

WSNA/HOLY FAMILY HOSPITAL NEGOTIATIONS ALERT

Your fellow nurses on your WSNA bargaining team have been attempting to get a fair contract at Providence Holy Family Hospital since January. We have had six bargaining sessions with Management thus far. During these sessions, HFH has attempted to make numerous, SWEEPING changes to your contract which we believe would, among other things, negatively impact your working conditions at the hospital, your financial security and safe patient care.

We are surprised and disappointed that Holy Family has pressed so hard to gut so many contractual protections that nurses have fought hard to secure through many, many years of hard work. Throughout the negotiations, your WSNA team has been united in defending against this assault on the collective bargaining agreement.

Here's some of what Providence Holy Family has been up to in negotiations:

Attempt to Weaken the Bargaining Unit and Keep Holy Family Nurses in the Dark. It's no secret that during the current contract WSNA has fought to protect nurses at HFH from actions by Mgt. which we believe violate the contract and the law. One example is the lawsuit WSNA has filed against HFH over missed rest breaks. It didn't surprise us, but perhaps it disappointed us, when Mgt. made several proposals during negotiations which we believe are attempts to weaken the local unit's collective power and to keep nurses in the dark.

First, Mgt. is proposing that new hires need not be required to join WSNA or pay their fair share for representation as is currently required. Mgt. would have you believe this is about employee "choice." On the contrary, we believe that Mgt.'s proposal is designed to weaken the unity and strength of the bargaining unit that the current membership language reflects. Each new nurse is expected to get involved and be a supporting member of the local unit. There is strength and power in that expectation. It leads to more engaged nurses who realize that they are part of a collective voice on issues of concern to them and their fellow nurses. We believe that HFH is trying to erode this collective strength.

As you learn more about what Mgt. is trying to do to you and your fellow nurses at HFH during these negotiations and reflect upon the daily challenges you face at work, ask yourself whether Mgt.'s actions are consistent with the notion of respecting "choice" or whether are designed to weaken and fragment the local unit's collective strength. Ask yourself, too, whether Mgt.'s membership proposal is designed to financially hinder WSNA's ability to advocate effectively on behalf of nurses at HFH, whether it is by filing lawsuits or taking grievances to arbitration, etc.

Mgt. has also made several proposals which would inhibit nurses' choice about rights they may have and would make it harder for the WSNA to communicate with nurses about matters of importance. For example, the current contract requires that Mgt. must inform a nurse of his or her right to have an Association representative present at any investigatory interview that could lead to disciplinary action. Having an Association representative at an investigatory meeting puts in place valuable safeguards for the nurse. Now, Mgt. is proposing that it no longer need inform a nurse of this right. Thus, if a nurse isn't aware of this right and does not request an Association representative, then too bad. So much for being concerned about notions of informed choice!

Mgt. is also proposing that it no longer be required to give WSNA prompt notice of all terminations. The effect of this proposal could be that a nurse may miss an important deadline for challenging the termination. Often, a nurse who has been suddenly terminated is not thinking clearly about technical issues such as deadlines. With the current contract language, WSNA would know about the termination and could timely contact the nurse to see if the nurse wanted to challenge the decision and to advise the nurse of important deadlines.

HFH is also proposing that it not provide WSNA with the nurses' home phone numbers in its monthly rosters that it sends to WSNA. This would make it hard for WSNA to communicate with nurses in a timely manner in the rare instances when it would be important to call a nurse at home concerning, for example, a current grievance/arbitration or urgent updates about negotiations or actions such as picketing, etc.

Finally, Mgt. is proposing that it no longer be required to provide new hires with a copy of the collective bargaining agreement. Mgt. is in the best position to provide newly hired nurses with a copy of the contract as soon as they are hired. Why wouldn't Mgt. not want to give a new nurse a copy of the contract? We believe that all of these proposals are designed to weaken the bargaining unit and to keep nurses in the dark about their rights.

Layoff/Reassignment/Reallocation. Mgt. is proposing SIGNIFICANT and NUMEROUS changes to the layoff language. Mgt.'s proposals would give nurses less notice of layoff/reallocation, less protection of his/her FTE and, overall, fewer options than the current language.

