

Speak Out Now in Healthcare

December 5th, 2023

#1 on Holiday Wish List: Safe Staffing Now!

'Tis' the season to be jolly...and to contract airborne viruses! Yes, it is the holidays, but it is also flu season, coronavirus time, and whatever other virus may be coming our way! People get sick. And we workers in the hospital can get extra sick as we are exposed to the viruses and infections that our patients transmit in our facilities. We have the right to call out, and to use the hard won medical and personal days we've gained in our contracts to recover at home, before returning to work.

But we need to be extra clear with the boss. Workers calling out sick is not the reason for short staffing. Short staffing is the result of the boss not hiring enough staff, not posting positions when they are vacated, and not offering positions that are competitive and appealing to workers seeking a fair wage and safe working conditions. Our hospitals are direly understaffed, and when management does not hire appropriately, we feel it most acutely in the holiday season.

We also deserve to celebrate the holidays, and have the right to heal and recover when sick. Our hospitals are understaffed and we need to staff up not just for the holidays, but ensure safe staff to patient ratios every day.

Supplies, Supplies, Where are You?

At Kaiser, nothing is worse than when you come in and know that you can't do your job because you don't have enough supplies. Be it gauze in the ED, medications in the pharmacy, or formula in the nutrition department – almost every department has felt the effects of a short supply of essential materials needed to help patients.

The supply chain that the hospital chain relies on is extremely vulnerable. Take for example, baby formula. Just four companies – Abbott, Perrigo, Nestle SA, and Mead Johnson – control about 90% of the U.S. formula market. So when one company has to halt production to deal with safety issues, it affects the entire supply chain. Now multiply this by the numerous supplies required to keep our hospitals functioning, and it is clear why we are almost always running out of at least something.

These are essential materials that not only affect our jobs, but in the case of certain supplies, can even cost our patients' lives. This is the reality in a system where companies are more interested in maintaining their profits than saving lives, where healthcare has become itself an industry. But neither we, nor our patients, deserve that. We all deserve a supply chain that makes our work and their health possible.

Highland Workers Hold Daily Vigils

For the past few weeks, workers at Highland Hospital have been commemorating the lives of the children killed in the ongoing attacks on Gaza. What started as a one time action on World Children's Day (November 20th) has lasted weeks, as workers have been writing the name of each child that has been killed while reading poems or sharing stories. Despite being present every day at lunch to participate in this peaceful, healing activity, it has taken weeks to try to honor each child due to the immense number of victims.

Seemingly because of this action, CEO James Jackson recently sent out a letter stating that AHS workers who engage in courtyard activities that have not been pre-approved by the CEO may be subject to termination. Although a "cease and desist" and grievances have been filed by the unions to allow this lunchtime activity to continue, workers themselves decided to take things into their own hands.

Not willing to stop until every name is written, this activity was moved to the front of the hospital. Ironically, this meant more attention on the action, with members of the public now able to join in bearing witness. Where it goes next is up to us, but one thing is clear - Highland workers cannot easily be stopped when it comes to doing what we feel is right.



Free Palestine!