



# K-9 Security Program

## Case For Support

### Executive Summary

Like healthcare systems and hospitals across the country, Bassett Healthcare Network (BHN) has experienced a significant uptick in instances of physical and verbal assault toward healthcare workers in recent years. In response, BHN has continued to expand the organization's K-9 security program, which is funded entirely through donations. Thus far, the results indicate the investment is paying off. The K-9 units are often able to quickly defuse tense situations before they escalate. The presence of a well-trained K-9 accompanied by its handler tends to give people in the room a sense of safety while also helping to settle agitated individuals more quickly. The K-9 teams have proven to be a welcome addition to Bassett's security force, elevating the level of safety provided to caregivers and patients.

### Impact

In 2024, Bassett's K-9 program responded to over 383 requests for help with aggressive behavior by a visitor or patient. There were also requests for the dogs' and handlers' presence in the emergency departments, and 14 requests for missing person assistance.

In addition to helping de-escalate potentially violent situations, the K-9 units have been a valuable resource in other ways. They regularly interact with patients and visitors on rounds throughout Bassett campuses and, when called upon, act as a comforting distraction for children in emergency departments. Each of the dogs in Bassett's K-9 program has its own baseball-style trading card available for patients and visitors who wish to collect them.

Bassett first added a K-9 unit to its security team in 2019. Today, there are four K-9 units and more than 40 security officers who staff five hospitals and over two dozen regional health centers. They act as a safety resource for patients, visitors and staff, respond to emergencies, and are the organization's liaison with area law enforcement.



*Officer Jeffrey Bever and K-9 Hutch*

# The Need

The K-9 program costs approximately \$40,000 annually to support the ongoing training of four dogs and their assigned handlers (security officers), as well as maintenance of the canines such as nutrition and veterinary costs.

Given the trends, it is anticipated that aggression against healthcare workers is not likely to decline but will, in fact, continue increasing. That trend is reflected in the records kept by Bassett's Public Safety Department over the course of 2024.

- Bassett's K-9 units received 672 requests for assistance across facilities.
- 209 incidents occurred when a dog and its handler were needed as a deterrent or de-escalation tool.
- Security received 131 requests to help law enforcement.

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***“Healthcare workers are five times more likely to be victims of workplace violence than employees in any other industry. The investment in this K-9 program is necessary to keep our staff, visitors, and individuals coming to our campuses for medical services as safe as possible.”***

**AJ Zuk**

Director of Public Safety and Transportation  
Bassett Healthcare Network

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*Officer Lynda May and K-9 Dank*



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Bassett Healthcare Network**