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# DA Stephan Receives Scripps President's Award for Efforts to Help Reduce Hospital Violence

*DA's Office has prosecuted 125 cases in past two and a half years*

SAN DIEGO – Scripps Health President and CEO Chris Van Gorder today presented San Diego County District Attorney **Summer Stephan** with the Scripps President's Award for her leadership and partnership in efforts to help reduce crimes involving workplace violence against hospital workers across the region.

The award is the nonprofit health system's highest honor for distinguished service to patients, physicians and staff at Scripps and to the broader community. DA Stephan has played a pivotal role in the growth of the San Diego Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force and in prosecuting criminal cases that have come forward since the group began in mid-2023.

"We are deeply grateful to DA Stephan for championing the important work of our regional Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force," Van Gorder said. "Her leadership is helping us continually improve the way we protect and bring justice for frontline health care workers all across San Diego County."

A former police officer and a retired reserve assistant sheriff, Van Gorder initiated the San Diego Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force as violent incidents in Scripps' hospitals grew more common. With strong support from DA Stephan, the group has gradually grown to include leaders from various hospitals and health systems from throughout San Diego County, the DA's Office, San Diego City Attorney's office, San Diego County Sheriff's Office, various regional police departments and others. The DA's Office has put in place a special unit to handle hospital violence cases.

“It is a tremendous honor to receive the Scripps President’s Award and to stand alongside President Chris Van Gorder and our hospital partners in sending a clear message that violence against health care workers will not be tolerated,” said DA Stephan. “Our nation and region have seen an alarming rise in violence against doctors, nurses and health workers who have devoted their lives to serving others. In San Diego County, we took action to protect these selfless health professionals through the Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force, and creating a specialized team within the DA’s Office to effectively prosecute crimes committed against health workers.

“Our message is clear – You don’t get to threaten, spit on, beat, or stab the devoted hospital staff without facing justice,” DA Stephan said. “Justice in the over 100 cases we’ve prosecuted often includes addressing the root causes of the violence through court ordered mental health and substance abuse treatment. This recognition reflects the extraordinary work of our District Attorney’s Office team – especially Deputy District Attorneys Jessica Coto and Jessica Sutterley, and District Attorney Investigator Donte Kendricks, whose leadership and dedication on the Hospital Workforce Violence Task Force have strengthened protections for frontline medical professionals and helped ensure accountability for those who harm them.”

The DA’s Office has prosecuted a combined 125 cases of hospital-related violence across the region since July 2023, when it started tracking such data. This includes 88 felonies countywide and 37 misdemeanors outside of the city of San Diego. (The City Attorney’s Office prosecutes misdemeanor cases within the city of San Diego.) These prosecutions have resulted in just consequences.

Moving forward, the DA’s Office plans to report expanded statistics on how many cases occur in specific medical facilities, as well as the type of criminal charges seen most frequently.

The task force, which meets every other month, has taken several steps to help improve communication and mutual understanding of workplace violence among regional hospitals, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors’ offices. For example, the group has established liaisons between hospitals and law enforcement agencies; arranged rounding tours through hospitals by law enforcement; and improved training for both hospital staff and law enforcement officers.

Scripps has worked closely with the DA’s Office to develop an online resource to guide Scripps staff through the prosecution process and has created other educational materials on the health system’s internal employee website. Scripps also has trained its staff to help avoid injuries and de-escalate potentially violent situations; incorporated artificial intelligence into existing video surveillance cameras to identify and respond to suspicious activity; integrated hospital security officers more closely into patient care teams; and deployed metal detectors outside of some facilities.

These internal efforts at Scripps, combined with its ongoing collaboration with the task force, have yielded positive results. After the first year that the task force was in place, Scripps achieved a 31% reduction in workplace violence injuries at its five hospital campuses, compared to the previous year. And from the start of the task force through the end of 2025, Scripps has achieved a 21% reduction in workplace violence injuries.

Scripps also advocated for Assembly Bill 977, a state law implemented in 2025 that increases jail time and financial penalties for people who assault emergency department workers. And Scripps supported Senate Bill 19, which was signed by California Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2025 and allows prosecution for threats made against medical facilities, schools, houses of worship and other locations.

Health care workers account for 73% of all nonfatal workplace violence victims and are five times more likely to experience workplace violence than are other workers, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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**About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office**

*The San Diego County District Attorney's Office serves nearly 3.3 million residents in San Diego County and is the region's largest law enforcement agency responsible for prosecuting felony crimes. The office also protects the public through specialized units that address consumer protection, environmental crimes, human trafficking, elder abuse, and cybercrime. The District Attorney's Office works every day to pursue justice, protect victims, and ensure that San Diego County remains a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.*

**ABOUT SCRIPPS HEALTH**

*Founded in 1924 by philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps, Scripps Health is a nonprofit integrated health care delivery system based in San Diego, Calif. Scripps treats more than 600,000 patients annually through the dedication of more than 3,500 affiliated physicians and nearly 18,000 employees among its five acute-care hospital campuses, more than 70 outpatient and specialty locations, and hundreds of affiliated physician offices throughout the region.*

*Recognized as a leader in disease and injury prevention, diagnosis and treatment, Scripps is also at the forefront of clinical research and is the only health system in the region with two level 1 trauma centers. With highly respected graduate medical education programs at all five hospital campuses, Scripps is a longstanding member of the Association of American Medical Colleges. Scripps has been ranked seven times as one of the nation's best health care systems by Premier. Its hospitals are consistently ranked by U.S. News & World Report among the nation's best, and Scripps is recognized by the Advisory Board, Fortune and Working Mother magazine as one of the best places in the nation to work. More information can be found at [www.scripps.org](http://www.scripps.org).*