

The September 2019 Arizona Department of Health Services performance audit found that the Arizona State Hospital has not fully evaluated assault-reduction strategies but has established processes for patient admission, ensuring patients receive prescribed treatment, and reporting incidents.

Status of report's 1 recommendation:

In process of being implemented

We will continue to follow up with the Department on the status of the recommendation that has not yet been fully implemented.

Finding 1: State Hospital has not fully assessed the effectiveness of its assault response and reduction strategies

1. The State Hospital should develop, implement, and document a structured approach for evaluating its assault response and reduction strategies to support the safest possible environment for patients and staff, including:
 - Prioritizing the order in which its multiple assault response and reduction strategies will be evaluated.
 - Seeking and using stakeholder input in the evaluation process to ensure the right evaluation questions are identified, such as nurses or staff involved in program operations; patients and their families, and others affected by the program; and those who are in a position to make decisions about or fund the strategy, such as State Hospital or Department management, or the Legislature.
 - Assessing and determining whether the selected strategy achieved its desired outcomes.
 - Using evaluation results to identify ways to improve the strategy or to demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategy.

Implementation in process—The Department has developed and documented some new processes for evaluating the State Hospital's assault reduction strategies, including system-based evaluations and individual patient-based evaluations. System-based evaluations are intended to evaluate State Hospital-wide assault reduction strategies to determine whether they are meeting their desired outcomes, whereas individual patient-based evaluations review the treatment for the 3 patients with the most assaultive incidents on a monthly basis.

To direct the performance of these evaluations and review their results, the Department has created an Assault Reduction Committee (Committee) comprising State Hospital executive leadership, clinical directors, patient treatment team staff, unit floor staff, and a data manager. The Committee first met in March 2020 and plans to assess prioritization of strategies for evaluation, methods for data collection, and whether to continue or modify specific strategies and patient interventions based on data evaluation. According to the Department, during its meetings, the Committee will review the evaluations to determine and recommend whether to continue or modify the State Hospital's assault reduction strategies. The Department has also begun some limited evaluation of the State Hospital's assault reduction strategies, such as comparing assault data recorded prior to the implementation of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training to assault data recorded after training implementation.

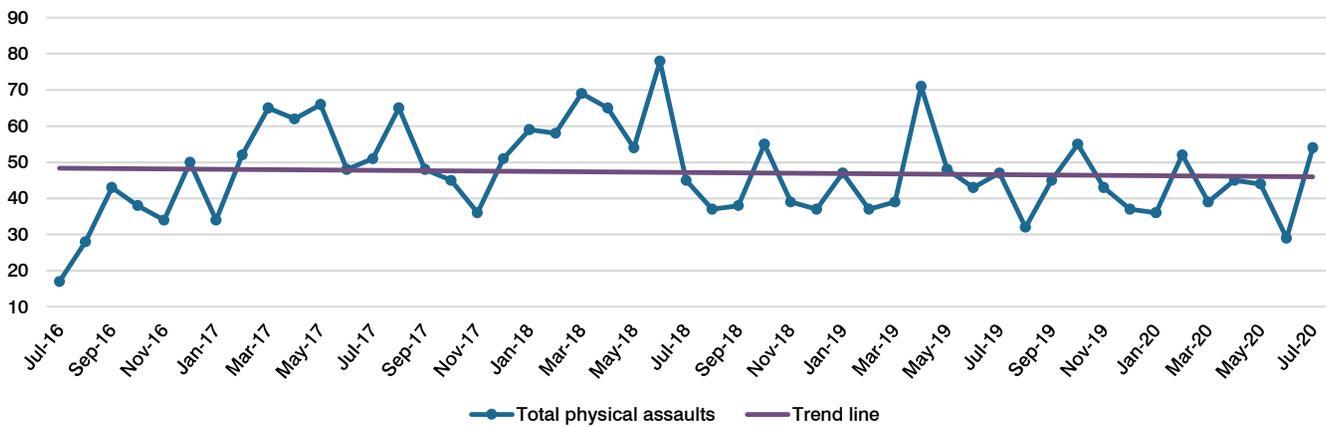
As indicated in the 2019 performance audit report, the State Hospital had implemented multiple strategies that, if successful, could help it respond to or reduce patient violence. Although the State Hospital has developed processes

for evaluating its strategies and has begun implementing these processes, it has yet to fully evaluate the extent to which its strategies are achieving their desired outcomes. By fully evaluating its strategies, the State Hospital can better determine whether to revise and/or eliminate strategies, or whether to adopt new strategies. As noted in the 2019 performance audit report, the combined number of physical assaults at the State Hospital for both the Civil and Forensic Hospitals—2 of the hospital facilities within the State Hospital—had fluctuated from month to month from July 2016 through June 2019, with the trend of monthly assaults slightly increasing during that time frame. During this time, the combined number of monthly physical assaults for the 2 hospital facilities ranged from a low of 21 in July 2016 to a high of 81 in June 2018.

As part of this followup, we obtained updated physical assault data from the State Hospital. Figures 1 and 2 provide information on the number of physical assaults in the Civil and Forensic Hospitals from July 2016 through July 2020. As these figures show, physical assaults in both the Civil and Forensic Hospitals have continued to fluctuate monthly. However, physical assaults at the Civil Hospital have trended slightly downward while the trend in the Forensic Hospital has continued upward over the 4-year period.

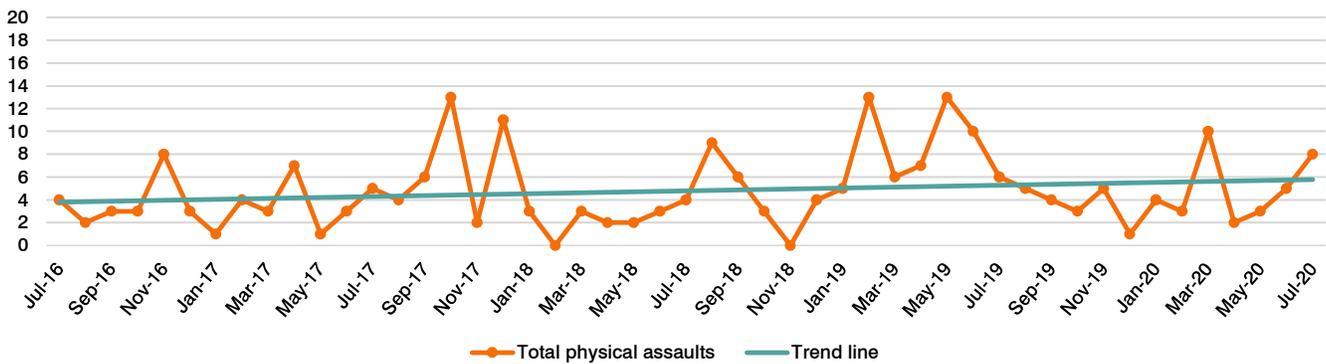
From July 2019 through July 2020, the monthly combined number of physical assaults for the 2 hospital units ranged from a low of 34 in June 2020 to a high of 62 in July 2020. Most physical assaults occurred in the Civil Hospital, with a high of 55 in October 2019, and a low of 29 in June 2020. Comparatively, during the same period, Forensic Hospital physical assaults ranged from a monthly low of 1 in December 2019 to a high of 10 in March 2020.

Figure 1
Civil Hospital total physical assaults
July 2016 through July 2020



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of State Hospital data.

Figure 2
Forensic Hospital total physical assaults
July 2016 through July 2020



Source: Auditor General staff analysis of State Hospital data.