Employer Must Improve Working Conditions

For the last few weeks, we have all experienced sweeping changes in our working conditions. Our bargaining unit leaders have been holding conversations with many nurses to hear your stories and your ideas.

We understand that nurses’ attention is divided among several high-stress issues at this time, including workplace changes and family and childcare issues. We appreciate your service to our community during these this crisis and thank you for your commitment to helping patients and our coworkers!

In listening to your stories and ideas, we can now bring forward your concerns to the employer in a unified fashion. On May 5, we asked the employer to bargain a side letter on COVID-19 issues. In legal terms, we issued a demand to bargain on the change in working conditions.

We are preparing proposals on the two issues that nurses raised:

**Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), including:**
- Used according to manufactured specifications not Center for Disease Control emergency guidelines, which lowered healthcare standards. For example, many N95 masks are listed as useable for eight hours, not twelve hours. Some of the disposable gowns that employer has issued have a four-hour lifespan.
- All nurses caring for COVID-19 rule out patients must be provided with proper PPE, including N95s, PAPRs, or CAPRs as well as face shields. This equipment must not be used between patients, which carries a high risk of repeated exposure. We must protect our patients and our community by ensuring we are not transmitting the virus between patients in the COVID-19 rule out unit.
- The standard of care for COVID-19 rule outs must be one patient per nurse. This eliminates any danger of viral transmission and is the standard of care used by other hospitals in our region.
- Leave policies, or paid time off (PTO), must hold the nurse harmless from any COVID-19 absences.
- As other employers have demonstrated, the employer must pay for all COVID-19 related time off above existing PTO arrangements, including:
  - Nurses with COVID-19 symptoms created by likely transmission from contact with a patient must get sick leave from a COVID-19 PTO bank that is separate from our current PTO.
  - Nurses whose hours are reduced because of changes in working conditions related to COVID-19 must receive full wages and benefits.

Rollover Our Contract?

Our current contract with the employer expires on Sept. 1, 2020. During the stay home, stay safe policy, workers are unable to use our normal tools to demonstrate unity. For example, visiting the bargaining table, unity breaks, and rallies would violate the ten-person rule.

Many nurses have suggested we rollover our contract. A rollover means we keep the current language and only address the cost of living increase. One idea is we would bargain a rollover for a year.

What do you think? Contact a member of your executive team or ONA labor representative.
Our Contract Is Still In Effect

Even though we are in a paradigm-changing environment, our contract remains fully enforceable. We have heard managers say that the contract must be set aside during a state of emergency. Nothing could be further from the truth. If any manager says our contract must be set aside during this crisis, show them this newsletter!

Our contract is a collective bargaining agreement fully protected by the National Labor Relations Act. The employer is bound by all provisions of our contract.

On the other hand, certain portions of the staffing law are affected by the gubernatorial declaration of an emergency. In particular, staffing plans and mandatory overtime may be suspended in the event of a national or state emergency or circumstances requiring the implementation of a facility disaster plan or an infectious disease epidemic suffered by hospital staff.

Click here to learn more.

We Want To Hear From You!

We want to continue the conversation with nurses about these issues. Our executive committee, stewards, and labor rep remain available via phone and email.

Our executive committee continues to hold regular meetings, currently by teleconference, on the following Fridays, 9 – 11 a.m. If you are interested in participating, please contact our labor representative.

June 12, 2020
July 24, 2020
Sept. 4, 2020
Oct. 16, 2020

Bankruptcy Update

Click here to view our FAQ from April 10, it still remains the best source for information on the debt restructuring bankruptcy of Quorum.

Since then, we have learned that the prepackaged plan of reorganization has the creditors agreeing to write down (forgive) $500 million in debt they currently are owed by Quorum. In exchange, the existing board of directors will step down and be replaced by seven new directors representing the creditors.

We can only hope that with lower debt payments going forward that the new board of directors can figure out how the entire corporation can become profitable, not just us here at McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center.

Click here to follow the bankruptcy court proceedings.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) ONA Resource Center

www.OregonRN.org/coronavirus