

WSNA Local Unit NORTHWEST HOSPITAL

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Local Unit Officers

Pamela Newsom	Co-Chair
Catherine Powers	Co-Chair
Thomas Booze	Secretary/ Treasurer
Cathy Sanders	Grievance
Mary Sweeney	Membership

WSNA Nurse Representative

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WSNA Web Site

www.wsna.org

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Union Representing
Registered Nurses in
Washington State*



HOW YOUR LOCAL OFFICERS REPRESENT YOU

By Pamela Newsom, RN

The Officers that you elect at the time of a new contract represent the nurses at Northwest Hospital and Medical Center on a variety of committees. I felt it was necessary to inform you of these committees so that you are aware of the hard work that they do for you and if you have any suggestions or concerns, you'll know which Officer to contact.

My job as Chair is to assist all the Officers whenever and wherever needed. I also communicate regularly with the WSNA Nurse Rep. My main job is to chair the Conference Committee meetings. These meetings occur every fourth Thursday of every month (some, like over the holidays, are excluded). At these meetings the Officers meet with management (Lorna Andrews, Carolyn Grant, Kathy Groen and Patty Johnson), and discuss situations that are occurring on the different floors or any incidents that have been brought to the attention of the Officers. For example, preceptor pay for all nurses who fill that role; harassment by management regarding overtime; ADOs that have been filled out; float pool nurses and locker availability, etc. I also sit on the Safe Lifting Committee that was developed in response to having adequate lifting equipment available to the nurses.

Mary Sweeney is the Membership Officer. She meets every two weeks with all the newly hired nurses informing them of the importance of belonging to their state professional organization and assisting them in becoming new members of WSNA. Mary also sits on the Benefits Committee which meets whenever there are any changes to be made to our benefits and at the beginning of the year when we sign up. If there are any changes, she can report back to the rest of the Officers and we can come up with a plan of action with the WSNA Nurse Rep.

Cathy Sanders is the Grievance Officer. Cathy is responsible for handling all the grievances between the nurses and management. She also sits in on disciplinary meetings whenever requested to do so by a nurse. All of these meetings allow the nurse to know that she is not alone and she has the Union on her side so that the contract is enforced appropriately and in a timely manner. These are your Weingarten Rights. Cathy sits in on all the Conference Committee meetings as well.



Tom Booze is the Secretary/Treasurer. Tom is responsible for taking the minutes from the Conference Committee meetings and posting them in the WSNA Public Folder so that all nurses at NWH can read that information. He also keeps track of the funds of the Local Unit. Tom sits on the Safe Staffing Committee. This committee was just developed, as the law now requires all hospitals to establish a safe staffing committee. Also on this committee are several bargaining member nurses who have volunteered their time, and we thank you!

Cathy Powers is the Co-Chair. Cathy chairs the Safe Staffing Committee and reports both to WSNA and the Conference Committee with the group's accomplishments. She also is on the Benefits Committee with Mary. Along with Tom and Cathy S., Cathy regularly attends the Conference Committee meetings. As Co-Chair, Cathy fills in for me whenever I am unavailable for any union matters or questions. She also assists the other Officers if they need assistance.

As a group, we meet every two months to discuss any rumors, questions, or situations that have come up at the hospital. The WSNA Nurse Rep also attends these meetings and informs us of any new action items happening with WSNA or in the legislature. We write articles for this Local Newsletter on a quarterly basis and we plan two bargaining member meetings a year. We also answer emails and phone questions that come to us. All of this is done on a volunteer basis. We believe in the integrity of the contract and want to give all the nurses at NWH a support system as it is needed. So, the next time you see one of your Officers, stop and say thanks - it goes a long way!!!!

Safe Staffing Committee

By Cathy Powers, RN

The Safe Staffing Committee at NWHMC has been first on the agenda of "Meeting Monday" since September 2008. Co-Chairs Cathy Powers, RN, CCRN and Tom Booze, RN oversee an active and dedicated group that is working to implement the Safe Staffing Legislation passed in March 2008.



Washington State is one of thirteen states, along with the District of Columbia, which has enacted legislation to implement staffing plans that ensure patient safety and address the Nurse Sensitive Quality Indicators. The Quality Indicators that we have chosen to monitor include; acuity (based on nursing care hours per patient day), patient falls, patient falls with injury, skill mix on a unit and pressure ulcer prevalence. The Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) will collect data from all participating hospitals furthering the goal of the Safe Staffing Legislation. Patient outcomes are the measurement of how well the staffing plan is working. Other factors include, but are not limited to, census, level of RN experience and specialty training, the need for specialized equipment and the architecture and geography of the patient care area.

The second aspect of developing the staffing plan includes developing a budget to support it. The committee has been provided with the tools for creating a budget with input from Gayle Ward, RN and Lorna Andrew, RN. Each unit will create the staffing plan and budget by September 2009 to be presented to and approved by the CEO.

This is an ongoing process measured not only annually, but daily as the patient census changes and acuities are adjusted. The staffing plan and matrix is required to be posted for each unit in a public area. The staffing plan must be available to the public, if requested.

For more information on safe staffing, please go to www.safestaffingsaveslives.org

Benefits Team

By Cathy Powers, RN

For the first time in our WSNA Contract, nurses who work at NWHMC are being represented on the Benefits Team. As your representatives, Mary Sweeney, RN (Operating Room) and Cathy Powers, RN, CCRN (ICU) have met with several members of the Benefits Team in Human Resources to discuss our benefits and obtain clarification on concerns that have been brought to us by staff. This has been very helpful and informative to be a part of the process by which management seeks to provide



staff with optimal benefits and choices while being fully aware of the financial costs.

