

NURSES DISCUSS CONTRACTUAL CHANGES

*Concerns include meals and breaks, staffing, bullying,
and gaps in step pay*



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Over the last few weeks, Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) nurse leaders at Sky Lakes Medical Center have had dozens of conversations with you, the floor nurses, in our bargaining unit. These conversations have taken place in break rooms and coffee shops, by phone, text, and emails, and—yes—sometimes even at the nurses stations in our facility.

Because our contract expires on Dec. 31, 2017, more than a dozen of our ONA leaders have begun asking for feedback and listening to nurses about changes they would like to see in our contract. We have yet to discuss bargaining dates with the employer, but anticipate negotiation sessions in November.

In these conversations, our leaders report that floor nurses are very loyal to Sky Lakes and to the Klamath Falls community. They are keenly aware of the critical role a full-service hospital provides to the neediest members of

our community. Nurses truly value the opportunity to practice their profession in their hometown, and they desire to safely care for their neighbors.

However, you have told us about several issues make that difficult to accomplish. Chief among your concerns are:

- Many units have staffing ratios that do not provide safe patient care, including much higher patient ratios than other ONA facilities. According to the Oregon Hospital Nurse Staffing Law, the hospital staffing committee decides ratios. Shared governance—nursing managers and direct care nurses collaborating to develop and approve staffing plans—is the primary impetus for this law, and ONA fully supports shared governance. Other ONA contracts reinforce the staffing law by requiring the unit practice councils in each unit approve a staffing plan before it is submitted

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to the hospital staffing committees. Some of these contracts require the employer to pay nurses for the time they spend outside of council/committee meetings researching and producing staffing plans.

- Several nurses have expressed concerns about excessive bullying by patients, especially in the emergency room (ER). Many travelers who have worked at hospitals throughout Oregon and in other parts of the country report that some of the patients at Sky Lakes present a sense of entitlement. Further, when nurses try to curtail and redirect bullying patients, the employer supports the patients' position instead of standing up for a safe working environment for nurses and other caregivers. It seems the employer is more worried about Press Ganey satisfaction surveys than workplace safety. Moreover, some nurses report a reluctance to speak out about unsafe working conditions because they feel intimidated and bullied by members of the management team.
- On many units, nurses are not able to take meals and breaks as required by law and our contract. Several nurses at Sky Lakes are discussing language found in other ONA contracts stating

meals are rest periods away from the floor, uninterrupted by work. Some ONA contracts incentivize the employer to provide adequate breaks.

For example, there are contracts that guarantee a nurse receives premium pay (1.5X their base rate) from the time they are supposed to have had a meal break until they actually get their meal break, or the end of their shift, whichever comes first.

- Nurses raised concerns about high turnover at Sky Lakes among nurses and other caregivers. They note how a disproportionate number of inexperienced floor nurses places higher burdens on more senior nurses. These concerned nurses point to the wide gaps between steps in our wage structure as one cause for turnover. While new hires are well-compensated, mid-career nurses feel they are not rewarded for their experience and may seek employment elsewhere. Our hospital should pay experienced nurses market wages to keep them in our community.



MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO GROW

Because Our Contract Protects Nurses!

We have seen substantial growth in the number of nurses at Sky Lakes who are joining ONA. In the last two months, 10 nurses have become dues-paying ONA members—a 20 percent increase in membership!

This growth is particularly important because our opponents are actively working to reduce our ability to promote patient safety. A union contract promotes and protects the safety and well-being of patients by giving nurses a unified voice to support a safe and adequately staffed work environment. Without an ONA contract, nurses at Sky Lakes would be “at-will employees,” meaning you could be fired at any time for any reason (except for statutory protections like race, gender, and pregnancy), without recourse.

Today, as unionized employees, nurses at Sky Lakes can only be disciplined for “just cause,” which

is the right to due process that ensures employees are treated fairly. Just cause recognizes that unionized employees have a property right to their job and the employer must demonstrate misbehavior before disciplining and ultimately terminating an employee.

Robyn Ewing, RN, is on the flex team at Sky Lakes and made the choice to become a full member:

“I choose to be an ONA member,” Ewing said, “because I feel it is extremely important to have a voice in my profession and belong to my professional organization.”

Register for ONA BU Leadership Conference

Sept. 19-20, 2017 ♦ Portland, OR

Upgrade your nurse leadership skills at ONA's Bargaining Unit Leadership Conference Sept. 19-20 at the Portland Hilton and Executive Towers in downtown Portland.

- Solve local issues through concerted actions
- Build strength through issue-based organizing
- Identify and develop nurse leaders



Join ONA nurses and staff from across Oregon to discover new ways to engage your coworkers, build nurse strength and create a community of committed advocates who can lead changes in your facility.

Agenda and Topics

This year, participants will choose one of two educational tracks to attend with sessions designed to develop and hone skills related to that topic. The tracks are:

- Building Power Through Workplace Action



Continuing Education

Attendees will be able to earn continuing nursing education contact hours at the conference. Information about which courses and sessions qualify for CE and the number of CE hours offered will be posted before the start of the conference.

Oregon Nurses Association is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.



Registration

This leadership event is FREE for ONA members. Due to the nature of the schedule, members must attend both days of the event.

Conference registration deadline is Friday, Sept. 8. To register, visit the ONA website:

www.OregonRN.org



ONA Member Benefits

Many nurses think they are members of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) even though they haven't officially joined!

To activate your ONA membership, you must fill out an ONA membership application.

If you haven't filled out a membership application you're missing out on ONA's membership benefits, discounts and voting rights.

ONA Members Receive:

ANA Membership and access to ANA Programs and Trainings

Discounted ANCC Certifications

Free and Discounted Continuing Education (CE) Opportunities

Consumer Discounts Including:

Rip City Rewards (Portland Trail Blazers)
California Casualty Auto and Home Insurance
Health Club Memberships

Celebrate! ONA Holiday Entertainment Guide
Get Away Today Vacations
Car Rentals

Members Have a Voice.

ONA members are the only nurses who can vote on contracts and other issues that matter to nurses.

Members Give Us Power.

Each member gives us added strength at the bargaining table to advocate for improvements to patient care, nurse staffing and other important issues.

Members Are Our Leaders.

Members can develop their leadership skills through ONA's Nurse Leadership Institute (NLI) and take advantage of leadership opportunities by serving on your bargaining unit leadership team, Professional Nursing Care Committee (PNCC), any of ONA's practice, ethics or health policy cabinets and the ONA board of directors.

To learn more, speak with your ONA labor representative today.

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Or visit us online at OregonRN.org to download a membership application!