

# Simply the BEST: Implementing a Behavioral Emergency Support Team

Kiersten Brelewski, MSN, APRN, AGCNS-BC; Laura Ledford, MSN, RN, CCRN; Tammy Mann, MSN, RN, NE-BC; Lacey Spangler, MSN, APRN, ACCNS-AG, CCRN

Carolinas Medical Center



## Background

- Approximately 97% of nurses are exposed to verbal or physical assaults each year.
- Many workplace violence (WPV) events occur in non-behavioral units where RNs may lack training and resources to safely manage escalating patient behaviors.
- Since 2021, WPV events in our large academic teaching facility increased by 98%.
- Our CNE identified a need for an innovative approach to combat a rise in WPV events

## Purpose

- Develop and implement a Behavioral Emergency Support Team (BEST) to decrease workplace violence (WPV) events.

## Methods

- Lean methodology was used for project implementation through use of PDSA cycles.
- Clinical Nurse Specialists collaborated with the CNE and Service Line AVP, Nurse Manager and direct care nurses of the medical/behavioral observation unit to develop and implement the BEST program.
- Developed a workplan to pilot BEST on 3 units with the highest WPV events reported in previous year.
- Determined responding stakeholders to BEST calls including RN from BH unit, Security officer, Chaplin, Supervisor of the department/On call house nursing supervisor, primary physician team member.
- Repurposed budgeted FTEs within the department to support BEST RN responder role.
- Followed a phased rollout approach beginning with 3 pilot units, adding additional units to the program every few months.
- Cultivated a debrief tool to gather data from stakeholders following a BEST call to ensure all persons were safe, identify what worked well/opportunities, note who participated in verbal de-escalation and if clear roles were established, recognize triggering factors and measures implemented before and after, along with documentation of patient outcome, injuries.
- Initiated BEST debrief forum to share BEST call experiences with peers, particularly things that went well and discuss opportunities to allow peer-peer learning.
- Supported the BEST RN Responder in proactive rounding in pilot units to reinforce BEST, provide real time education, and provide proactive assistance to teammates.

## Results

- BEST was piloted on two general units and one intensive care unit (ICU).
- Of the 113 WPV events reported in 2023, 29 events originated within the pilot units. *Figure 1*
- After BEST implementation in the pilot units, reported WPV events decreased by 69% (29 in 2023 – 9 in 2024) *Figure 2*
- Pre/post survey results revealed a 10% increase in overall safety at work, 22% increase in the perceived ability to handle escalating patient behaviors, 18% increase in confidence in medication administration in an escalating situation, and 16% increase in confidence in verbal de-escalation skills. *Illustration 1*
- Overall rating of the BEST program stands at 7.93 out of 10.

