Federal Mediator Re-assigned to Negotiations

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) is the agency assigned in dispute mediation as a neutral third-party who assists two sides in reaching an agreement when one cannot be reached during collective bargaining. Generally, a mediator is assigned prior to the opening of negotiations so that once we need to call for a mediator, we have someone assigned and prepared to take our case.

We are in an unusual situation where due to multiple scheduling conflicts, we have had another mediator assigned to our case. It’s important for our nurses to know, that the hospital and ONA are in agreement with the decision to be assigned a different mediator in an effort to set some dates and work toward a resolution in a timely manner.

Ms. Julie Kettler is our newly assigned mediator and is actively working to clear her calendar and offer us dates that we can all agree to in the very near future. Our goal is to get back to the table and get some resolution to the ongoing issues we’ve been discussing since May.

We may still have a session scheduled for November 16, 2011 but this has not yet been confirmed. Ms. Kettler has asked both teams to be looking at the first week in December so that we can meet for two or three back-to-back days and make some significant progress.

Possible Mediation Dates

I know many of you have been very flexible in working with your negotiating team members to trade so they may have time off.

Please look at your schedules for that first week in December and see if you may be able to assist your team members in getting time off.

Schedules are tight and the dates are approaching rapidly. Please also have in mind, that the CCU may especially have a difficult time filling these shifts. If anyone is cross-trained to CCU and could offer to help cover for mediation, please try to do so.

Well Wishes for Hallie Scott

Please join your negotiating team in sending our thoughts and well wishes to Hallie Scott. Hallie is an incredible advocate for all of the nurses here in Ontario and works tirelessly to be sure nothing falls through the cracks.

She is currently off work on FMLA, undergoing some medical testing. Our team wishes her well and is dedicated to doing our best to allow her time to get better.
Flu Shot and Masking Requirements

Many of you have asked about the recent changes to the hospital policy regarding the requirement of flu shots and wearing of masks. ONA has requested the policy change information and has advised the hospital that we believe this change may be a mandatory subject of bargaining and must be negotiated with us at the table. We are currently evaluating the specific changes from the prior policy that we believe need to be removed until we can bargain for changes.

This is a policy that we have seen arise in a few other hospitals across the state, and we are handling the issue consistently and in compliance with recent rulings regarding these policies. Please watch for more information as we work to resolve this issue.

Update Your Contact Information!

Throughout the year it is critical that the executive team and ONA labor relations representatives are able to communicate openly and efficiently with nurses. The ONA website, mail at home and e-mails at home continue to be the best methods of getting updates to all members as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, many members aren’t getting the most up-to-date information because ONA doesn’t have a current mailing address or a home email address. Or, the email address on file is a work email. ONA is often restricted when sending out mass e-mails to employer based e-mail addresses and if we don’t have a current mailing address or home email address, it results in many members not receiving the critical information they need as quickly as they should.

To remedy this situation, ONA is encouraging all members to go to www.oregonrn.org and click on "Update Your Contact Information" to update their information on file to include a personal (non-work) e-mail address to ensure the messages get through in a timely manner. Together we can make sure everyone is involved and stays informed!

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination for Health Care Workers

A Portion of the ONA Position Statement from our ONA website.

Recent flu seasons and the previous threat of an H1N1 pandemic have caused policy makers to focus on programs to protect Oregonians. Individual health care facilities have implemented a variety of procedures and policies related to influenza vaccinations for health care workers that have achieved varying degrees of success; these policies have had a range of implications for employees. As Oregon’s largest group of health care professionals, nurses have seen and experienced the best and worst of this piecemeal approach to vaccinations, and are striving to propose an evidence-based, common sense solution that protects health care workers and the patients they serve.

The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) believes that all nurses and other health care workers should be vaccinated against seasonal influenza. Vaccination is a key method of protecting health care workers from influenza and helping to prevent the spread of influenza among patients and the public. ONA is actively promoting vaccination to become immunized within the nursing profession by using social media, and electronic and print media to provide education to Oregon’s nursing professionals and student nurses and assist them in making informed choices about receiving annual influenza vaccines.

ONA opposes requiring influenza vaccinations of nurses and other health care workers as a condition of employment. Rather, education and access to vaccinations, when combined with other methods to prevent influenza transmission, are sufficient and effective in protecting patients and workers.

More information and the entire Position statement may be found online by visiting the ONA website at www.oregonrn.org