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Professional Patient Care Unit **CHAPTER NETWORK NEWS**

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Division of Public Health Western Regional Office Starts Local Negotiations

By: James Zanto, Public Health Educator Adv

With the help of Ron Hudson, SEIU Staff Representative, The Division of Public Health Western Regional Office has for the first time undertaken Local Negotiations as provided for in the Master SEIU Contract. The local negotiations are a result of changing working conditions. Negative interpretations of long standing policies have resulted in this work unit exercising the rights afforded to us under the master contract. We want policies and work rules applied equally. Moreover, standing policies regarding “comp” and “flex” time have been re-interpreted as to take advantage of our members; despite long standing past practice.

After contacting Ron Hudson at the Union office for advice, the work unit expressed its desire to start local negotiations.

The Western Regional Office started local negotiations on January 26, 2010. The initial session was quite productive and the next session is scheduled for February 22.

I have already seen a change in everyone’s attitude. We all agree it will be very rewarding to look at our local agreement and it is a sense of pride for us that at the end of this we will have a local agreement for our work unit that we have negotiated ourselves! I think even though it is not finished yet, it has already helped with the outlook on our work unit!

Upcoming Steward/Worksite Leader Training

We have confirmed April 15 for our next Union Steward/Worksite Leader Training at the Union office in Madison. In order for us continue to succeed in representing our membership; we need to have a strong network of stewards/worksite leaders. Contact the Union office for more information.

Annual Infection Control Exchange Meeting By: Sharon Moerchen, DOC RGCI, RN

On February 5, 2010 we had our First Annual Infection Control Exchange Meeting. Management and Union representatives met pursuant to our collective bargaining agreement Negotiating Note #2 at Mendota Mental Health Institution. Attendees for the Union were; Sharon Moerchen DOC RGCI, Dee Ives DVA King, Gerald Gabor DPH Eau Claire, Brian Virgin DHS CWC, Helen Clark DHS MMHI and Tom Berger , SEIU Staff Representative. Management attendees were; Kris Adams SWC, Barb Bergum MMHI, Sue Becker DHS and John Morgan DHS Employment Relations.

We discussed future goals of this committee which include sharing of ideas and plans related to infection prevention. We agreed due to the diversity of agencies and different work units that standardizing policies would not be feasible.

The committee agreed to utilize guidelines set by CDC and OSHA and included APIC for reference.

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We also discussed timely topics of MRSA and the increase in community cases, influenza, use of proper PPE and N95 masks versus for influenza.

Group consensus was that this was a great committee to get started and planned to meet more often to share ideas and concerns that affect our members and the patients we care for.

Issues from Dept. of Veterans Affairs

By: Sandra Ives, DVA King, RN

At the recent convention in October, a young DOC RN asked me why the main issues seemed to be politics and mandatory overtime. I suppose that to a Union RN at a facility where layoffs are occurring, the overtime issue does not seem as relevant as it is in other facilities. In the DVA-King where I have worked for the past 12 years, it will continue to be a major issue for PPCU nurses if we are unable to get AB152 passed this year to ban mandating overtime.

SEIU Healthcare District 1199W was instrumental in making this political issue a priority and has been successful in getting the Wisconsin Senate version of this bill passed this year with no restrictions on volunteer hours. As the State does furlough and layoffs to balance their budget, they will rely more heavily on mandating overtime to cover the understaffing that will occur in all their departments.

As we are all aware, the Department of Licensing & Regulation put out a recommendation on safe overtime in Dec 2006 that says, "safe overtime is no more than 12 hours per day or 60 hours per week for direct care nursing staff". This was in response to Wisconsin legislating that nurses who commit medication errors that cause significant harm or death can be brought up for criminal charges as well as the inevitable civil suits. As a major issue in PPCU bargaining for the past 10 years, it is crucial for all PPCU nurses to stand together and write their WI Assembly Representatives to pass AB152 in order to protect our profession and our patients.

This brings me to the politics. PPCU is dependant on the Wisconsin Legislature for position funding in the biannual budget. We are also are subject to the Legislative Budget and in the current economic recession we face many challenges to try to maintain

safe staffing levels and quality care for our patients, especially if the influx of newly insured patients is realized through the National Healthcare Reform bill.

It took 5 years and two budgets battling legislators for DVA King to regain position authority for the seven positions we had lost in budget cuts between 1999 and 2007. Politics simply cannot be ignored when your employer is the State of Wisconsin.

After many Senate Budget hearings, we were successful in this and in 2008 rearranged how our nurses were staffed to provide both replacement factor and float pool positions that have decreased the overtime in our facility by 80% and saved \$63,000 of overtime costs this year. We are now working with SEIU Staff Representative Tom Berger as we try to bring the same results to our sister facility DVA Union Grove. We are also watching for a new DVA facility proposed in Chippewa Falls to see how we can help them do the most with the resources available.

In 2007, Andy Stern announced that SEIU International was going bipartisan and started a GOP Advisory Committee. Now, in 2009 SEIU 1199 WI is asking that their members who are independent or GOP voters to let us know your home/e-mail addresses so we can get you involved in speaking with our Legislators on these important issues. Your participation is vital in this effort!

It will take lots of work to convince a majority of our state legislators to pass AB152 to end mandatory overtime for nursing staff in Wisconsin. I hope this helps answers the question of why politics and overtime are such crucial issues for PPCU members.

Attend Lobby Day in Madison

Legislators need to hear from you about your job and about the services you provided State residents and patients for whom we care.

Tuesday March 23rd and Wednesday March 24th

Please contact your union staff representative for information and to reserve your spot today!

*Call 608-277-1199 or 888-285-1199
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