Break Relief Nurses: The Solution for Guaranteed Breaks!

On Monday, Nov. 27 nurses across the hospital wore stickers to show unity and support for our bargaining team as they presented a proposal for guaranteed breaks to administration.

Our top priority is quality patient care, and improved staffing is the best way for us to improve the care we provide. Nurses overwhelming chose “staffing” as their top priority in the ONA bargaining survey.

A key component to ensuring that nurses can take their rest and meal breaks is having enough staff. Only 21 percent of nurses who took the bargaining survey reported being able to consistently take uninterrupted rest breaks, with the remainder of nurses stating that breaks were possible only sometimes, rarely, or never during the majority of their shifts. Not only are such rest periods mandated by law, but rested nurses are safer, more effective, and have higher job satisfaction.

Breaks are a critical component of improving patient outcomes and the retention of great nurses.

Nurses feel that administration puts the onus on us to find time to take a break, but it is administration’s responsibility to ensure adequate staffing so that we can safely do so. The best way the guarantee consistent, uninterrupted breaks is allocating a nurse whose sole responsibility is covering the patient load of breaking nurses. This policy is already in place in some departments, like Surgery and the Emergency Department—and not coincidentally, nurses from those units were the survey respondents who usually get breaks.

That is why we proposed a solution:

The hospital will commit to assigning a Break Relief Nurse to each unit for the purposes of rest and meal breaks.
“For several years now the Emergency Department has had a designated nurse assigned to giving lunches and breaks. From noon to midnight, we have a RN whose sole job is rotating between our nurses to make sure we are able to leave the floor and take our full rest and meal breaks. Our nurses go on break knowing that their patients are cared for by someone who can focus solely on their needs instead of a break buddy who is also managing their own patient group. Having critically ill or high needs patients can make it difficult to leave the floor, but a dedicated lunch and break nurse can step into your shoes. It makes it more feasible for us to take a break and come back to deliver safer and better care to our patients.”

-Anne Groundwater, RN, Emergency Department

Other Items Our Team Recently Proposed:

- Across the board pay increases with added steps
- Nurses who utilize the 10-hour work break don’t have to use PLH.
- Matching contributions for retirement.
- Differentials for resource nurses
- Bigger differentials for evening and night shifts, and relief charge nurses
- Increased standby pay
- Standby pay for per diem nurses
  - Nurses for whom standby is required will be paid a higher rate for all standby hours over 50% of FTE hours per pay period
- Increase extra/odd shift differentials
- Certification bonuses paid per hour rather than calculated at the end of the year

For more details about these and other proposals, speak with a bargaining team member.

The way to win is to continue to show our unity across the hospital, like signing the petition in support of the bargaining team’s proposals.

We reached tentative agreements with administration for:

- More of a voice in how money and education hours are allocated.
- Updated language regarding discrimination.
- Updated seniority language

UPCOMING BARGAINING DATES:

Dec. 8 & Dec. 11