Our first meeting prior to the 2009 Benefits Open Enrollment allowed us to present questions that we had received from staff and obtain clarification on out of pocket expenses. Our conclusion was to have the Benefits Team provide periodic explanations of specific benefits and, in particular, explain when an individual may choose to have a procedure done at another facility as a personal choice. Additions to our benefit package after our discussion included voluntary employee-paid buy-up options for orthodontia and short term disability. Other points of discussion included the availability of generic prescriptions which may cost less than our \$10.00 co-pay and the Benefits Card.

The Benefits Team would like your input and is available by phone or email. Questions can be directed to Linda Olmstead (ext. 1821) or John Pabarcus (ext. 1786) in Human Resources. As your WSNA Representatives, Mary and Cathy welcome your questions to bring forward to the Benefits Team.

Read Those Minutes!

By Tom Booze, RN

The WSNA/NWH Conference Committee Meeting Minutes are posted regularly in the Public Folders. To access these, go to Outlook via a computer at work and look to the upper left to see the Folder List. Scroll down to Public Folders and double left click on it. Two folders appear: Favorites and All Public Folders. Double left click All Public Folders. Several new folders will appear. Scroll down to WSNA Notices and double click it. The Minutes of various months will appear. Click on the month you want to read and get informed! It's that simple!



Thanks for Asking!

By Margaret Conley, RN, ARNP, WSNA Nurse Representative

So, how can you help???

Now that you've read everything your Local Unit Officers are doing on your behalf, we invite you to get involved.

You can help in ways that are not time consuming and allow you to get to know more about what is happening in the hospital.

Your Local Unit Officers need your help to:

- Post copies of this newsletter, conference committee minutes, and other notices on your unit WSNA bulletin boards.
- Print a copy of the WSNA contract, place it in a cover labeled "Unit Copy" and keep in a central location on your unit.
- Talk about WSNA and issues you are aware of. It is OK to talk about WSNA on your unit during breaks.
- Commit yourself to membership recruitment. Welcome new hires on behalf of WSNA.
- Help with surveys, distribute updates as needed.
- Let your Local Unit Officers know about issues and concerns on your unit.

Grievances 101

So you think you have a grievance? How do you know? What do you do? What constitutes a grievance?

A grievance is a conflict between the employer and the nurse that violates the Local WSNA contract. The grievance **procedure** is an effective problem-solving procedure between management and staff nurses. It places the employer and employee in an equal relationship. Both parties are required to provide requested information and to follow the grievance procedure described in Northwest Hospital's WSNA contract.

Step One:

The nurse who is experiencing the conflict contacts the Local WSNA Grievance Officer. This nurse and the Grievance Officer will meet to discuss the nurse's complaint, and together they will decide if a violation of the WSNA contract has actually

occurred. If a violation HAS occurred, a grievance form is filled out stating which article of the contract has been violated and what resolution of said violation is requested. This form will be provided to you by the Grievance Officer. The form will be given (usually by the Grievance Officer) to the nurse's immediate supervisor/manager. At this time, or shortly thereafter a meeting (the Step One Meeting) will be scheduled between that supervisor/ manager and the nurse. At Northwest Hospital, management usually requests the presence of a Human Resources Representative at this meeting. This meeting gives the grievant the opportunity to talk to management and to explain the contract violation that has occurred. Although the Grievance Officer does not have to be present, the very presence of that person usually assures the nurse a fair hearing and indicates to management that the nurse has full support of the Local Unit. It also assures that there is a witness present who can take notes.

At this level, the conflict could be resolved. The manager has two weeks to respond to the grievance. If she/he responds favorably and the conflict is resolved, no further steps are required.

Step Two:

If the conflict has not been resolved at Step Two, a meeting is set up with the Grievant, the Grievance Officer, the Nurse Manager and the Director of Nursing. Again, the hospitals' Human Resources Representative is usually requested to be present by management.

Again the Grievant will have the opportunity to explain the contract violation, and allow management to ask any clarifying questions.

After this meeting, the Grievance Officer will file the copy of the grievance and all relevant information with the bargaining unit and the WSNA Representative.

Step Three:

Again, Management has two weeks to respond to the step two meeting. After two weeks, if the matter has not been resolved, another meeting is held. At this point, the presence and formal involvement of the WSNA Nurse Rep is both

appropriate and necessary. Other participants at this meeting are the Nurse and the Local Unit Grievance Officer. This meeting follows the format of the prior meetings.

Step Four – Arbitration

If the conflict has not been resolved by the other three meetings, this complaint may go to Arbitration. The decision to advance the grievance to arbitration is decided by the Director of Labor Relations with input from the WSNA Representative and the WSNA Legal Counsel. If the grievance is advanced to arbitration, WSNA Legal Counsel assumes primary responsibility with assistance from the Local Grievance Officer and the WSNA Representative. Arbitration is a legal procedure and can take up to a year for a decision.

The most important part of the grievance process is that you, as a Northwest Hospital Nurse **are NOT alone**. In addition to the Local Grievance Officer, there are four other Local Unit Officers who can assist you. The list of your Local Officers follows:
Pam Newsome, Co-Chairperson
Cathy Powers, Co-Chairperson
Tom Booze, Secretary/Treasurer
Mary Sweeney, Membership Officer
Cathy Sanders, Grievance Officer

Up Coming Events

WSNA Convention '09
April 29 – May 1, 2009

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