In Uncertain Times, More Unified Than Ever

On Monday, March 17 our ONA/Tuality Community Hospital (TCH) bargaining team had a short day at the bargaining table, but they came away with two tentative agreements, had some back-and-forth about a possible COVID-19 agreement, and gave feedback on administration’s proposal to dissolve extended illness hours (EIH).

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team canceled our next two bargaining session for this week, and agreed to a 30-day extension for the contract. The next bargaining session is scheduled for April 14, 2020.

COVID-19 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Our ONA/TCH bargaining team proposed a number of items to address the emergent issues with COVID-19:

- ONA representation in the COVID-19 readiness meetings so that nurses on the front lines of the pandemic can have a voice. **Rejected by TCH administration.**
- A process under which a nurse can receive paid administrative leave. **Rejected by TCH administration.**
- Paid administrative leave for any ONA-represented employee who is quarantined. TCH administration modified it in their proposal to say only if required by the hospital if due to a high risk exposure at work as defined by the CDC.
- 1:1 nurse staffing for presumptive COVID-19 cases. **Rejected by TCH administration.**
- 2:1 and 1:1 ratios in the emergency department for presumptive COVID-19 cases. **Rejected by TCH administration.**

Tuality also proposed to assign break relief nurses to permanent patient assignments. Our ONA/TCH bargaining team was disappointed by administration’s responses, but we will continue the conversation and will take more action if necessary.

TENTATIVE AGREEMENTS

The tentative agreements include:

- Better seniority tie-breakers.
- Clearer language on internal applications to help ensure that current ONA-represented nurses can transfer to other shifts or units. This should help with retention.
- A new specialty nurse residency program.
- Clarification on the grievance procedure.

ONA REJECTS HOSPITAL’S EIH PACKAGE PROPOSAL

The team also shared their (and their co-workers’) disappointment with administration’s proposal to dissolve EIH. One by one, each member of the bargaining team shared stories from co-workers about what EIH means to nurses and the devastating impact it would have to lose it. Some expressed that it felt like “a slap in the face” and that Tuality should be ashamed to even try to take it away. Our team told TCH administration that this is a non-starter and gave them a counter proposal that simply said “ONA rejects the Hospital’s EIH Package proposal.”

2020 ONA/TCH NEGOTIATION TEAM

- Cindy Kistler, RN (PCU)
- Terri Kaiser, RN (TOPS)
- Cindy Whitaker, RN (TOPS)
- Jayesh Palshikar, RN (Med/Surg)
- Chris Peterson, RN (ED)
- Cory Meyer, RN (Geri Psych)
- Chris Fults, RN (Med/Surg)
- Andrea Haney, RN (FBU)
Coronavirus Update: How ONA is Fighting to Keep Nurses Safe

As more cases of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) are reported and confirmed, ONA will continue working relentlessly to do the work needed to keep nurses and our communities safe. We have received reports from frontline ONA members of suspected Coronavirus cases in at least three additional facilities, which have not yet been confirmed. We have also heard disturbing instances of appropriate practice protocol not being followed by hospital administrators in multiple facilities across the state, and in Washington.

Incidents ONA members have observed firsthand include failure to mask patients with Coronavirus-like symptoms during triage, failure to supply adequate fitted N95 masks to nurses caring for patients with potential cases, and failure to maintain proper quarantine of the family and healthcare provider team of suspected Coronavirus patients. These breaches of practice standard put us as nurses directly at risk.

ONA has worked diligently through the weekend to implement a Coronavirus response that will keep our members, patients, and communities safe. This has included:

- ONA staff traveling the state to observe protocol to facilities with suspected cases
- ONA conducting an information request to all 50+ ONA facilities to gather information on management’s plans for protecting members and enforcing practice protocols
- ONA engaging with the governor’s office around the need for any furloughed or quarantined nurses to receive paid admin leave instead of being forced to drain earned paid sick leave banks
- ONA leadership sounding the alarm about the risk to our members this outbreak presents in published interviews with NBC Portland, the Oregonian, Willamette Weekly, and Pamplin Media Group
- ONA partnering with both ANA and AFT around a national response to the outbreak, spearheaded and driven by ONA leadership
- Partnering with the Washington State Nurses Association around a coordinated public message and response to the outbreak our two organizations are at the center of
- ONA coordinating with the Oregon Health Authority and a number of hospital employers in an ad hoc task force to manage Coronavirus response, containment, and resource management

To report a violation of Coronavirus protocol in your facility, please email practice@oregonrn.org with as many details as possible while being mindful of HIPAA guidelines.

ONA is also asking all members to take an ONA COVID-19 Workplace Survey to help better understand the work being done by facilities across the state.

To stay up to date on the work being done and to take the COVID-19 Workplace survey, visit:

www.OregonRN.org/coronavirus