Low Census MOU Update

We met with PWFMC nurse administration to discuss the issues around low census and continued to emphasize the need for a low census cap.

As you all know, low census was a big issue during the last negotiation cycle and was a huge reason bargaining was prolonged. We fought hard for a fair low census cap that was substantial and the hospital undercut our offer by making the cap equal to about what on average each nurse sustains already under our current low census data.

Additionally, the hospital was only willing to count mandatory low census in the cap and not any low census that occurs from us volunteering. We agreed in June 2019 that the conversation deserved more time than we had, so we put it into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), ratified the contract and agreed to revisit the issue of low census after gathering more data on mandatory and voluntary low census separately. Kronos went live with that capability in November 2019, but then the data was skewed for most of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have had two meetings with a federal labor negotiations mediator present — once in August 2020 and again on March 31, 2021. We agreed that the data is not very good due to the wild fluctuations in census over the last year. Where we disagreed was that the hospital still sees voluntary low census as a “perk” and something they don’t want to “take away from the nurses.” What we have reiterated again and again is that we only volunteer to stay home because we know that someone will be called off and we are making an attempt to be strategic about when our low census day falls in our schedule pattern. The hospital has maintained that mandatory low census is something they take upon as their responsibility, that if there’s “too much” mandatory low census, that indicates there is an imbalance in scheduling or workflow, but they don’t see voluntary low census counting the same as mandatory.

We’re not asking for the ability to volunteer to be taken away; we’re asking for it to be counted in the cap, something they have disagreed with. Bottom line, it’s all low census to us, whether we volunteer for it or it’s our turn by dates (mandatory).

There are many reasons we want a low census cap. While the occasional shift off is okay, there are some units (BirthPlace, OR and ICU) where nurses are losing a shift or more a week due to low census and there are times when census is low across the hospital and all units are impacted. Nurses are having to use their PTO to cover their bills and are later denied vacation requests because they have no PTO left.

Additionally, time at home on low census does not count as hours worked and in order to be eligible for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave time, federal law states you have to have worked a minimum of 1250 hours in a rolling 12-month period. Nurses who are 0.6 and work 12-hour shifts are
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only scheduled for 1248 hours in a given year, so any low census sustained by part-time nurses puts them at risk for not being eligible for the FMLA.

The hospital has agreed to meet again at the end of April and engage in intentional bargaining on language that will address our concerns and we are eager to look at what we can come up with together. In the meantime, in order to show the hospital how the difference between mandatory and voluntary low census doesn’t matter, that’s it’s all savings for them and a cost to us in the end, we are asking you all to participate in a...

NO VOLUNTARY LOW CENSUS BLOCK PARTY!

For ALL NURSES AT PWFMC, DO NOT VOLUNTEER TO STAY HOME for the two weeks between April 25 and May 8. This includes if the charge nurse is asking anyone if they want to go home early.

By doing this, it will show Providence that regardless of how low census is recorded, it’s the same amount of low census hours and the same burden on the nurses. We are the only bargaining unit in Providence in Oregon that does not have low census cap language in the contract. We can change that!

Contract Negotiations Are Coming!

Survey

Our pre-bargaining survey is coming out soon, it’s quick and easy. It is vital for the ONA nurses of PWFMC to speak up! The survey will ask you to tell your PWFMC/ONA bargaining team what is important for us to bargain for and what steps you as an ONA nurse are willing to take for us to get what we need and deserve from Providence. The survey will be sent out via the EMAIL YOU HAVE LISTED WITH ONA. Please make sure you are getting emails from ONA and they’re not going to your spam box or email junk mail. If you are not getting emails, you can update your email at the ONA website here.

Contract Action Team — The CAT!

With negotiations coming in less than six months, we have exciting news for nurses that want to be more involved and on the “front lines” of our bargaining efforts! We are forming a contract action team (CAT) and would like at least two people from each unit to participate. Being a CAT member includes updating the other nurses in your unit and helping to organize members during contract negotiations. This is an exciting time to be involved! If interested, please tell one of your PWFMC/ONA executive committee officers!

Kick-Off Meetings

We are holding some kick-off meetings for nurses to drop in, have a snack and talk about contract negotiations! These are open-house style in conference room 3, where you can come ask questions, sign up to get involved and tell us what is important to you that we work for in our next contract. Please drop in during one of these times:

- Wednesday, April 28, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 6 – 8 p.m.
- Monday, May 3, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 6 – 8 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 4, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 6 – 8 p.m.

All attendees must wear masks and observe appropriate social distancing guidelines to ensure safe and healthy meetings.
Issues With Sedgwick

The PWFMC/ONA executive committee continue to hear horror stories about nurses and their trials of dealing with Sedgwick for handling leaves of absence, getting underpaid and unfair denials.

If you or someone you work with are experiencing difficulty with Sedgwick, please reach out to our labor representative Timothy Welp at (503) 748-9768 and/or our PWFMC/ONA President, Virginia Smith, RN at (503) 312-7809.

FYI

If you requested reimbursement for your face shield, a check from the PWFMC/ONA bargaining unit will be in your snail mail soon!

PWFMC/ONA Executive Committee Meetings

Please join us for our executive committee meetings! This is where and when your elected bargaining unit officers meet to discuss issues impacting us all like:

♦ wages,
♦ scheduling,
♦ working conditions,
♦ benefits, and more!

All bargaining unit nurses are welcome!
Here is the zoom link and the next upcoming meetings Zoom link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7304909354
Meeting ID: 730 490 9354
Thursday, April 29, 8 – 10 p.m.
Thursday, May 27, 8 – 10 p.m.

Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference, June 25

Register today to join us Friday, June 25 for the ONA Virtual Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference. This year’s conference will focus on Bargaining for the Common Good.

Bargaining for the Common Good (BCG) is a return to the roots of unionism – the basic idea of advancing shared interests. We are not just nurses, we are community members, parents, users of public transportation and renters too! Our employers are required by law to negotiate employment contracts with us, but that only addresses one part of our lives and largely ignores the community members we live with and care for.

Come to ONA’s 2021 Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference to learn more about the BCG framework and how to achieve win-win results for ONA members and our communities on issues ranging from racial inequities to public health improvements and more.

Registration

Registration is open through May 26. Visit www.oregonrn.org/event/2021BULC to register.

Continuing Education

Limited continuing nursing education contact hours will be available.

Oregon Nurses Association is accredited as a provider of nursing continuing professional development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation.
Voting in the 2021 ONA Statewide Elections is open through May 10. This is an opportunity for every ONA member to have a voice in the future of nursing in Oregon.

This election features contested races for Vice-President, Directors, Cabinet on Health Policy, ANA delegates and more. Vote today and let your voice be heard.

Thank you to all of the members who have stepped up to run for one of the statewide leadership positions. Our organization depends on strong leaders like you to participate in the election and help guide ONA into the future.

The candidate slates are posted on the ONA elections webpage and you can read the candidate bios in the ONA Statewide Election Voter Guide. Get to know the candidates before you cast your ballot.

ONA is using Election-America as the service provider for our 2021 ONA Statewide Election. All members will receive an email or postcard from Elections-America with your verification information: an election code and voting PIN.

For technical assistance, please contact Election-America at Help+ONA@election-america.com

For questions regarding your membership or election guidelines, please contact ONA at ONA@OregonRN.org.

The election closes at 11:59 p.m. on May 10, 2021.