Two states in the Midwest have new laws in place that aim to improve the safety of nurses and other health care professionals. The Illinois General Assembly passed **HB 4100** in response to two high-profile incidents. In one case, the Chicago Tribune reports, two nurses were taken hostage after an inmate being treated at their hospital got hold of a corrections officer’s gun. One of the nurses was sexually assaulted before police fatally shot the inmate. A month later, a nursing assistant and corrections officer were taken hostage at another hospital.

The new law requires Illinois medical facilities to develop workplace violence-prevention programs (Minnesota has this type of requirement as well), establishes whistleblower protections for nurses, and creates new safety guidelines for facilities to follow when caring for an inmate.

South Dakota’s **HB 1293**, meanwhile, increases penalties for assaults committed against first-responders and medical-care workers. The American Nurses Association lists Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska and Ohio as among the other U.S. states with specific penalties for assaults against nurses. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, rates of assault against health care workers are up to 12 times higher than they are for the overall workforce.
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