

Frequently Asked Questions

Kadlec Nurses – Strike Questions & Answers

WSNA Contract Negotiations

Kadlec nurses have been bargaining for months to reach a fair agreement that addresses the priorities identified by the bargaining unit: **fair wages, real break relief, and meaningful safety improvements.**

Your bargaining team remains committed to reaching a contract without a strike. However, it is important that every nurse understands what a strike means, how the process works, and what protections exist if escalation becomes necessary.

Why are nurses talking about a strike? A strike is **not the goal.**

A strike is one of the tools workers have when negotiations fail to produce an acceptable agreement.

Kadlec nurses are raising concerns about:

- Wages that fall behind comparable Providence hospitals
- Lack of proactive violence prevention measures in the Emergency Department
- Continued missed breaks despite legal requirements and documented data
- Management proposals that rely on monitoring and evaluation rather than solutions

If management refuses to meaningfully address these issues, nurses may decide escalation is necessary.

What happens before a strike can occur? A strike does **not happen suddenly.**

There are multiple steps.

- 1** Negotiations continue between WSNA and Kadlec
- 2** Members provide feedback and direction to the bargaining team
- 3** Strike assessments measure readiness and support
- 4** Strike authorization vote by union members
- 5** WSNA Labor Executive Council reviews the situation
- 6** If necessary, a strike is called
- 7** Federal law requires **10-day notice to the hospital before a strike**

That notice period allows the hospital time to arrange patient coverage.

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Will patients be abandoned if nurses strike? No.

Federal law requires **advance notice** before a healthcare strike so hospitals can prepare.

Hospitals routinely bring in **temporary replacement staff** during strikes to maintain operations.

Nurses striking are advocating for **safer conditions and better patient care**.

Can Kadlec fire nurses if they strike? No.

Striking is a **protected activity under federal labor law**.

It is illegal for the employer to fire nurses for participating in a lawful strike.

Can management retaliate against nurses for supporting a strike? No.

It is illegal for management to discipline, threaten, or retaliate against nurses for participating in union activity or strike preparation.

If any nurse experiences retaliation or threats, they should report it immediately to WSNA.

Can probationary nurses or nurse residents strike? Yes.

All nurses covered by the bargaining unit have the **same legal protection** when participating in protected labor activity.

What happens if someone crosses the picket line? Crossing the picket line weakens the ability of nurses to win improvements. Strikes succeed when nurses remain united.

Crossing also:

- prolongs negotiations
 - weakens solidarity
 - undermines the profession's collective power
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What happens to our jobs after a strike? At the end of a strike, nurses typically return to their same positions, units, and shifts.

Return-to-work agreements are often negotiated as part of resolving a strike.

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What about health insurance during a strike? This depends on the terms of the employer's health plan.

In many cases:

- Benefits continue as long as the strike does not last the entire calendar month
- Alternative options may include COBRA or Washington Health Exchange coverage

WSNA provides guidance if a strike occurs.

Can I use PTO during a strike? In many strikes, employers do not allow PTO to be used during strike days, even if the PTO was previously approved. Instead, the employer may treat the time as strike participation rather than paid leave.

This means that PTO scheduled during strike days may not be paid out.

However, policies can vary depending on employer's decisions. If you have PTO scheduled before a strike begins, keep documentation of the approval and notify WSNA if your PTO is cancelled.

If my PTO was approved before the strike was announced, will it still be honored?

It depends on how the employer chooses to handle PTO during the strike.

Some employers honor PTO that was approved prior to the strike notice. Others cancel PTO and treat those days as unpaid strike days instead.

If you have preapproved PTO scheduled during potential strike dates, keep documentation of your approval and contact WSNA if you receive conflicting instructions from management.

What happens if I am on FMLA leave when a strike occurs? If you are already on approved FMLA leave, your leave generally continues as scheduled.

You are not required to participate in the strike, and your protected FMLA leave status should not change because a strike occurs.

Your job protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) remains in place.

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What if I use intermittent FMLA leave? If you are using intermittent FMLA, you may continue to use it for qualifying medical reasons.

However, intermittent FMLA should only be used for the legitimate medical reason for which it was approved, not as a substitute for strike participation.

If you are scheduled to work and choose to participate in the strike, that time should be treated as strike participation, not FMLA leave.

What if I cannot afford to strike? This is a common concern.

Strikes require preparation and solidarity.

Strike planning typically includes:

- financial preparation guidance
- mutual support among coworkers
- community solidarity
- strike committees coordinating assistance

Nurses should also consider the long-term impact of contracts that fail to address wages, safety, and working conditions.

NEW: Washington Unemployment Benefits During Strikes

Washington recently passed a law allowing workers to apply for unemployment benefits during strikes.

Important things to understand:

Waiting Period

Striking workers are generally eligible **after a two-week waiting period** from the start of a strike.

Amount of Benefits

Benefits are based on your previous earnings and typically replace a portion of your weekly wages (not full pay).

If the Strike Ends Early

If a strike ends before the waiting period is reached, workers will not receive unemployment benefits.

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Eligibility

Workers must:

- meet unemployment eligibility rules
- be actively participating in the strike
- file a claim through Washington Employment Security Department

Strike captains and WSNA staff will provide guidance if this becomes necessary.

What are nurses expected to do if a strike occurs? Every nurse plays a role.

Responsibilities include:

- Honor the picket line
- Participate in scheduled strike activity or picket duty
- Stay informed through union communications
- Avoid rumors and misinformation
- Support coworkers and maintain unity

A strike should not be viewed as a vacation from work, it is a collective effort to win improvements.

What can nurses do right now? Strong participation sends a clear message: **Kadlec nurses are united.**

Even if a strike never happens, preparation strengthens negotiations.

You can help by:

- Completing the strike assessment
- Attending negotiations as observers
- Wearing WSNA gear at work
- Talking with coworkers about the issues

Nurses do not win fair contracts by hoping management does the right thing. Contracts are won when nurses:

- Stay informed
- Stay united
- Stay engaged