



For immediate release

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KAISER PERMANENTE CLINICIANS TO LAUNCH NATION'S LARGEST EVER MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS' STRIKE JAN. 12

2,600 Kaiser California mental health clinicians notify state and federal authorities today that they will hold a week-long statewide strike over the HMO's failure to provide timely, adequate care to patients.

Local contacts and information on 35 strike locations and 65 picket lines below

EMERYVILLE — Kaiser Permanente's 2,600 California mental health clinicians — psychologists, therapists, and social workers represented by the National Union of Healthcare Workers — will launch a statewide strike on Monday, January 12, to protest Kaiser's chronic failure to provide its members with timely, quality mental health care. Kaiser staff will be on 65 picket lines at more than 35 locations throughout the state during the scheduled week-long strike. Notice of the strike was filed today.

More than 700 other Kaiser workers will join the picket lines, including Northern California optical workers and Southern California medical social workers, speech pathologists, audiologists, health educators, and registered dietitians, all of whom also report problems with inadequate staffing.

Despite huge profits — “nonprofit” Kaiser has made more \$14 billion since 2009, and this year's profits of more than \$3 billion are up 40 percent over last year's record— Kaiser Permanente does not staff its psychiatry departments with enough clinicians to treat the ever-growing number of patients seeking mental health care. Kaiser's systemic understaffing forces patients to endure lengthy waits for treatment — weeks and even months — in violation of California law and industry standards. Last year Kaiser was fined \$4 million for imposing lengthy and illegal appointment delays on mental health patients. Since then, Kaiser has failed to correct the violations. Compounding the crisis, during the first nine months of 2014, Kaiser added 422,000 new members nationwide, many as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

“For patients suffering from depression, anxiety, and other debilitating mental conditions, these delays can be insurmountable obstacles, sometimes leading to tragic outcomes,” said Clement Papazian, a clinical social worker at Kaiser in Oakland and president of NUHW's Northern California chapter of mental health clinicians. “We don't want to see patients being ignored. Kaiser's actions are doing real harm. Even suicides have been linked to Kaiser's delays and denial of care.”

For more than four years Kaiser has refused to acknowledge the problems caused by its lengthy appointment delays, much less fix them. Having exhausted every other means, Kaiser's mental health clinicians are adhering to their ethical responsibility to advocate for their patients by conducting a strike aimed at forcing Kaiser to uphold its contractual and ethical obligations to its patients.

Journalists covering this issue are encouraged to review NUHW's ten-page summary, which provides a history of the crisis, its impact on patients, and evidence of ongoing violations. Here are a few key items:

In 2013, California's Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) fined Kaiser \$4 million for systemically understaffing its psychiatry department, falsifying patients' appointment records to conceal long wait times, and providing patients with misleading information regarding the care available to them — a situation nearly identical to the scandal that engulfed the Veterans Affairs Administration last year.

Rather than staff their clinics appropriately, Kaiser merely shifted resources, directing clinicians to see more first-time patients at the expense of returning patients. Healthcare workers at Kaiser facilities report that patients frequently endure waits of between four and twelve weeks for a return appointment, making effective, ongoing treatment nearly impossible.

The situation is getting worse. This year, under the Affordable Care Act, Kaiser's California enrollment has increased by a quarter million members. Staffing levels, already too low, are not keeping pace with enrollment of new patients. Withholding services while increasing membership is an effective way to score record profits but it has led to woefully inadequate care, as well as four class-action lawsuits filed by patients and families who say Kaiser's violations contributed to tragic outcomes, including suicides.

In September, Kaiser implicitly acknowledged the problems by agreeing to pay the DMHC's \$4 million fine. Also, Kaiser revealed plans to outsource Northern California mental health services to Value Options. Kaiser's mental health clinicians believe outsourcing is necessary as a temporary, stop-gap measure while Kaiser hires enough staff to meet its patients' needs. However, Kaiser has ignored Value Options' dubious track record. In July 2009, New Mexico discontinued its use of Value Options because of the company's denial of services to patients. In June 2014, California's Department of Managed Health Care fined Value Options for "repeated deficiencies." And in July 2014, New York's attorney general assessed \$1.2 million in penalties to Value Options and up to \$31 million in restitution to patients for denial of access to mental health care.

In contract bargaining in December, Kaiser's mental health clinicians presented Kaiser with a commonsense solution: clinician-management committees in each facility that can work together to determine adequate staffing levels and outsourcing needs, with help from a neutral, outside expert if the two sides cannot agree. It's a simple and effective solution already in place in other health care systems. But once again, Kaiser failed to act, triggering this statewide strike.

"With soaring profits and a \$30 billion reserve, Kaiser needs to step up and lead the way in finally making mental health care a priority in this country," said NUHW President Sal Rosselli. "The law requires it and Kaiser's ethical obligations as a health care provider demand it."

