

WSNA Local Unit St. Joseph Hospital- Bellingham

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Local Unit Officers

Diane Rientjes-Green	Chair
Patrick Baron	Co-Chair
Sarah Newell	Co-Secretary
Kimberly Finger	Co-Secretary
Linda Smallwood	Treasurer
Patricia Lombard	Co-Grievance
Ina O'Donnell	Co-Grievance
Chris Hammond	Co-Grievance
Tracy Pullar	Co-Membership

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WSNA Web Site

www.wsna.org

*The Oldest and Largest Union
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SAFE STAFFING FORMS

Many thanks to all the nurses who have filed staffing concern forms about the conditions on their units. Your Executive Team continues to

address the forms that we receive at our monthly WSNA/Management meetings. The hospital administration states they are working hard to improve the work environment and we need your input on the effects of any changes. As a reminder, be sure to work through your chain of command about staffing concerns before filling out this form so that the problem can be dealt with in real time. You should start with your team leader or manager, and proceed to your director as needed. You need to advocate for yourself and your patients. Speak out if you feel the assignment is too difficult or unsafe. Your voice is being heard and we are working hard to improve working conditions. We understand the time it takes to complete the forms but they are a valuable source of information and are the first agenda item at every WSNA/Management meeting.

NEW GRADUATE/RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Concerns have been raised about the new graduate/residency program, specifically about nurses being obligated to a unit/shift/FTE for up to two years. The hospital management feels this is in keeping with "Industry standards." WSNA has voiced concerns about locking nurses into a unit or schedule that is a poor fit, leading to a resignation instead of a possible adjustment in a position. Management urges residents to talk to their managers if they are having difficulties with their schedules or positions.

Your Executive Team will continue to address concerns about the new graduate/residency program. More to come!!

FTEs

We are addressing concerns about the inability of staff to reduce their FTEs. WSNA wants to support staff that feels the need to reduce hours because of obligations outside of work while managers are concerned about keeping units staffed and creating uneven schedules. We have heard that some managers are refusing all requests to reduce FTEs. Administration states it has to be looked at by a case-by-case basis. WSNA has inquired if the creation of guidelines would be helpful for staff as they try to balance work and life obligations.



ATTENTION UNIT REPS

Your Executive Team would like to extend an open invitation to all Unit Reps to attend WSNA/Management meetings to help keep you up to date on what is going on. This will also give us additional input about the needs of all nurses. These meetings occur the last Friday of each month from 0930-1330, usually in Conference Room 5. Attending this meeting is completely on your own time but we think you will find it very interesting and helpful in your roles as Unit Reps.

Speaking of Unit Reps, there was a great turnout and response for the pizza/get to know you celebration that took place March 21st at Cascade Pizza. Folders were handed out to the Reps with lots of information about their role and responsibilities. The Executive Team is considering doing this on a quarterly basis to keep everyone updated on what is happening and getting to know one another as well. Your executive team is delivering packets to unit reps that were unable to attend the party.

EXECUTIVE TEAM CHANGES

Some changes have been made on the Executive Team; Carolyn Shaffer, Co-Membership Officer, and Brenda Stotts, Occupational Health and Safety Officer, have resigned. Charles Shoecraft has agreed to assume the role of Occupational Health and Safety Officer. Charles, who works on South Campus as a Utilization Review nurse has lots of experience along these lines. We are very fortunate to have him join our team. We are looking for a Co-Membership Officer to help Tracy speak to new hires about WSNA. Please contact an officer if you are interested. Thank you Carolyn and Brenda for your hard work. We are sorry to see you go.

MANDATORY OVERTIME

Just a reminder, Article 7.5 of the nursing contract prohibits mandatory overtime at St. Joseph Hospital in accordance with state law, except in “limited circumstances.” According to Engrossed Senate Bill 6675 enacted in 2002, limited circumstances means an unforeseen disaster or catastrophe and specifically excludes chronic staffing shortages. This bill was enacted to protect the health and safety of health care workers. Two exceptions allowed in mandatory overtime are prescheduled on-call time or an interruption of an ongoing case (such as OR or Cath. lab). While no one wants to leave their unit short staffed, as professionals, we need to realize when we are too tired to provide safe care.



PAY FOR

PERFORMANCE

Administration has requested the bargaining unit to participate in the CREW/CARE program with the rest of the non-bargaining unit employees. WSNA strongly opposes participation for a number of reasons:

- A. Pay for performance creates an ethical conflict; we believe that we deliver the best care to all patients and do not require financial incentive to do so.
- B. Pay for performance has the potential to affect bargaining for future pay raises.
- C. Pay for performance is often tied in with cost of living raises.
- D. Payout is not guaranteed and can be withheld at the whim of the employer.

Your executive team has requested repeatedly that any CREW/CARE funds be used for nursing education, but hospital management states that IRS law prohibits this.

PCU/ED RESTRUCTURES

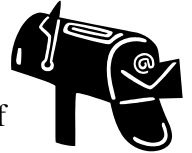
PCU-outpatient and ED have completed their restructures and the new schedules started in April. WSNA officers were present at each restructure to oversee the process and provide council for staff with questions. Restructures are never perfect but WSNA strives to enforce the contract language so that the process is as fair as possible. Please continue to contact your WSNA Executive Team or Nurse Representative with questions or concerns.

PTO/TRANSFERS

Are you transferring to a new department and have previously been granted PTO in the old department? This should be discussed between you and your new manager before assuming a new position to assure that there is not a problem or conflict with the time that was previously granted.

PARITY

Administration has completed their parity information and letters should have been sent out to everyone that submitted a form. All nurses should have received an email from Ellen Whitcraft in Human Resources to that effect. Please review your letters to affirm that you are receiving all credit due for past experience. The payroll department has amended the crediting schedule; adjustments will now be made during first pay period of May for up to three years as needed, instead of using eligible employee's hire date. This is great news for those folks whose anniversary date fell prior to the cutoff date this spring.



SAFE STAFFING LAW

There is a new staffing law passed by the legislature and signed into law by our governor, Christine Gregoire. The law is posted on the WSNA (www.wsna.org) website in it's entirety for your viewing pleasure. Basically it states that by September 2008 hospitals must establish a Nurse Staffing Committee. At least one half of the committee must be RNs currently providing direct patient care. A staffing plan and schedule (created by the committee) must be posted in a public place. Clinical staffing for each unit must be updated each shift and is made available to patients, visitors and the public. WSNA is working to assure that the process for choosing staff committee members is fair and that they receive appropriate training.

Save The Date!

2008 Leadership Conference
September 28 – 30, 2008
Lake Chelan, WA