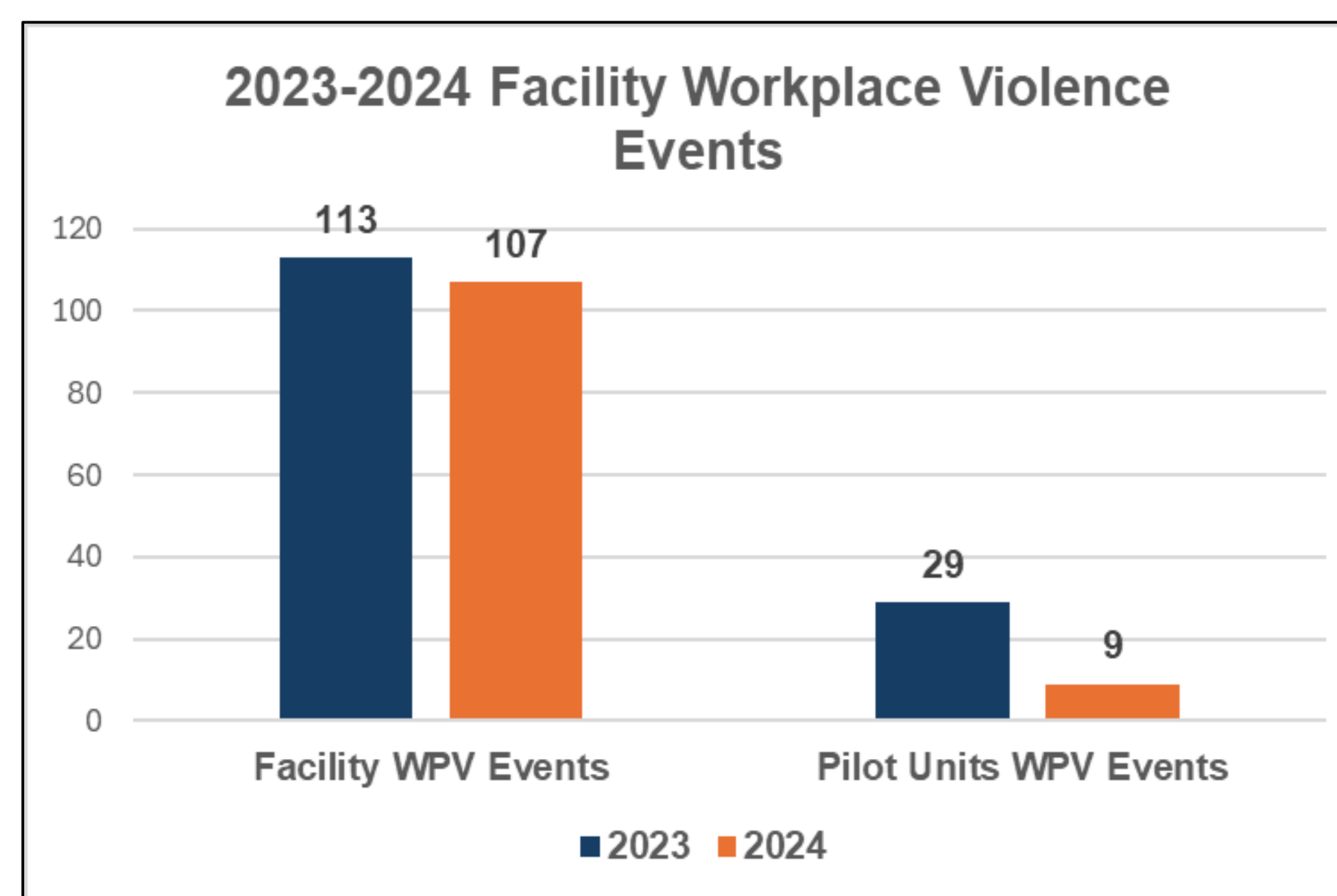


Figure 1: Total WPV Events within Facility and Pilot Units

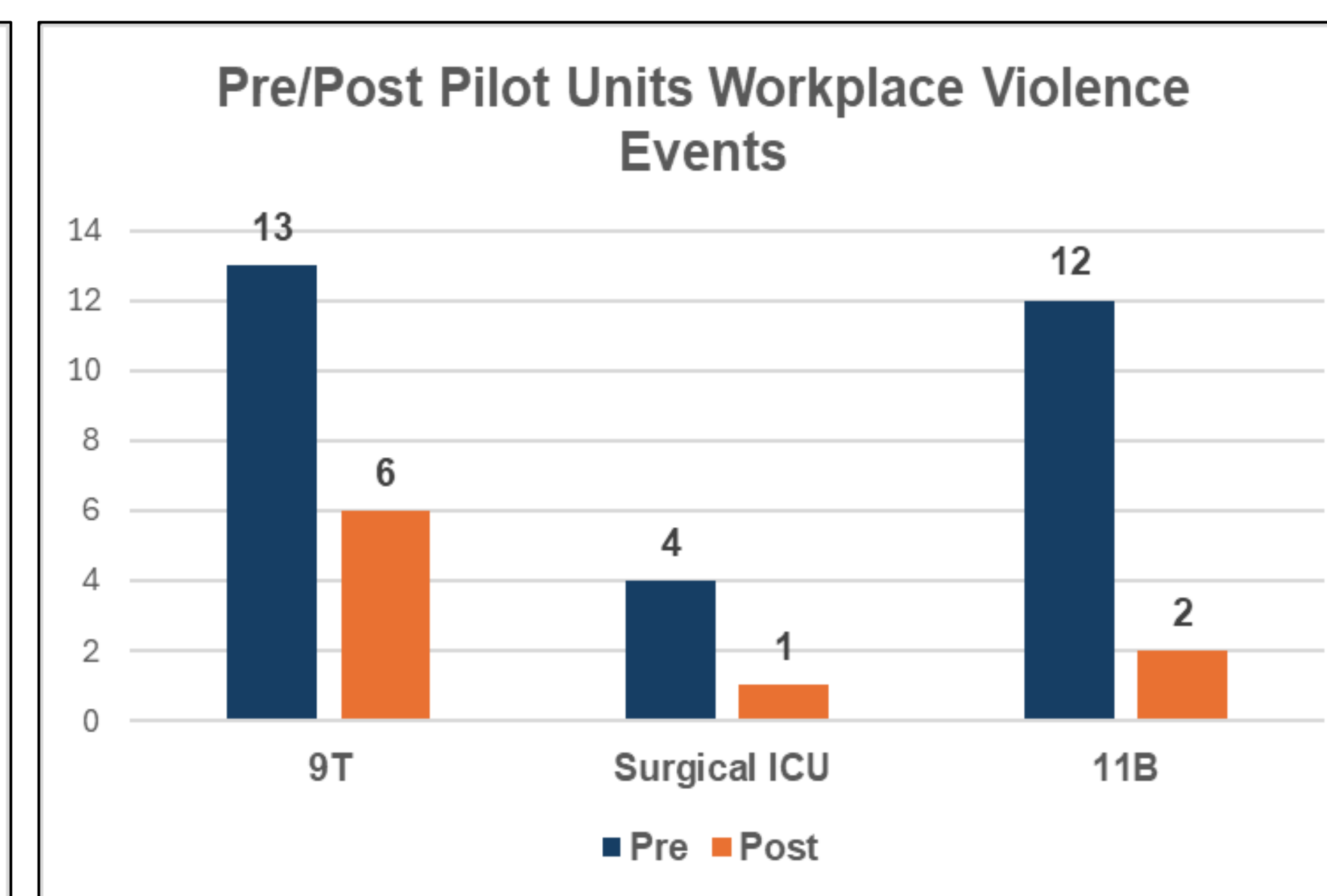


Figure 2: WPV Events Pre/Post BEST Implementation in Pilot Units



Illustration 1

## Current State

- Since spread of the BEST pilot, the team has responded to 475 calls, totaling over 800 hours de-escalating potential violent situations. *Illustration 2*
- Out of the 475 calls, 0.03 % resulted in teammate injury and 22% resulted in the utilization of restrictive interventions. *Figure 3*