Local contacts and information on 35 strike locations and 65 picket lines on following page

NUHW Kaiser Strike

6 a.m. Monday, January 12 to 6 a.m. Monday, January 19

PICKET SCHEDULE

MONDAY, JANUARY 12

Northern California

San Francisco Medical Center

2425 Geary Blvd., San Francisco, 94115

San Jose Medical Center

275 Hospital Parkway, San Jose, 95119

Santa Rosa Medical Center

401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa, 95403

Sacramento Medical Center

2025 Morse Ave., Sacramento, 95825

Fresno Medical Center

7300 North Fresno St., Fresno, 93720

Modesto Medical Center

4601 Dale Road, Modesto 95356

Southern California

West Los Angeles Medical Center

6041 Cadillac Ave., West L.A., 90034

Anaheim Medical Center

3440 East La Palma Ave., Anaheim, 92806

Fontana Medical Center

9961 Sierra Ave., Fontana, 92335

San Diego Medical Center

4647 Zion Ave., San Diego, 92120

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13

Northern California

San Francisco Medical Center

2425 Geary Blvd., San Francisco, 94115

San Jose Medical Center

275 Hospital Parkway, San Jose, 95119

Santa Rosa Medical Center

401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa, 95403

Sacramento Medical Center

2025 Morse Ave., Sacramento, 95825

Fresno Medical Office Building

4785 North Fresno St., Fresno, 93726

Modesto Medical Center

4601 Dale Road, Modesto 95356

San Leandro Medical Center

2500 Merced St., San Leandro, 94577

Richmond Medical Center

901 Nevin Ave., Richmond, 94801

San Rafael Medical Center

99 Montecillo Rd., San Rafael, 94903

Vallejo Medical Center

975 Sereno Dr., Vallejo, 94589

Walnut Creek Medical Center

1425 South Main St., Walnut Creek, 94596

Southern California

South Bay Medical Center

25825 Vermont Ave., Harbor City, 90710

Kaiser CDRP/Psych Building

1539 West Garvey Ave. North,
West Covina, 91790

Santa Ana Medical Office Building

1900 East 4th St., Santa Ana, 92705

Ontario Medical Center

2295 South Vineyard Ave., Ontario, 91761

Point Loma Medical Office Building

3420 Kenyon St., San Diego, 92110

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14

Northern California

Roseville Medical Center

1600 Eureka Rd., Roseville, 95661

Santa Rosa Medical Center

401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa, 95403

San Rafael Medical Center

99 Montecillo Rd., San Rafael, 94903

Antioch Medical Center

4501 San Creek Rd., Antioch, 94531

Vacaville Medical Center

1 Quality Dr., Vacaville, 95668

Walnut Creek Medical Center

1425 South Main St., Walnut Creek, 94596

San Leandro Medical Center

2500 Merced St., San Leandro, 94577

Santa Clara Medical Center

700 Lawrence Expsrwy., Santa Clara, 95051

Redwood City Medical Center

1150 Veterans Blvd., Redwood City, 94063

Modesto Medical Center

4601 Dale Road, Modesto 95356

Fresno Medical Office Building

4785 North Fresno St., Fresno, 93726

Southern California

Downey Medical Center

9333 Imperial Highway, Downey, 90242

Euclid Medical Office Building

1188 North Euclid St., Anaheim, 92801

Corona Medical Office Building

2055 Kellogg Ave., Corona, 92879

Point Loma Medical Office Building

3420 Kenyon St., San Diego, 92110

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15

Northern California

South Sacramento Medical Center

6600 Bruceville Rd., Sacramento, 95823

Santa Rosa Medical Center

401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa, 95403

San Rafael Medical Center

99 Montecillo Rd., San Rafael, 94903

Vallejo Medical Center

975 Sereno Dr., Vallejo, 94589

Walnut Creek Medical Center

1425 South Main St., Walnut Creek, 94596

Oakland Medical Center

280 West MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, 94611

San Leandro Medical Center

2500 Merced St., San Leandro, 94577

South San Francisco Medical Center

1200 El Camino Real, South S.F., 94080

Santa Clara Medical Center

700 Lawrence Expsrwy., Santa Clara, 95051

Stockton Medical Office Building

7373 West Lane, Stockton, 95203

Fresno Medical Office Building

4785 North Fresno St., Fresno, 93726

Southern California

Woodland Hills Medical Center

5601 De Soto Ave., Woodland Hills, 91367

Irvine Medical Center

6650 Alton Parkway, Irvine, 92618

Fontana Medical Center

9961 Sierra Ave., Fontana, 92335

Point Loma Medical Office Building

3420 Kenyon St., San Diego, 92110

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16

Northern California

South Sacramento Medical Center

6600 Bruceville Rd., Sacramento, 95823

Santa Rosa Medical Center

401 Bicentennial Way, Santa Rosa, 95403

Oakland Medical Center

280 West MacArthur Blvd., Oakland, 94611

Santa Clara Medical Center

700 Lawrence Expsrwy., Santa Clara, 95051

Stockton Medical Office Building

7373 West Lane, Stockton, 95203

Fresno Medical Center

7300 North Fresno St., Fresno, 93720

Southern California

Baldwin Park Medical Center

1011 Baldwin Park Blvd., Baldwin Park, 91706

Irvine Medical Center

6650 Alton Parkway, Irvine, 92618

Riverside Medical Center

10800 Magnolia Ave., Riverside, 92505

San Diego Medical Center

4647 Zion Ave., San Diego, 92120