ONA Attempts to Negotiate with PeaceHealth Over COVID-19 Impacts

On Friday, March 20, representatives from Sacred Heart Medical Center (SHMC), Sacred Heart Home Care Services (SHHCS) and Peace Harbor Medical Center (PHMC) ONA executive committees and their ONA labor representatives attempted to negotiate with representatives from PeaceHealth about the impacts of COVID-19 on ONA members in a meeting held over the phone and through an online platform. The meeting was called in response to ONA issuing a formal “demand to bargain” notice to all three facilities as well a request that it be handled through a combined meeting to bargain on behalf of all three bargaining units (BU). PeaceHealth waited until three hours before the meeting was scheduled to start to agree that all three BUs could be included in the meeting. This left ONA labor reps scrambling to get nurse leaders from SHHCS and PHMC to the meeting. This was an initial indication that the meeting would not be one marked by collaboration and mutual problem solving.

PeaceHealth representative, Erika Skoog, began the meeting by announcing that the nurse leaders who were on the phone, Heather Wall Riverbend CNO, and Kim Maryniak, University District CNO, Mary Allred SHHCS Director, were going to have to leave the call before the discussion began because they were needed to “attend to urgent matters that need to be addressed on the front lines” indicating the issues nurses wanted to address in this meeting were not considered urgent by administration. This was the second indication that this meeting was not going to be one that embraced collaboration. After saying they were on the call, Heather, Kim, and Mary left the meeting. Robin Allen, director of nursing at PHMC, never joined the call due to a scheduling conflict.

Next, ONA labor rep Tyler Whitmire referred Skoog to the draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) that he provided which outlined the topics ONA believed needed to be addressed. These included:

- provisions for testing
- provision of PPE
- additional paid time off
- incentive pay
- assistance with childcare
- establishing a labor-management committee to address COVID-19 issues
- and a number of other items

Skoog responded by saying that PeaceHealth had no desire to enter into an MOU with ONA and this meeting was going to be limited to “hearing your concerns” while acknowledging she likely wouldn’t have answers to many of the issues we raised. The meeting proceeded with Whitmire and others providing Skoog with a list of concerns and questions, most of which Skoog said she would get back to us with responses. For example, when asked how much PPE was currently available at the hospital, she would not provide specific information, nor did she agree to get back to us with an answer. Another PeaceHealth representative from Vancouver was also on the call and indicated that she would take some of our concerns back to the committees that Vancouver has set up to address the COVID-19 crises. Both PeaceHealth representatives refused to make a commitment to taking any of the actions requested by the nurses whether they were related to safety, pay or working conditions.
Needless to say, your nurse leaders as well as your ONA labor reps were extremely disappointed in and frustrated by the administration’s handling of this meeting and their total lack of interest in collaborating with staff nurses on how to address this crisis. This was a good faith effort on the part of the nurses to find solutions to the many issues nurses and other staff are facing on a daily basis and it was flatly rejected.

Your executive team is considering what steps to take next and will keep you apprised on any new developments. In the meantime, please use the ONA website as a resource for up-to-date information on your rights at work and how to stay safe.

Oregon Board of Nursing Revises Statement Clarify Nurses’ Rights and Responsibilities

The Oregon State Board of Nursing issued a revised statement on March 23, 2020 regarding a nurse’s right to refuse a patient assignment. ONA was instrumental in getting the board to provide more clear guidance on how the lack of proper personal protective equipment can be considered in a nurse’s decision to refuse to take an assignment.

- Click here to read the newly revised statement