

WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL INSTALLATION

Facility-wide ligature-resistant initiative ensures patient safety

By Tamera Cook

With more than 11,000 rooms, 860 patient beds and 29 wards, Western State Hospital is the largest psychiatric care facility in the Pacific Northwest. Established in 1871 as the Insane Asylum of Washington Territory and renamed as Western State in 1889, the facility is operated by the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

As one of more than 20,500 accredited hospitals in the United States, Western State Hospital strives to maintain and exceed the rigorous standards set forth by the Joint Commission—formerly the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations—for providing safe and effective care of the highest caliber and value. In accordance with Joint Commission Standard EC.02.01.01, hospitals must

STANLEY's patient safety lever features a patent-pending design that meets the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act by eliminating the operational "pinch and grasp" motion. The new ligature-resistant designs enhance patient safety.

Photo courtesy of STANLEY Security

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take “action to minimize or eliminate identified safety and security risks in the physical environment,” including the identification of any potential safety hazards to patients.

Due to past incidents with patients and safety concerns inherent to the nature of behavioral healthcare facilities, Western State Hospital complied with the Joint Commission’s recommendations to cultivate facility-wide ligature-resistant programs that would further ensure the safety and security of patients by inhibiting any tendencies to self-harm. Although the Joint Commission standards do not mandate the type of locksets and door closers to be used in behavioral care facilities, Western State wanted to ensure that all patient wards were equipped with the latest preventative solutions to maintain patient safety.

Behavioral healthcare solutions and hardware are relatively new to the security field, but they are of significant importance to the patients that they serve to protect. For hospitals like Western State, these solutions can make a tremendous difference in patient safety and overall facility security. Recognizing the lack of solutions available to behavioral healthcare facilities, STANLEY Security developed an entire portfolio of products specifically tailored to meet the needs of these facilities and to help create environments that can keep patients safe from self-inflicted harm.

“This is still a growing and necessary field,” says Tim Mount, Carpenter Lead for Western State Hospital. “There really wasn’t anything like this on the market at the time. We’d heard of this type of ligature-resistant hardware being deployed at VA hospitals prior to this, and STANLEY delivered a quality product we could trust.”

Upgrading Patient Safety

As part of a widespread ligature-resistant initiative launched throughout the hospital, Western State focused specifically on the doors and closers for all rooms with patient access. When first evaluating the necessary upgrades to be completed at the hospital, STANLEY Security installation experts surveyed each of Western State’s 11,060 rooms to determine precisely which locks would best accommodate the hospital’s needs. Ultimately, they recommended the BEST 30H and 40H Mortise Mechanical Locksets for areas accessible to staff, patrons and visitors, and the new STANLEY Patient Safety Lever (SPSL) from the company’s Behavioral Healthcare Solutions product portfolio to best accommodate rooms specifically designated for patient access.

With a patent-pending design that meets the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by eliminating the operational “pinch and grasp” motion, as well as new ligature-resistant designs, the SPSL

provides Western State Hospital with the reliable performance and security found with the traditional Best Access Systems products.

"SPSL is a fairly new concept, and [STANLEY] was right at the forefront of that, which is always encouraging when you're considering a security company," says Mount. "It required a lot of confidence in the company to complete this project...to be able to protect some very vulnerable individuals: our patients. And they didn't let us down."

"They had the best quality product," says Darlene Stevens, Facilities Locksmith for Western State Hospital. "We'd heard about other products that were similar and that they had had issues. STANLEY was able to provide us with a reliable product, and they made everything happen in a timely manner that would completely meet our needs as well."

In compliance with this initiative, door closers throughout the hospital also required replacement, with all moveable pieces and arms having to be moved to the hallways in all rooms and patient access areas so that patients could not access them to potentially harm themselves. Although STANLEY did not offer door closers that had the requisite capability to link to the hospital's fire system at the time of the installation, the company provided Western State with the recommendation for another trusted manufacturer to suit the hospital's needs.

Overall, approximately 1,200 SPSL and 30/40H mortise locksets were implemented in all patient-access areas, including bedrooms, bathrooms, classrooms, arts centers, gyms, patient treatment malls and more. Understanding the delicate nature of adapting the installation process to be completed on active wards without any major disruption, the entire installation and implementation process was completed at the facility within a six-month timeframe in 2013.

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Putting the Locksets to the Test

Since the installation's completion nearly two years ago, Western State Hospital has witnessed the durability and reliability of STANLEY's SPSL locksets firsthand. When a patient abused a lock to the point at which the mortise assembly was bent into a c shape, the lock was still able to function efficiently and keep the patient safe and secure in the designated area. The hospital was then able to remove and replace the lockset, sending the abused hardware to STANLEY for

study to determine how the design could be upgraded further to prevent similar damage in the future.

"I'd guess that these locksets go through 10,000 uses each month, having to endure life cycles well beyond any normally conceived human use, and they're holding up well in one of the harshest environments imaginable," says Mount. "Keep in mind that these are often patients with anger issues, actively trying to destroy doors and mechanisms. When the patient bent the mortise assembly into a c shape, the lock didn't fail and was just damaged in the opening, which was incredible."

"They're doing great," says Stevens. "They've honestly already exceeded our expectations."

Continuing a Lasting Partnership

Throughout the proposal, design and installation processes, STANLEY Security presented itself as an instrumental and unwavering partner in improving the safety of Western State's patients and the overall security of the hospital.

"Western State Hospital has been a customer of STANLEY's for approximately 40 years; we've definitely had a long-standing partnership, only further proven by this project," says Stevens. "We continue to go back to them because they're great—it's a good product, and they back it up with good supply and fantastic technicians. We can reach out to the techs on the phone or online. These people are truly accessible."

Having worked with a number of hospitals and behavioral healthcare facilities across the country, STANLEY Security recognizes the complexities that these facilities face in balancing patient safety with facility security. For the company, the comprehensive installation achieved at Western State Hospital only furthers its goal to assist behavioral healthcare facility staff in ensuring patient safety. ■



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