



## **Kaiser IBHS Contract Campaign Update**

*April 3, 2020*

As a union, we must work together to hold Kaiser accountable for keeping us safe and treating us fairly during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to participating in Kaiser's twice-per-week COVID-19 calls with all of its unions, we have been bringing member concerns to the attention of Kaiser officials and pressing them to take action on a wide range of issues including struggles people are facing to work from home, obtain proper protective gear and obtain additional paid time off.

So far about 40 Kaiser members have emailed their concerns to [COVID19@nuhw.com](mailto:COVID19@nuhw.com), and we have moved quickly to respond and either get information to members or bring the issues directly to Kaiser.

This email is long, but it contains a lot of information, including an update on our contracts and Kaiser's disappointing new draft proposal for providing workers with additional administrative leave. Please [email us](#) with questions or concerns and [visit our COVID-19 information webpage](#).

### **Contract Update**

We are still awaiting a formal response from Kaiser to our proposals for a final settlement that we gave to Kaiser's labor consultant Tom Schneider on March 17. About 10 days ago, Schneider told us that Kaiser executives were responding positively to our proposals, but that it was hard to get the necessary sign-offs because everyone was consumed by the coronavirus outbreak.

Of course, that is no excuse, and we are making clear to Kaiser executives that it's time to settle the contract.

### **EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

#### **Work from Home**

We have made good strides in getting Kaiser to allow clinicians to work from home, and to make sure that managers follow the rules. At this point, five clinics are allowing all clinicians to work from home. Nearly all of the others are requiring clinicians to work at a Kaiser facility only one day per week. The lone holdout is Santa Rosa, where we will have actions planned if local management doesn't reverse course.

#### **Progress made on remote ED consults**

We have also made progress in getting Kaiser to do Emergency Department consultations remotely. There is clearly no good reason to make clinicians go into hospitals and risk infection. Kaiser has worked with us on this issue, but there remain several locations with various barriers that we are continuing to address and resolve.

#### **New policy should increase access to masks**

Kaiser rolled out a more comprehensive masking policy this week and should have masks for every employee. There is still a shortage of N-95 masks so these are limited for those who are treating COVID-19

patients. Familiarize yourself with Kaiser's masking protocol and make sure you have the appropriate mask for the task.

### **COVID-19 testing to be expanded**

Kaiser has committed to expand testing of employees as testing capabilities increase. We expect expanded testing to happen any day now.

### **INCOME SECURITY**

#### **Kaiser introduces disappointing enhanced benefits policy**

On Thursday, during a national call with representatives from all unions, Kaiser shared its draft plan for providing enhanced benefits to employees who have to take COVID-19-related absences. Unfortunately, Kaiser's proposal is significantly worse than what several other major health providers have adopted.

The Kaiser plan would only cover employees who have to report to work at the facility during the pandemic, thus excluding many of our members who are working remotely. Even then, the policy only allows for 80 hours of administrative pay (prorated for part-time employees) which can only be used for COVID-19 illness of the employee or household member. The benefit, which also includes \$250/week for childcare expenses (prorated) and provisions for temporary shelter, would have to be used by May 31.

We will formally state our objections to this proposal, but it's unlikely to face any objections from the Coalition or Alliance unions. In contrast to Kaiser, Children's Hospital of Oakland, where NUHW represents 1,200 workers including mental health clinicians, agreed to provide 128 hours of additional pay to all employees. We believe that is the standard that Kaiser should meet.

#### **Kaiser to allow borrowing from retirement accounts**

The Federal CARES Stimulus Act allows employees to dip into 401(k) and 403(b) plans maintained by their employer without incurring substantial withdrawal penalties, but leaves it up to each Employer to decide if they want to opt in to this provision. On Thursday, Kaiser informed us they were opting in and employees should be able to withdraw funds from their Vanguard accounts beginning Friday. For more information, click [here](#) for our COVID19 information page.

We will update everyone again next week. If you have any concerns about your safety on the job or financial issues caused by COVID-19, please contact your steward or organizer — or email us at [COVID19@nuhw.org](mailto:COVID19@nuhw.org), and an organizer will get back to you quickly.

In Unity,

Sal Rosselli, President, National Union of Healthcare Workers  
Greg Tegenkamp, Kaiser Division Director