

UNION UPDATE

Nov. 1, 2013



WORKING WITH THE CEO & CNO

Union Stewards have been meeting on a quarterly basis with CEO Doug Long. We asked that Stephanie Mearns, our new CNO, be included in our last meeting. Susan Farrell initiated the invitation to CEO Doug Long so that the stewards could meet and discuss concerns over staffing, training and other critical issues. He shadowed stewards and staff in DOU, ICU, Outpatient Surgery, and ER, learning the strengths and weaknesses of our hospital, and the needs of RNs. We met with him last week to continue the discussion and to learn hospital plans for the upcoming flu season and how the hospital is planning to cover the possible influx of patients as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Specifically, the hospital has increased RN staff by 10 positions since January 2013. There are openings for about 15 additional new positions. Los Robles and West Hills have hired 20 to 30 travelers who will be assigned to rotate between the hospitals as needed to help staff during the flu season and to train for the upcoming CPOE (Computerized Physician Order Entry), scheduled to begin April 1, 2014.

We also addressed our concerns about the hospital's commitment to the Staffing Issues Committee and are happy to announce that CNO Stephanie Mearns accepted our invitation to attend these meetings and will do so as her schedule permits.

STAFFING ISSUES

At our last meeting, committee members Jouse Kuy, Linda Perrin, Cate Canava and Donna Anderson were informed that they should attend the Nursing Forum to get answers to our concerns about staffing. Our agenda included: Staffing to Core, Resource RNs, and plans for the current flu season.

We met with the CEO about the hospital's refusal to discuss our concerns, and the hospital seems to have made a renewed commitment to share information, address our concerns, and/or utilize our insights and recommendations. We look forward to working with new CNO Stephanie Mearns.

LABOR MANAGEMENT MEETING

In our last meetings, we addressed:

- Security concerns. Security guards fill in for the telephone operators during the night shift and patrol the facility, leaving RNs in the ER feeling vulnerable.
- Lift equipment and lift policy. The hospital has promised to start a labor management committee to review equipment. Committee members have been waiting for the hospital to provide a date.
- RNs and hospital staff were happy that the hospital agreed to provide bottled water in the break room on the fifth floor.
- Food delivery and family member visits. We requested that when we order food or a family member visits us, that family members or delivery personnel be allowed up to the floors. We suggested that employees advise the front desk so that the visitor may obtain a visitor's badge.

UNION STEWARDS

Kathleen Burke & Jouse Kuy, ICU; Tjwana Holt, ICU; Stella Chavez, & Monique Johnson, Cath Lab; Elley Langsam, L&D; Cate Canava & Donna Anderson, NICU; Linda Perrin, DOU; Susan Farrell, Outpatient Surgery

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HCA INNOVATOR AWARD

Congratulations to Susan Farrell for receiving an HCA innovator award for fiscal savings. Susan won the award for her suggestions that the hospital hire Resource RNs to help cover RN breaks and lunches. We hope the hospital will use her suggestion to its fullest extent. *During last year's flu season, West Hills RNs were paid for nearly 5,000 missed breaks and lunches.*

Farrell says, "Everyone is willing to work through breaks and lunch to provide patient care in an emergency. The emergency should not become a daily practice. I am happy that the hospital has hired travelers and more RNs to address our staffing needs. I believe patient satisfaction would improve if nurses got the breaks and lunches they need to be refreshed during our 12-hour workdays. Pizza is ok in a pinch, but we need real breaks and lunches, especially during high census."

OUR STEWARDS IN ACTION

ER HOLDS

Cate Canava, NICU (but formerly a float team RN) met with John Omel in HR and Chris Plummer at the second step of the Staffing Issue Dispute. At issue is RN patient ratio when the Float Team has been assigned to work in the ER Hold area. Float Team RNs believe that staffing should be three patients assigned to one RN because of patient acuity and job responsibility. The hospital has 15 calendar days to respond.

KNOW YOUR WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

A number of RNs have been disciplined over the past few months for mistakes they have made. Anyone can make a mistake but as the HCA attorney warned us at 2011 bargaining, we can be fired for that mistake.

You never know when you might need a steward so remember: If you are called into a meeting with

management and you are being asked questions which might result in disciplinary action, ask for your Union Steward. You have the right to ask for a steward even if you're in the middle of the meeting.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

As the hospital ramps up its staffing, managers are disciplining employees over violations of the attendance policy. If you have been written up, stand up for your rights. One night shift RN did just that when she was called into a meeting and was told that she was going to receive a written warning for absenteeism. The manager used absences that occurred outside of the rolling year as justification for the discipline. The nurse spoke up about her concerns, the manager checked her facts, and the written warning was rescinded. Good job to all. Remember, leaves to care for a sick family member (kin care) and FMLA do not count as occurrences.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.SEIU121RN.ORG

CALL OFFS, FLOATING, EXTRA SHIFTS

Over the past few weeks, census has yoyo-ed. Nurses have been called off, floated and asked to work extra shifts. The contract is clear on how call offs, floating and extra shifts should be handled and doled out. Our Union has filed grievances on behalf of RNs whose rights have been violated. If you have questions or concerns, talk with a steward or call our Union Representative.

Know Your Rights

Call-Off Order

- Agency and Travelers
- RNs on premium pay
- Per diems
- All others on a rotational basis

If you believe the hospital has made an error in the employee call off rotation, and that error results in an employee's hours for that pay period being reduced below his/her documented FTE status, this employee will be paid his/her base rate plus any applicable shift differential for those hours that were inappropriately reduced. If hours are not reduced below the documented FTE, the error will be remedied solely by bypassing that employees the next time his/her name comes up for call off.

Float Order

- Float Pool
- Volunteers
- Agency and Travelers
- Per Diems
- All other employees on a rotational basis

Extra Shifts

For most departments, if you wish to work an extra shift, you must sign up for one or more in the Nursing

Office. Work is assigned from the list on a rotational basis, and starts over each posted work schedule with the most senior employee.

Examples

- Nurse A and B sign up to work the same extra shift. The RN with more seniority is assigned to work the shift.
- Nurse A and B sign up to work an extra shift on the same day. Nurse A has seniority but has already worked an extra shift during this posted work schedule. Nurse B has not worked an extra. Because the shift assignment rotates, Nurse B is assigned to work the shift.

If you believe you should have been assigned a shift but were not, contact a steward or our Union Representative.

Flexed Off Before the End of Shift

If you are a 12-hour nurse and you are told to go home before your shift is scheduled to end due to low census (and remember not to volunteer to go home early), you should be paid time and a half for all hours you worked over 8 hours. Registered Nurses have been shortchanged on their paychecks lately and the hospital will continue this practice until we stand up for ourselves and the rights contained in our contract. Make sure to inspect your paystub to ensure you are paid the correct amount for all hours worked!

