



NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

Kindred Hospital Bay Area

JANUARY 2018

AROUND THE UNION

NUHW continued our drive to organize mental health clinicians with a victory at **Elk Grove Unified School District** (Sacramento County) in late October. Nearly 40 Elk Grove mental health therapists and behavior support specialists are now NUHW members, marking our union's fourth mental health organizing victory over the past year.

Nearly 120 psychologists, therapists, behavioral health counselors, employment consultants and clinical supervisors at **Richmond Area Multi-Services** voted in a mail-ballot election to join NUHW, seeking staff retention, higher staffing levels, and fair wages. RAMS is a nonprofit that operates in San Francisco schools and serves community members.

NUHW has committed \$100,000 to help victims of the **Northern California wildfires** that killed 42 people and destroyed 5,700 buildings. Twenty-two NUHW members lost their homes in the fire. They will each be offered an immediate \$1,500 grant. A portion of the remaining funds will be donated to the relief efforts spearheaded by the North Bay Labor Council and North Bay Jobs with Justice. The remainder will be set aside to provide further help to NUHW members impacted by the fire.

Following President Trump's declaration that the **opioid addiction crisis** is "a public health emergency," NUHW president Sal Rosselli released a statement urging for more resources for mental health care services. Read the full statement on our website: NUHW.org.

GREETINGS FROM OUR NEWEST STEWARD

Babette Des Jardins

Respiratory Care Practitioner, AM Shift

I have worked at Kindred as a Respiratory Care Practitioner for the past seven years. Two years ago, I first became involved in our union when we started bargaining our contract for the RN and Tech workers.

Participating in bargaining — which was a very long and difficult process to say the least — opened the door for me and got me interested in trying to improve working conditions at Kindred. I finally decided to ask my co-workers to nominate me as their steward because I wanted to continue serving my friends and co-workers in the respiratory department and beyond.

I want to ensure that management treats everyone professionally and with respect. I also want to be a resource and a support to my co-workers and to be able to answer their questions about our contract. I really want to encourage everyone to step up and get more involved in our union. We should work on electing a shop steward for every department, on both shifts. And we should have every department involved in our quarterly Labor Management Meetings so that each department is represented when we push management to improve staffing and to take into account our suggestions.

Only we know what our issues are and what we need in our own department, so I urge all of you, my co-workers, to elect a steward for our department and make sure our voice is heard.

If you have questions about your contract or need help with a disciplinary issue, you can reach Babette at (209) 620-4853 or babettegarden13@gmail.com.



Babette with Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom, whom NUHW endorsed at our Leadership Conference in Anaheim in October.

LABOR MANAGEMENT MEETING RECAP: SHORT STAFFING AND PATIENT SAFETY

On December 7, 12 workers from EVS, Respiratory, Radiology, OR, and Nursing met with management to discuss short staffing, patient care, and pay.

EVS

James Fox discussed the shortage of EVS staff on the PM shift — a problem worsened by the growing number of CRE patients, room changes, and new admissions. He expressed concern that short staffing affects infection control and work safety and asked management to hire another PM shift EVS worker. CCO Joe Lotsko said he would look into extending the hours of AM shift workers.

NURSING

Patient Acuity

We asked Joe Lotsko about how Kindred ensures that they are staffing to acuity and to state mandated staffing levels. Joe explained that Kindred uses an acuity tool to

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Labor Management meeting

Thursday, March 15
10:30 a.m. • Location TBD

All members are invited to participate during their break. According to our contract, we can have up to 15 workers paid to participate in these meetings. If you'd like to participate, please talk to your union organizer, Alex Early, and talk with the scheduler to arrange to have that day off.

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

Your Weingarten rights guarantee you union representation in a meeting with management that may result in discipline. But you **must** request a shop steward or a union representative be present in the meeting. When management calls you into a meeting, ask first:

"Can this meeting or discussion in anyway lead to my being disciplined or terminated?"

If the answer is yes or possibly, say:

"I request that my union steward or representative be present for the meeting. Once they arrive or are available, I'll participate in the meeting."

If the employer denies the request, the employer has committed an unfair labor practice. You have the right to refuse to answer questions. The employer may not discipline you for such refusal.



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constantly measure acuity. He asked staff to bring assignment and acuity concerns to their supervisor so that they can be corrected.

CNA Staffing

Gina Washington, RN, shared how CNA short staffing increases the workload of nurses, making it extremely difficult for them to properly monitor patients. Shonda Hansen, NOC shift LVN and union steward, talked about how management had forced LVNs to carry out CNA job duties without any prior notice.

Joe Lotsko said he had informed supervisors to ask LVNs before assigning them CNA duties, so that should not be a problem. He acknowledged that CNA staffing levels could be improved, but did not agree that having fewer CNAs creates more work for other nursing staff.

When we asked about the use of registry CNAs to meet staffing needs, Joe said he would look into this, but did not commit to a start date.

Since this meeting, we know of at least one instance in which a supervisor asked an LVN to work as a CNA without prior notice. We still have to work to hold management to this commitment.

RADIOLOGY

Paul Rai and Rohit Sharma advocated for a pay raise for Rad Techs, given that they are now conducting CT scans in addition to their other work. Joe said he would check with corporate management and we assured him that we would agree to any raise that was administered in a fair and transparent way.

RESPIRATORY

Respiratory Techs Mike Klak and Babette Des Jardins followed up with Joe Lotsko and Jan Fraga, Respiratory Manager, about the commitments management made to staff based on acuity. We argued that if management continued to staff inadequately, workers would be forced to use shortcuts, treat multiple patients at the same time, or omit or abbreviate treatments — practices that threaten quality patient care.

Since our last LMC meeting, management has created a new point system for Respiratory staffing, but Jan said the department would need to hire at least four to five new RTs before they could actually implement the new staffing model. She did not know how long this would take. Since the meeting, we have checked and it doesn't seem there are any open RT positions posted online.

Management also committed to accept our suggestions to the new staffing model and to use it to analyze the shortcomings of the current staffing model, saying they would need the data to convince Kindred corporate that the department needs a larger budget for hiring staff.

We also presented 63 Objection to Assignments forms, which workers have been using to document instances of short staffing and the resulting risks to patient safety. We informed management that we will continue to document short staffing and that we would provide these forms to regulatory state agencies if staffing problems persist.

RTs and management will meet again on January 25 at 10:30 a.m. to review the data and plan next steps.

*For more information, please contact NUHW Organizer
Alexandra Early at aearly@nuhw.org or (617) 816-4260.*

