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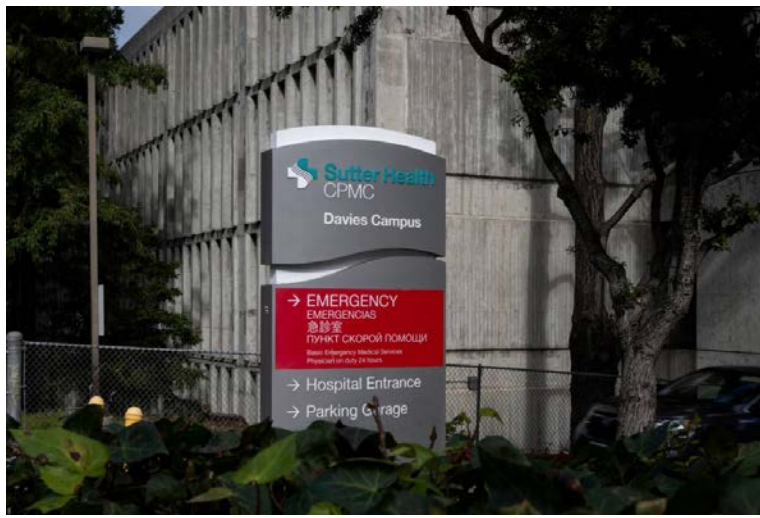
California Regulators Investigate Sutter Health Over Unreported Assault on Psychiatry Worker



By Kevin Stark

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The Sutter Health CPMC Davies Campus in San Francisco on Feb. 8, 2024. (Beth LaBerge/KQED)

California regulators are reviewing Sutter Health's handling of a violent assault on a psychiatry resident after she **shared her story with KQED**.

Dani Golomb was brutally beaten and knocked unconscious by a patient on Sept. 5, 2020, while working in the inpatient unit at California Pacific Medical Center. The patient jumped her from behind, shoving Golomb to the floor.

"I was punched in the head, neck and shoulders," she told KQED in an interview. "I had one of these folding metal clipboards. [The patient] grabbed it out of my hand and smashed it repeatedly on my head."

'I had one of these folding metal clipboards. [The patient] grabbed it out of my hand and smashed it repeatedly on my

Golomb suffered a concussion **head.'**

and a traumatic brain injury.

She missed more than a year
of work as she recovered.

—Dani Golomb, psychiatry
resident, California
Pacific Medical Center

Sutter Health was legally required to file a violent incident report to state regulators within 72 hours, but the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, has no record of the incident, the agency confirmed in an email to KQED. Cal/OSHA said it was “looking into the matter.”

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In an emailed statement, Sutter Health acknowledged that the hospital did not initially report Golomb’s assault or injury but said it did record the assault in an injury log filed with Cal/OSHA.

“I think, whether intentionally unreported or not, what upsets me the most is the possibility that more safety measures could have been implemented if Cal/OSHA had been aware of the violence,” Golomb said in an interview this week with KQED. “I think it’s a relief

to hear that state regulators are looking into my case. I feel angry that it wasn't properly reported in the first place."



Dani Golomb, psychiatry resident at CPMC Sutter Davies Campus, poses for a portrait at her home in San Francisco on Feb. 9, 2024. (Beth LaBerge/KQED)

In 2014, California lawmakers passed what was touted as the nation's strongest state workplace violence regulations for health care facilities. The law, SB 1299, was sponsored by the California Nurses Association. It requires hospitals to develop comprehensive workplace violence prevention plans, and it mandates strict reporting requirements for acute care settings, like the inpatient psychiatry unit where Golomb was beaten.

"I authored legislation to help ensure safer working environments for the nurses and doctors who provide critical care for our

'Enforcement on a basic level has been lax. My sense is that no

communities, but it's clear that more needs to be done to build on our efforts," Sen. Alex Padilla, who wrote SB 1299 when he was a state lawmaker, said in a statement. "Physicians on the frontlines of our mental health crisis deserve a safe workplace."

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—Carmen Comsti, lead regulatory specialist, California Nurses Association

Since 2017, California hospitals have reported roughly 10,000 violent incidents annually to the state. Carmen Comsti, the California Nurses Association's lead regulatory specialist, said that many hospitals are underreporting violent incidents, and regulators have not been holding facilities accountable.

"Enforcement on a basic level has been lax," she said. "My sense is that no one at Cal/OSHA is really looking to see whether or not hospitals are reporting or not."

"The violent incident reports are key to the success of implementation of workplace violence prevention plans," Comsti continued. "[They allow] workers to know what is happening and can engage with their employer to say

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Golomb and her colleagues have pressed Sutter Health to increase its safety measures. Earlier this month, they delivered a petition to hospital management signed by more than 100 psychiatry residents, fellows and nurses who demanded a round-the-clock security presence in the inpatient psych unit and an intensive care unit.

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“Our ability to continue to provide the highest standard of care is increasingly threatened by a growing concern for our own safety in our workplace,” the petition said.

Sutter claims it has spent nearly \$40 million to improve security for the unit where Golomb was attacked, purchasing cameras, panic buttons, duress alarms and securing doors. A security officer is now stationed there during the day.

On March 8, the day after KQED’s story on Golomb was published, Warner Thomas, Sutter Health’s president and CEO, sent an email to hospital employees

titled, “Keeping you safe from harm at work.”

The email noted Sutter’s plan to spend an additional \$45 million to simplify workplace violence reporting, develop new signage, increase training and expand security officer patrols.

“Many of you have also voiced your concerns about safety at our Sutter Health worksites,” Thomas wrote. “I want to thank you for speaking up and talking about your experiences with me and other leaders.”

Golomb said there have been “notable improvements” at work, with a more consistent security presence. Residents were also given panic buttons.

“My goal since the beginning of all this was to work towards creating a safer environment for my peers, patients, nurses and the rest of our staff,” she said.

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