

The Union Fight for Safer Staffing in Washington Hospitals: Where are we right now?

This winter, members and leadership of the three healthcare unions WSNA, UFCW 3000, and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW are meeting regularly and participating in both the statewide staffing advisory committee process and hospital-level staffing committees.

We knew that hospital management would push back against some of the reforms we need to improve staffing and even on the process by which we'll get there, but we also know that by sticking together, we can hold the line for safer staffing.

Wondering what's going on in hospital staffing committees? Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: HOW ARE MEMBERS OF THE HOSPITAL STAFFING COMMITTEE SELECTED?

A: Each side selects its committee members.

Management selects its members, which include the CFO, CNOs, patient care unit directors/managers or their designees. We, as union members, select which direct patient care staff are on the committee. We are working together as WSNA, UFCW 3000 and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW to expand our committees to ensure we have the right representation of job classes. Selecting the direct care committee members will NOT be decided by the hospital. The law states hospital staffing committee members will be selected by the collective bargaining representative or representatives (union) if there is one or more at the hospital.

*"(2) Hospital staffing committees must be comprised of:
(a) At least 50 percent of the voting members of the hospital staffing committee shall be nursing staff, who are nonsupervisory and nonmanagerial, currently providing direct patient care. The selection of the bargaining representative or representatives if there is one or more at the hospital."*

RCW 70.41.420

Q: HOW MANY MEMBERS CAN BE ON THE HOSPITAL STAFFING COMMITTEE?

A: That is up to each hospital staffing committee to decide.

Management does NOT get to make that decision alone. The hospital staffing committee is comprised of at least 50% of voting members that are non-supervisory/nonmanagerial nursing staff, currently providing direct patient care.

Q: ARE HOSPITAL STAFFING COMMITTEE MEMBERS RELIEVED OF THEIR DUTIES TO ATTEND COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

A: Yes. According to the law:



tinyurl.com/RCW70-41-420

◀ Read more about staffing committees in RCW 70.41.420

"Participation in the hospital staffing committee by a hospital employee shall be on scheduled work time and compensated at the appropriate rate of pay. Hospital staffing committee members shall be relieved of all other work duties during meetings of the committee. Additional staffing relief must be provided if necessary to ensure committee members are able to attend hospital staffing committee meetings."

RCW 70.41.420



HELPFUL TIP FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL HOSPITAL STAFFING COMMITTEE

Call a caucus when you need to collaborate with your fellow committee members. Remember we are working together towards a common goal of better staffing for our coworkers and our patients.

CELEBRATING OUR WINS, TOGETHER!

We're all in this together, and where more than one union represents the nursing staff, that means coming to agreement, starting with staffing committee representation.

ONE EXAMPLE: At Skagit Hospital, WSNA and UFCW 3000 members came together and advocated for adding two additional seats to the staffing committee. The discussion around staffing relief to ensure committee members could attend meetings was not an easy one, but together we made it happen and expanded the staffing committee! This is a small but important step in making the committee process work better for members—which means a better outcome for patients, too.