

Negotiations Update

Hackensack Meridian Health June 10, 2020

Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH) and the Health Professionals and Allied Employees union (HPAE) continued negotiating via video conference on June 9 for successor contracts for 1,500 nurses at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and Southern Ocean Medical Center.

HMH made counter proposals about pandemic response policies and staffing, among other issues.

Our proposals are guided by our mission of providing high-quality, affordable and safe care for our patients while providing a safe working environment, with competitive pay and benefits, for our team members.

This bargaining update unpacks some of the specific reasons why we believe the union's proposals on pandemic response and staffing do not support our goals for patient care and team member safety.

Pandemic response

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed health care in ways most of us could not have foreseen.

One of the lessons learned during this unprecedented time is health networks are best positioned to care for patients and team members during a pandemic through smart planning and nimble response.

HMH's response saved lives and protected team members. Our response relied on the ability to quickly:

- Adapt to changing guidelines from the CDC
- Scale staffing based on acuity and volume
- Deploy resources, including appropriate PPE, to protect patients and team members
- Reward all of our team members with additional compensation

The union's proposals at bargaining would move our response to a future pandemic away from science and patient-centered care. Under the union's proposals, our response would be based on guidelines in a labor contract that might not fit the situation. These proposals would dictate that we follow union rules instead of the CDC, work through a union committee to develop a plan in a process we believe would be slower and deploy PPE based on union recommendations, which may not be best practices.

For these reasons, we have countered with a proposal that commits to providing the union with relevant information at the start of a pandemic within a reasonable timeframe. We also offered the union a dedicated point of contact at the hospital's discretion. We already provide union nurses, and all other team members, the ability to help shape our plans through a host of committees.



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Staffing

HMH believes staffing decisions should be based on providing high-quality and affordable care for our patients while ensuring a safe and supportive work environment for team members.

HPAE has proposed a system of rigid staffing grids and a requirement to meet with the union president about staffing patterns, among other changes.

Including rigid staffing grids in the contract does not support HMH's focus on patients or team member safety. It also does not help HMH remain competitive in the market as we work to attract and retain the best team members.

For these reasons, we have countered with a proposal that bases staffing decisions on patient acuity and volume.

We also are including, with this bargaining update, frequently asked questions we received from team members during negotiations.

Discussions with HPAE are ongoing and due to the back-and-forth nature of bargaining, proposals are subject to change.

Bargaining is planned every day this week.

The contracts for the local unions end June 15 under an extension agreed to by the parties. All wages, benefits, employment conditions, and the no strike clause, remain in effect.

HMH is committed to bargaining in good faith with HPAE and has been in talks with the union since April 21. We also are committed to providing a comprehensive, generous and affordable benefits package that helps us retain and recruit team members across our network.

For more information, contact your staff representative for HPAE Local 5058 at JSUMC and Local 5138 at SOMC at (732) 774-9440, ext. 215.

