-compliant visitors to leave.

5. Loss Prevention

Security has the authority to investigate and take necessary actions in cases of theft or vandalism within the hospital. They can also detain individuals for police when theft has been clearly observed.

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Registered Nurses: Authorized Requests

1. Assistance with Medication

Nurses can request security's presence when administering medication to potentially combative or non-compliant patients.

2. Escort Services

R/Ns may ask security to escort patients or staff to their vehicles during late hours for safety reasons.

3. Containment of Hazards

Nurses can ask security to assist in cordoning off areas where there are biohazards, pending proper cleanup.

4. Assistance with Disruptive Patients

R/Ns can request that security assist in calming down or restraining disruptive patients, particularly if the patient poses a threat to themselves or others.

5. Elevator and Door Access

In certain situations, R/Ns can request that security provide access to restricted elevators or doors within the hospital.

Understanding each role's authorized actions and requests can streamline operations and improve safety measures in a hospital setting. In any given situation, it is imperative for both security personnel and registered nurses to adhere to hospital policies and procedures, ensuring that actions are aligned with protocol and ethical standards.