Rest Breaks and Rest Between Shifts. Your fellow nurses on the bargaining team realize how physically and mentally demanding nursing is. Adequate rest is important to the well-being of nurses and for the safety of our patients. As noted above, WSNA has filed a suit over the issue of missed rest breaks. What is Holy Family's approach? Instead of implementing staffing changes that will allow nurses to take 15-minute breaks in compliance with the current contract, it wants to lower the bar and allow for "intermittent" rest breaks. That's right, instead of getting one meaningful 15-minute rest break, Mgt. wants to give "breaks" of much shorter duration. How much rest do you get during a short pit-stop to bathroom and a quick dash to drink some water? As long as these few of minutes of "rest" here and there total 15 minutes in each 4-hour period, that's all the "rest" you are entitled to. Think about that when you are working a difficult 12-hour shift. Think about how that could impact the quality of care that you provide to your patients.

Holy Family's approach is the same for "rest between shifts." Instead of focusing its attention on ensuring that nurses get the required rest between shifts, it wants to lower the bar yet again by significantly reducing the amount of time-and-a-half pay it must give to a nurse when the nurse does not get the required rest. That's right. Holy Family's proposal does not focus on how to ensure that nurses get the required rest, but rather to make it cheaper for Holy Family when nurses work without the required rest. What is important to note that Holy Family can already ensure that it never has to pay time-and-a-half for missed rest by putting in place appropriate staffing measures. How is it better for patients to put new language in place that makes it less costly for Holy Family when nurses do not get their required rest?

Charge Nurses. Mgt. has claimed that it does not intend to "eliminate the charge nurse." Who knows? What they have proposed is to delete a provision in the contract which states: "A charge nurse will be assigned for each unit and shift except when the Unit Director/unit coordinator is designated charge." Management's proposed deletion means that your (or any) unit or shift may no longer have a charge nurse, but could have an Assistant Nurse Manager instead. Nurses have told us that they like the current charge nurse system.

Bereavement Leave and Jury Duty Leave. In looking at ways to gut the contract, Management has left no stone uncovered. Management is proposing to reduce the maximum number of paid days of bereavement leave from 5 days to 3 days for a death in a family. Management is also proposing that guaranteed paid jury leave be limited to 4 weeks. Currently, there is no such limit. So much for compassion and supporting civic duty.

Health Benefits. Your bargaining team recognizes that affordable, comprehensive health insurance is a very important issue to you and your fellow nurses at Holy Family Hospital. The current contract states that health care benefits cannot be reduced during the life of the contract without bargaining over the proposed reductions. Holy Family is proposing that it can unilaterally change benefits as long as it merely discusses the change with WSNA.

The current contract states that Holy Family must provide a health insurance plan at no cost for nurses who work more than 24 hours per week. Holy Family is now proposing that all nurses may be asked to contribute toward premiums, even for employee-only coverage.

Wages. Your bargaining team has been trying to get Management to put forth fair wage proposal for months. Management did not even bother to give us a complete initial wage proposal until our FIFTH bargaining session which occurred after the contract was scheduled to expire. So much for Management's claim that during negotiations they "have shown nothing but respect to WSNA and the bargaining team." [Please note that WSNA and HFH have extended the current collective bargaining agreement while we continue to bargain.]

So what is Management proposing for wages for a 3-year contract? Mgt. proposes to keep the current step structure with a **1%** across-the-board increase in the first year and **ZERO %** across-the-board increases in the last two years of the contract. Currently, the wages for nurses at Holy Family are between 2% and 4.9% *lower*, depending on the step, than the wages for nurses at Sacred Heart, another Providence facility. Sacred Heart nurses will get another 2.5% across-the-board increase in January, 2012. [During the last Sacred Heart negotiations last year, Providence agreed to pay annual across-the-board raises of 3%, 2% and 2.5%.] As noted above, Holy Family is proposing that Holy Family nurses receive **ZERO %** across-the-board increase in 2012 and 2013. Because of this, Holy Family nurses will fall even further behind nurses at Providence Sacred Heart. In considering Management's wage proposal, consider that Management has not claimed an inability to pay more than what it is offering and that nursing wages at Holy Family have been close to Sacred Heart wages over the years.

We hope that this update gives you a better understanding some of the sweeping changes that HFH is seeking during these difficult negotiations. Many of these proposals will have long-lasting impact and will affect your day-to-day working conditions as well as your pocket book. Now, more than ever, it's important for nurses at Holy Family to stand united.

Stay tuned for how you can get involved in supporting your fellow nurses.

In Solidarity,

Your WSNA Bargaining Team