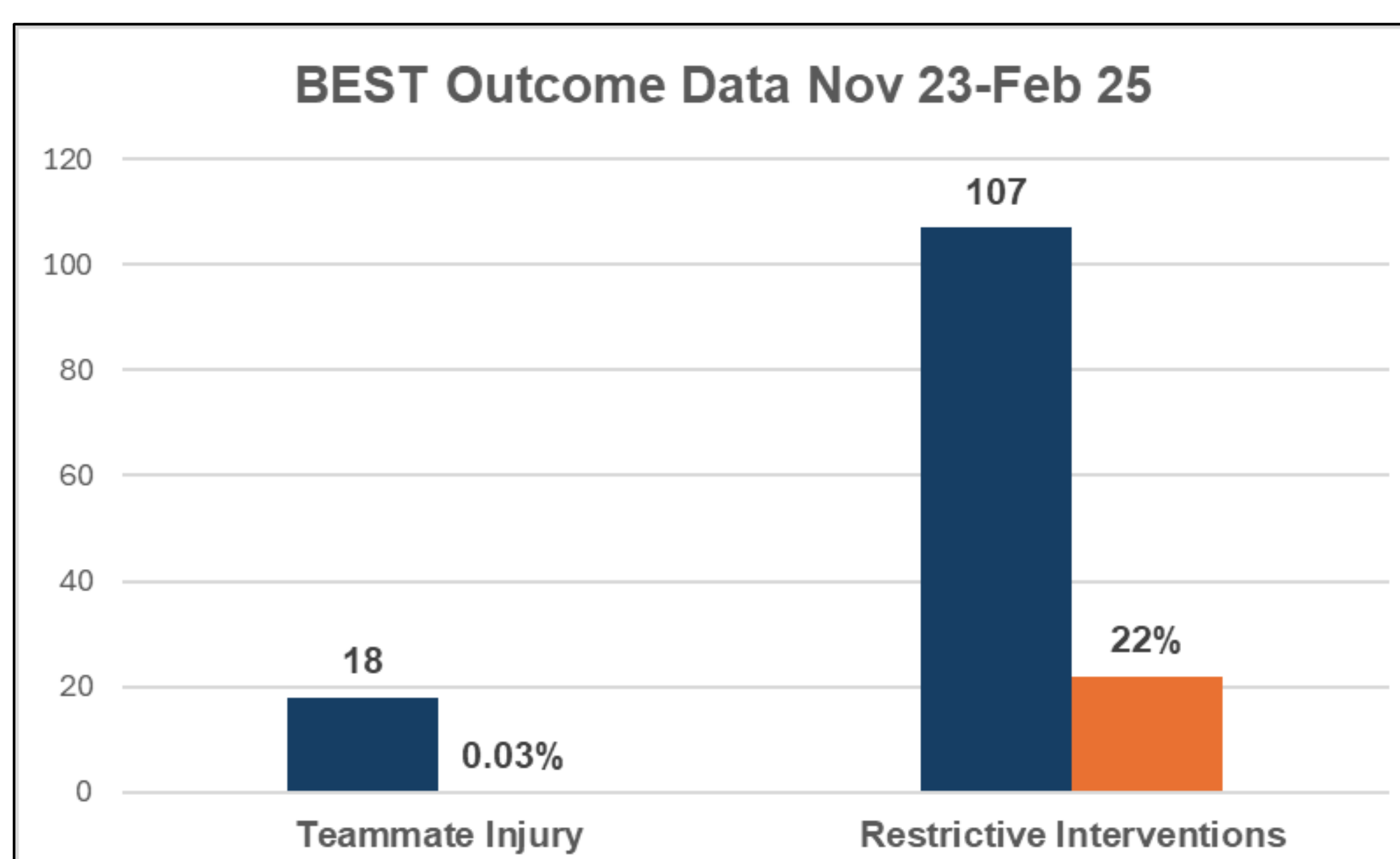


Figure 3: Teammate Injury and RI rates

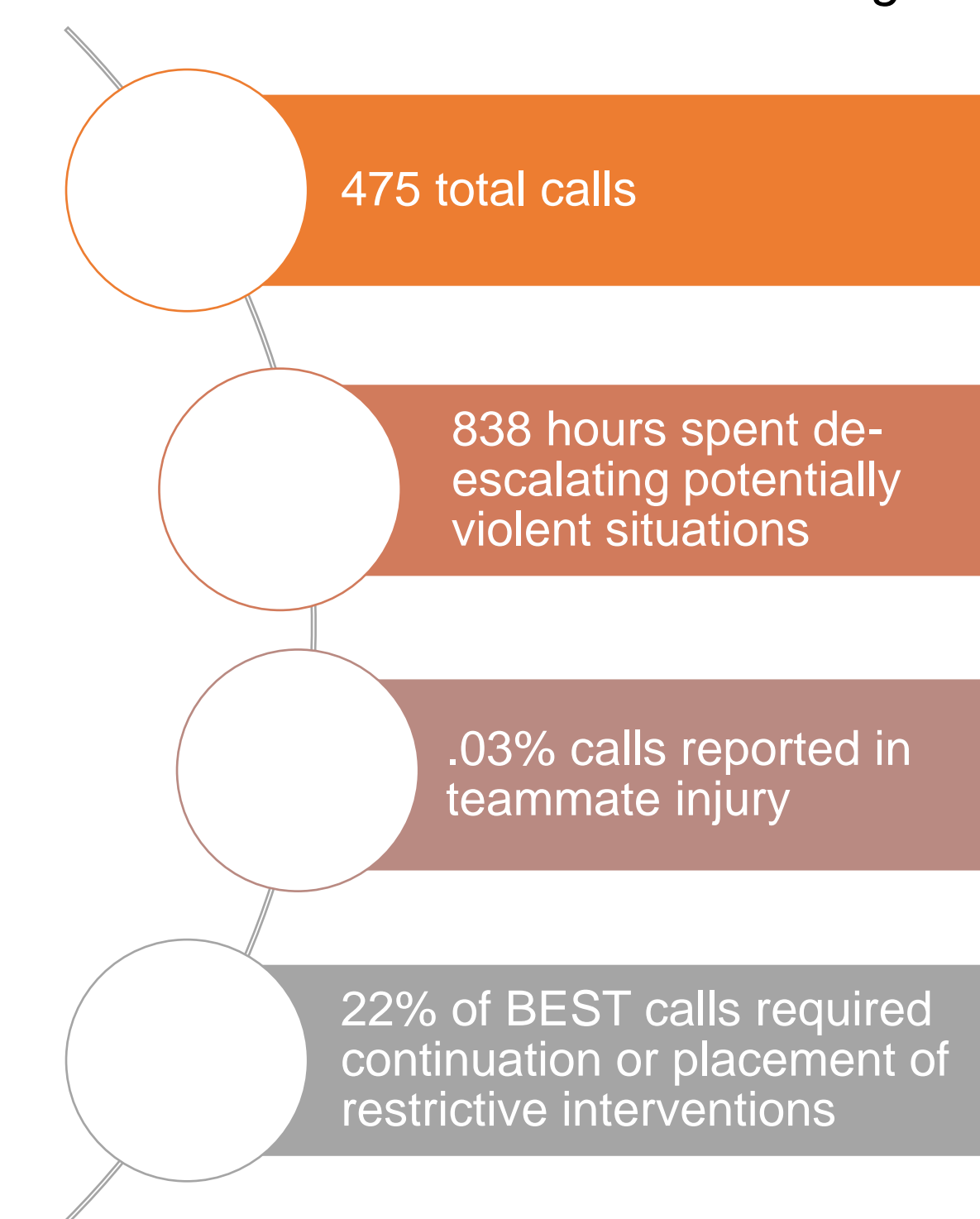


Illustration 2

## Implications for Practice

- **Mitigation of WPV:** The BEST serves as a critical response to help de-escalate potentially violent situations, reducing the risk of physical harm to nurses and other staff members.
- **Psychological Safety:** Nurses feel more supported in high-stress situations, knowing there is a trained team ready to intervene, leading to improved job satisfaction and mental well-being.
- **Operational Impact:** Promotes collaboration between nursing staff, security, behavioral health experts, and other key professionals, fostering a more cohesive and supportive work environment.
- **Organization Impact:** Nursing leadership will need to establish clear policies and protocols surrounding the use of the BEST RN, ensuring proper integration into the facility's overall emergency response system.
- **Promotes a Culture of Safety:** By prioritizing staff and patient safety, the introduction of a BEST team can contribute to an organizational culture focused on prevention, care, and respect.
- **Employee Retention and Satisfaction:** Nurses who feel protected and supported in high-risk situations are more likely to remain in their roles, decreasing turnover and the associated costs of recruiting and training new staff.

## References



## Contact Info

Kiersten.Brelewski@atriumhealth.org;  
Lacey.Spangler@atriumhealth.org;  
Laura.Ledford@atriumhealth.org;  
Tammy.Mann@atriumhealth.org

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