PROVIDENCE PORTLAND STRIKE FAQ

We’ve explained a bit more about pickets and strikes below because it is important that you understand your rights and options under ONA. If you have more questions, reach out to your ONA Labor Representative.

Q: What is an informational picket?
A: An informational picket is not a strike. However, an informational picket is an escalation because it is intended to look like a strike. As a union, our strength is in our numbers and the value of our life saving work, so the number of RNs who sign onto support and attend our picket will help determine our success the table. It is not a work stoppage and, if scheduled, nurses should report to duty as normal.

Q: Am I protected if I engage in an informational picket?
A: Yes, an informational picket is considered “concerted activity” or group activity to improve working conditions. Engaging in concerted activity for mutual gain is explicitly protected by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). Providence, including all of its agents and including supervisors, may not retaliate against workers for participating in such activity. And our union will aggressively defend all members against any attempts at retaliation.

Q: Who decides to call an informational picket? Do we have one planned?
A: Your bargaining team has preliminarily scheduled an informational picket for April 11, 2023. We have heard overwhelming support from coworkers in every unit. Our RN leadership is asking every member to follow through by attending our picket for a fair contract and signing our petition to support the picket.

Q: What happens to patients in an informational picket?
A: Some patients and community members may consider rescheduling their appointments or services in the event of an informational picket, but we are not asking them to do so. Our fellow nurses and ONA members will be providing care as usual during an informational picket.
**Q: What is a strike?**

A: A strike is a democratic decision to not work voted on by every PPMC RN at the request of our RN bargaining team. Workers don’t get paid, and the employer must attempt to continue operations without our labor.

A strike is powerful escalation and places another level of pressure on Providence to step up and do the right thing. It is also an opportunity for us to engage and educate the public to garner support from our provider colleagues, labor partners, and the community at large.

**Q: Who calls a strike and how is it authorized?**

A: The bargaining team may call a strike, but it must first be authorized by a vote of the entire bargaining unit. For a strike to be successful, we anticipate that it would need to be supported by 80% of the bargaining unit.

**Q: Are our jobs safe if we strike?**

A: It is illegal to terminate workers for striking. Thousands of health care workers have gone on strike along the West Coast and consistently returned to their positions after a short time – usually not more than a few weeks. Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) strikes offer some additional protections for striking workers.

**Q: Who decides the duration of a strike?**

A: A strike may be limited (e.g., one day, five days, two weeks) or unlimited in duration. The duration of the strike is determined by your elected ONA bargaining team and approved by the ONA Labor Cabinet, the highest elected nurse-officers of our union. Decisions about the length of a strike are often strategic, balancing the impact on the employer’s operations and the ability of nurses to successfully execute a strike.

**Q: Who will care for the patients if we strike?**

A: Our goal is to make sure our patients have better care now and in the future. Participation in the strike does not constitute patient abandonment. By standing up for improved conditions, we are advocating for better patient care. As required by law, ONA will give the employer 10 days advance notice before a strike so the facility can move patients to other locations and cease taking elective patients. Patients who may normally come to our facility may have to use other facilities. If a legitimate emergency (e.g., natural disaster, catastrophic event) arises, the situation will be assessed and the decision to provide RNs will be made.
**Q: Will we receive financial support during a strike?**

A: ONA is Oregon’s largest health care union with 15,000 members, who are affiliated with our more than a million-member national union The American Federation of Teachers. Our union is dedicated to ensuring every ONA member can stand together to build power at their employers up to successful strikes. The strength of our local and national organizations ensures resources like hardship funds, loan options, and other forms of support. The amounts are not equivalent to normal pay, but they help support workers in cases of hardship, and have led to successful strike efforts throughout the country.

**Q: Are my health benefits protected if we strike?**

A: Depending on the duration of the strike and its timing, health benefits could end the beginning of the next month following the beginning of the strike (e.g., if a strike begins Jan. 10 benefits would stop on Feb. 1 if an agreement has not been reached). Most strikes do not last long enough for health care workers to face an interruption in health benefits for participating in a strike. However, it is possible they could be impacted if the strike were to last long enough.

**Q: Can I strike on probation?**

A: Yes, you can strike on probation. ONA will vigorously protect every striking bargaining unit member’s right to engage in the federally protected right to strike.

**Q: May I use PTO to cover wages on a strike?**

A: Nurses are not able to take PTO to cover time lost while on strike. If a nurse has been approved to take leave that is described in the collective bargaining agreement or by law, and a strike is called during the period of the approved leave, the employer must honor the leave and pay the nurse for the approved time off according to terms of the contract. If a strike continues beyond the period of approved leave, the nurse would be on strike and not get paid.

**Q: What can I do to prepare?**

A: 1) Save a little money, and perhaps pick up a few shifts in anticipation of potential lost pay. Consider getting signed up for an On-Call/Resource/Per Diem position at another local employer

2) Get together with your coworkers and demonstrate strong support for our bargaining proposals. If we can demonstrate to Providence that we have a willingness and ability to strike, we may not have to. Either way, we intend to be prepared.
Q: Where do I go for more information?

A: Visit www.oregonrn.org/providence for access to a range of Providence-wide newsletters and updates. Make sure ONA has your correct address, phone number and email address. Visit www.oregonrn.org/update to submit the information. We have found the quickest way to disseminate information is through text message so be sure that ONA has permission to send you texts.