We wanted to let the bargaining unit nurses know that we have heard your concerns regarding the recent unsafe staffing occurring in many areas of the hospital.

We are equally concerned with the working conditions we are seeing. Administration continues to be out of touch with the reality that each of us face on a daily basis. We have been disappointed that they have continued to make decisions without input from bedside nurses.

The lack of presence from administration or meaningful rounding to our units shows a complete disregard for the well-being of our nurses. Receiving a weekly script from the CEO that is written by a marketing director is just not a sincere form of concern.

We have been swimming against the tide of inadequate staffing for so long now. The mantra that “it will get better”, or “this is a problem at every hospital” cannot continue to be the answer. We continue to lose our staff nurses while the hospital replaces us with travelers, they receive subsidized funding for. Unfortunately, we are being forced to take action. After consulting with our nurse practice experts, we have found some avenues to assist us. These include:

- Filing a complaint with the Oregon Health Authority for shifts when your department is outside of the staffing plan agreed upon by the staffing committee.
- You may refuse to accept an unsafe patient assignment. Be prepared to verbalize the reasons that you believe the assignment to be unsafe. If you are pressured or forced to take the assignment, document the conversation including the reasons you believed it to be unsafe, alternatives that were offered to you, and the conversation you had that led to you being required to take the assignment. You may be able to file a complaint with the OSBN against the nurse leader who forced you to accept the assignment.
- Call the Lifepoint Ethics line to report instances where management engages in bullying or intimidation, when patient care is compromised, or any time there is a conflict of Lifepoint’s core values which are honesty, integrity and trustworthiness, inclusion, compassion, or legal/ethical compliance. 877-508-LIFE
- Complete SIM (safety incident management) reports for any and all safety concerns including patient care that was missed due to inadequate staffing.
- Continue to file unsafe staffing reports on the ONA website.

We understand your frustration and we are here for you. Each of you are likely exhausted and suffering from mental and emotional fatigue. We must continue to stand together to make a difference for ourselves and our patients. It is often difficult to find the time or energy to file a report after a
Protect Your License First!

Regardless of the stressful environment we are working under, it is important that your right to be treated fairly and with respect is maintained. We also have a responsibility to provide quality patient care by virtue of our independent nursing license. That means we need to be extra vigilant during this difficult period. We need to be hypersensitive to fatigue – our own and our colleagues’.

We need to stand strong if we face pressures to work beyond our capacity. The Oregon Hospital Nurse Practice Act requires that we self-assess for impairment due to fatigue AND that we refuse to accept any assignment which we are not “educationally prepared” for. The Act is clear that we should not accept assignments which we do not have the “knowledge, skill or ability to safely perform.” Please remember that your nursing license could be jeopardized if a patient care error is made regardless of the fact that you have been placed in an unsafe assignment.

Know your rights and responsibilities and be prepared to stand up for them if needed! If you are being asked to accept an assignment that you do not feel you can safely perform, it is your obligation to refuse to accept the assignment by virtue of your independent nursing license. This is tough, you may be threatened with discipline. It is important to remember that maintaining an unencumbered nursing license is far more important than maintaining your current position at WVMC – don’t put your license at risk!!!

Document, Document & Document!

As you know, if it isn’t documented then it didn’t happen so be sure to document your refusal to accept the assignment. Take note of who you spoke to and how they responded and use email to document your specific concern regarding taking the unsafe assignment to your supervisor. Should your supervisor and/or nurse manager insist that you accept an assignment that you do not feel you can safely perform we all need to stand strong and refuse!

If the assignment is not modified in order for you to feel safe performing it and your supervisor either disciplines and/or intimidates you in an effort to force you into taking an unsafe assignment that is a violation of the Nurse Practice Act and the supervisor could be reported to the Oregon State Board of Nursing https://www.oregon.gov/osbn/pages/complaint.aspx.

The hospital is still required to follow approved staffing plans and our union has just secured greater protections through the Oregon legislature to ensure that the Staffing Committee must be involved in the development of a contingency staffing plan when an emergency or epidemic occurs. The improved administrative rule also limits the ability to deviate from the hospital-wide staffing plan to 90 cumulative days unless approved by the staffing committee. These enhanced protections mean that the hospital must continue to follow the staffing plan as it was approved by the Staffing Committee. The Oregon Nurse Staffing Law (OAR 333-510-0110) requires the hospital to implement the staffing plan that has been approved by the Staffing Committee which “must include a formal process for evaluating and initiating limitations on admission or diversion of patients to another hospital when, in the judgment of a direct care registered nurse or a nurse manager, there is an inability to meet patient care needs or a risk of harm to patients.” If staffing plans are not being followed and/or there is no mechanism for staff nurses to initiate limitations on admission or diversion of patients please complete a Staffing Request and Documentation Form (SRDF) to alert ONA and management of the concern OregonRN.org/SRDF.

Consider filing a complaint with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to report that the hospital is out-of-compliance with the The Oregon Nurse Staffing Law.

New Protections for Nurse Staffing Law

Last year, ONA members brought evidence showing hospitals exploited the state of emergency to deviate from staffing plans, sometimes when they had no COVID-19 patients! The state legislature listened and passed House Bill 3016 (HB 3016), placing greater restrictions on hospitals.

On Jan. 1, 2022 these new restrictions went into effect, making it incredibly difficult to deviate from staffing plans that have been approved by the hospital nurse staffing committee.

ONA members should empower themselves by taking time to read the new language here.

You can learn more about this and other staffing rules and best practices on the ONA website at www.OregonRN.org/113.

As Oregon faces another surge it is important for ONA members to hold hospital executives accountable to the law!

Some key highlights of the changes:
- Clear limits on how long a Hospital can deviate from plans
- To deviate from staffing plans there needs to be “a national emergency or state emergency requiring implementation of a facility disaster plan and crisis standards of care.”
- The incident command shall report a written assessment to both co-chairs of the staffing committee within 30 days of deviating from a plan
- Deviation may not occur for more than 90 cumulative days unless approved by the staffing committee.

ONA stewards are the lifeblood of what makes our union strong. A strong union has at least one steward for every unit and shift. Stewards are there to answer colleague’s questions and discuss concerns and help keep every nurse up to date on important union activities.

There are three different steward trainings offered throughout the year. Introductory steward training focuses on representing your coworkers and problem-solving workplace issues. Grievance handling covers identifying, filing and following up on contract grievance. Building worksite power stresses how to build your union and create an environment that results in improvements for nurses.

Stay tuned for more training dates as they are finalized.

Space is limited so register today at:

www.OregonRN.org/Steward-Training

Introduction Steward Training
- Thursday, January 13
- Saturday, February 5
- Wednesday, March 9
- Saturday, April 2
- Friday, May 6
- Saturday, June 4

Grievance Handling Training
- Saturday, January 29
- Monday, March 28
- Saturday, May 28

Building Power Training
- Tuesday, February 22
- Saturday, April 16
- Monday, June 20
Serving as a statewide leader in ONA is a rewarding opportunity and a way for you to weigh in on the most important issues facing nurses today. ONA is actively seeking enthusiastic, engaged nurses to run for leadership in our organization’s statewide elections!

Nominations will open January 17, 2022 and the full list of available positions open for the 2022 elections is still being finalized. Stay tuned for more information and start thinking about how you can get involved in your statewide professional organization.