



# WVU Medicine to rollout personal staff safety alert systems in hospitals, clinics

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — In the coming weeks, WVU Medicine will start rollout of its new “Help Alert! Staff Safety System,” which will give the organization’s employees a small wearable alert pendant they can press in case of workplace violence or other emergencies.

The pendant can be adhered to the back of an employee’s ID badge, and once pressed, it will silently notify security personnel of the employee’s location anywhere on a WVU Medicine campus. WVU Medicine Chief Nursing Executive Melanie Heuston, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, noted that the technology will allow all WVU Medicine facilities to be safer for both employees and patients.

“Workplace violence is increasing year over year, and we’ve always been committed to protection for our employees,” Heuston said. “The need didn’t arise from



WVU Medicine aims to start rolling out its “Help Alert! Staff Safety System” this week. The pendant can adhere to the back of an employee’s ID badge and be pressed to silently alert security in case of workplace violence or emergencies.

WVU Medicine

one specific event. It was the commitment to the safety of our employees. This device is intended for prevention. ...



Heuston

“Employees can push the button if they feel like they need help in any way. It doesn’t have to be an overt threat against the employee. It can be used if a person’s language or body language is escalating. It could be a verbal or physical threat.”

In most cases, she said, the device will send a discreet alert to that specific facility’s security team. Heuston explained that giving WVU Medicine’s thousands of employees a uniform method of alerting security personnel — rather than each

individual facility having its own protocols — will also be a huge benefit for the new program's implementation and ease of use.

"We have nurses who float from hospital to hospital and doctors who are in one clinic and then another hospital," she said. "A Help Alert is a Help Alert. There was a reason to standardize the process and support the entire workforce."

WVU Medicine will pilot the new device at Princeton Community Hospital within the next few weeks, and Heuston said the organization hopes to have the new alert system in all WVU Medicine facilities by the end of 2026.

"Princeton will be the site where we learn how fast it goes," Heuston said. "We wanted to pick a mid-sized hospital. We've got critical access hospitals and academic medical centers. Our hope is that everything is rolled out by the end of quarter three or the beginning of quarter four of 2026. We have a schedule that's drafted, but we'll learn from the first place we do it."

Heuston said employees with whom she's spoken about the new system are looking forward to its implementation, and she hopes that enthusiasm will also help teams learn the new technology and protocols more efficiently.

"This is something that staff wants," she said. "This is going to make them feel safer, because at the touch of a button, they'll have someone respond. The beauty of this alert system is that it can be in the parking lot or anywhere at the hospital."