



Nurse Staffing Takes Center Stage

RNs speak out about the impact inadequate staffing has on patients.

Two of our key contract priorities were the focus of negotiations on Monday: Minimum RN-to-Patient ratios adjusted for acuity and full union security to ensure a strong voice for RNs.

Growth is Great but RN Staffing Isn't Keeping Pace.

Nurses from across our hospital spoke to management at the bargaining table about the struggle nurses face every day to provide quality care for too many patients.

"We're thrilled about the growth, and we want to grow with our hospital, but right now we're not.

"The truth is, things are changing and we need to change with it. We need some minimum staffing ratios – based on acuity. It will be better for our patients, better for our hospital, better for us," said Gabrielle Kaschak, RN, MS5W.

Management Dismisses Our Concerns as "Rhetoric"

Management initially reacted by dismissing our concerns as "rhetoric and horror stories.."

Later they stated that they are concerned about recruitment and retention of RNs but don't believe staffing ratios are the answer.

Over the next few weeks, our negotiating committee will be asking RNs in every department to help make our case and determine specific staffing proposals for each department.

Help Determine Staffing Proposals for Your Area

Contact the Following Bargaining Committee Members:

Ruth Visintainer, RN, MSICU

Kim Klinger, RN, MS3

Gabrielle Kaschak, RN, MS5W

Lynn Getz, RN, OB



"To provide the best care, we need to retain experienced nurses and nurture new nurses. We must limit ratios of patients to nurses to allow safe care. One nurse to six patients isn't reasonable in any area!"

JUDY SMITHNOSKY, RN, REHAB

Research on Nurse Staffing and Patient Safety

A growing body of evidence finds that low nurse staffing levels compromise patient safety.

✓ For each additional patient over four in a registered nurse's care, the risk of death increases by 7 % for surgical patients. In hospitals with eight patients per nurse, patients have a 31 % greater risk of dying than those in hospitals with four patients per nurse. *Source: Research by Linda A. Aiken, PhD, RN, University of Pennsylvania, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), October 23-30, 2002.*

✓ Understaffing was a contributing factor in 24 % of all sentinel events reported to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). *Source: "Health Care at the Crossroads," a report by JCAHO released August 7, 2002.*

✓ In hospitals with fewer registered nurses, patients are 2 to 9 % more likely to suffer complications like urinary tract infections and pneumonia, 3 to 5 % more likely to have to stay in the hospital longer, and 2.5 % more likely to die from "failure to rescue." *Source: A study by Dr. Jack Needleman of the Harvard School of Public Health published in The New England Journal of Medicine on May 30, 2002.*

More on Negotiations . . .

In addition to spending significant time talking about RN-to-patient staffing ratios and the importance of union security so nurses have a strong, united voice to advocate for ourselves and our patients, we also made progress on the following issues:

- 1. Job Postings:** We did not quite reach an agreement, but made a lot of progress on the issue of posting jobs in the work area before posting hospital-wide or system-wide.
- 2. Fair Handling of Disputes:** We agreed on an issue regarding the process for nurses to file grievances and the use of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.
- 3. Bereavement Leave:** We reached an agreement that nurses who work 11 PM - 7 AM may choose to use their bereavement day before OR the day of the funeral.
- 4. Loan Forgiveness.** We proposed loan forgiveness of \$30,000 for a Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees.
- 5. Continuing Education Units:** We had good discussion about continuing education at the last bargaining session, but did not reach an agreement.



"It's important that nurses are united and speaking with one voice. Unity will bring us strength to better advocate for our patients' safety, quality of care, and our job security."

LYNNE GETZ, RN, OB

Important Meeting for All RNs Discuss Staffing and Wage Proposals

Monday, December 29

7:45 AM, 1:00 PM, 4:00 PM, 7:00 PM

East Mountain Inn