

Speak Out Now in Healthcare

A workplace newsletter for Highland and Kaiser workers

April 23rd, 2024

Clockin' In Blues

At Highland Hospital, our nurses' union contract stipulates that we have a 7-minute grace period to clock in before the start of each shift. This ensures that we are settled and ready to take report from the off-going nurse right at the start of our scheduled shift. However, management recently decided that they could save a few pennies by demanding that we clock in only moments before our shift starts, giving no time to find our assignment, sign up for breaks, log into our work phones, or even grab a pen and paper to take report!

This leads to delayed and rushed handoff reports, compromising patient care. What's more, this new "rule" is not in our contract and not in any way enforceable by disciplinary action! If we need to save money, maybe we should be dispensing with some of these overpaid managers instead of rushing nurses and jeopardizing patients.

Dialysis Workers to Unionize?

Rumors are circulating at Kaiser Oakland about the possibility of dialysis workers forming a union. They would potentially join SEIU-UHW, which represents various healthcare professionals such as: lab techs, environmental service workers, dietary workers, and more.

It's important to emphasize bottom up organization in union formation. True unionization stems from the workers themselves advocating from within, rather than from top-down pressure from union officials. Additionally, it's crucial to keep in mind that contracts need to be ratified within the year, or the whole effort can collapse.

Union membership offers numerous advantages to workers: guaranteed job protections, benefits, support during formal reprimands, a lawyer if needed, the right to strike and engage in other work actions that can lead to a better contract, and much more. As Kaiser workers, we support all efforts to unionize. However, it's essential to recognize that achieving these benefits depends on the determination of the workers themselves.



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We Need More Permanent Staff

Travel nurses play a vital role in our hospitals - they help make sure patients are cared for when facilities have higher than usual census, such as during a sudden outbreak, natural disaster, or major accident. However, this is not how travelers are used in our hospitals today.

Instead of hiring permanent staff, management likes to rely on a constant flow of travelers. This means we are never truly fully staffed - and never with benefited workers who are fully trained on hospital-specific protocols and processes. For example, some travelers aren't even familiar with EPIC when they start working!

But the problem is not with travelers - we are grateful to have them. The problem is management, who would rather treat workers like a water faucet - on when they want staff, and off when they don't - instead of staffing our hospitals fully at all times. Our patients deserve a workforce that is consistent and stably employed. And our coworkers deserve benefits and job security!



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