

Frequently Asked Questions

About Strikes

Seattle Children's Hospital, November 6, 2025

Why are we considering striking?

Ultimately, this is about protecting our patients and our professions, and we are not seeing Children's take those issues seriously enough. We have been in bargaining since late May, and we have had to get a federal mediator involved. Even with a federal mediator, Children's is sticking to some of their most outrageous demands and failing to meet several of the nurses' key priorities like break relief, sick leave, and market wages. For updates on the specific issues, check our bargaining updates at: <https://www.wsna.org/union/seattle-childrens-hospital>

Who will take care of my patients if we strike? Will it be considered abandonment?

Your right to strike is protected by federal law. By standing up for improved conditions, you are advocating better care for your patients. As required by federal law, WSNA would give the Hospital 10 days advance notice before a strike (just like we did for the picket), so that the facility can make appropriate arrangements to ensure continuity of care.

What is the process for going on strike?

Striking is not a spectator sport – all of us need to engage in the preparation for a strike vote, vote on a strike, and then participate in and honor our strike.

The decision as to whether the Children's nurses will go on strike will involve participation, input, and votes by WSNA members, local unit officers, statewide elected WSNA bargaining unit nurse leaders, and staff. When it is time to vote on a strike, only dues-paying members, by democratic vote, have the power to authorize a strike. If you are not currently paying dues, you can sign up now and be eligible to vote when the time comes – contact Linda Burbank, RN, your WSNA nurse representative.

The WSNA Labor Executive Committee (LEC), a statewide elected body made up of WSNA bargaining unit nurse members elected by WSNA members, are responsible for deciding:

- If strike authorization should be sent to the membership of the bargaining unit for vote.
- Whether to call a strike that the bargaining unit members have authorized.
- The duration of the strike and when to end the strike.

Will I get into trouble if my manager thinks I'll strike?

It is illegal for Children's (including any individual manager) to retaliate against nurses for participating in protected concerted activities including striking. Report instances of threats, guilt, or retaliation to your WSNA nurse representative immediately.

Can my manager ask me if I plan to strike?

Your manager can and will ask you if you plan to strike. They legally cannot force you to answer, but the best answer is, "I'm standing with my coworkers to strike for our patients and our profession." If they ask whether you are going to strike, they also have to reassure you that your answer will not lead to discipline in any way. If you get asked whether you are going to strike but not given the appropriate reassurances, report that to your WSNA nurse rep.

Will I lose my job if I go on strike?

A strike is a protected activity under federal labor law, and it is illegal for the Hospital to fire you for participating in a strike.

Most strikes are called in part to protest unfair labor practices (ULPs) by the employer. A ULP is a violation of federal labor law. If the ULPs are upheld by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and Courts, the employer cannot legally hire a permanent replacement to take your position.

In instances where a strike is over solely economic issues and not to protest ULPs, workers can be permanently replaced, but only after the actual hiring of a permanent replacement for your position. We can't make any guarantees, but given the current nursing shortage, it seems unlikely that the Hospital would be in a position to permanently replace RNs.

Will this strike be a ULP strike?

Maybe, depending on the circumstances at the time the strike is called. The NLRB is currently investigating ULPs that WSNA has filed. Seattle Children's nurses should provide WSNA with evidence of any potentially illegal conduct by Seattle Children's. WSNA will inform nurses of whether they are being asked to vote on a ULP strike or an economic strike before a strike vote is taken.

Can a nurse go on strike during their residency?

Absolutely, resident nurses can go on strike, and they cannot be fired for participating in a strike. If your manager is telling you otherwise or if Children's were to discipline or fire a resident nurse for exercising their legally protected right to strike, that would constitute an unfair labor practice

Can a nurse on probation go on strike?

Yes, nurses who are on probation can go on strike, and they cannot be fired for participating in a strike. If the employer were to fire a probationary nurse for exercising their legally protected right to strike, that would constitute a ULP.

What are the consequences of crossing the picket line?

Crossing a picket line – “scabbing” – will undermine our attempts as nurses to create a better work environment for our profession and our patients and achieve our negotiating goals. Nurses who cross the picket line to work during a strike also damage the camaraderie in the workplace, prolong the strike, and negatively impact our efforts to work as a team once the strike is settled.

Working during a strike can often mean floating outside your unit and orienting scab nurses who aren’t familiar with our policies. In addition to the many reasons why nurses shouldn’t cross picket lines, consider that your license might be on the line.

Can I return to my same job and shift after a strike?

At the end of a strike, the employer is legally required to reinstate strikers to their positions, in the same unit with the same hours, except that where the strike is caused solely by economic issues (and not ULPs), the employer is required to place any strikers who have been permanently replaced on a preferential hiring list to be recalled to work before any new nurses are hired.

A “return to work” agreement is usually negotiated prior to the conclusion of any strike. We will insist, as part of the “return to work” agreement that each nurse is returned to their job, unit, and shift. If nurses stay unified in striking, we are more likely to prevail in negotiations for a “return to work” agreement.

What happens if I can’t afford to go on strike?

A strike will require sacrifice and it’s important that you take steps now to prepare financially for a strike. Strike committees will be formed to address the financial challenges nurses will experience during a strike.

Another question to ask is, can I afford to keep working under the current proposals from Children’s? We all know nurses that have been priced out of the Seattle area and have left for other jobs – are we willing to keep losing these skilled nurses at the expense of our patients and profession?

How are health insurance benefits affected during a strike?

It depends on your health insurance plan and how much you have to work to qualify for benefits in a month. If you have to work one day a month to qualify for benefits for that month, then as long as we do not strike for an entire calendar months your benefits should not be affected.

Another option, if a nurse does not work the requisite period of time in a month, is to access COBRA health plans or more affordable options for health coverage through the state health insurance exchange under the

Affordable Care Act. Depending on an individual nurse's family financial situation, a nurse may qualify for coverage under the Washington Apple Health plan (Medicaid).

Will a strike affect the image of nursing in a negative way?

No. We are professionals. We have the right to demand a safe environment for both our patients and ourselves, and wages that reflect our professional status. On the picket line, it is important to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and to make clear that we are striking for our patients.

What are my personal responsibilities if we go on strike?

- Do not cross the picket line! The Union's ability to win nurses' priorities depends on each and every nurse honoring the picket line. WSNA does not impose financial penalties on members who cross picket lines, but we do expect members to honor the strike.
- Take your share of picket duty and/or strike activity. A strike is not a vacation; it is a collective effort to improve wages and working conditions and protect employee rights. If you cannot attend your shift on the picket line, it's up to you to find someone to attend in your place. Nurses unable to physically walk the picket line can contribute to strike activity by helping in other ways, such as providing childcare, coordinating food, or making signs. Everyone has a role to play!
- Pay attention and be engaged on social media, meetings and any other communications from your team or WSNA.
- Do not contribute to the rumor mill.
- Stay in contact with your colleagues.
- Help each other out in any way you are able.
- Discuss issues and continue a productive dialogue.

Is there anything I can do to help before we go on strike?

Yes! Volunteer to help by signing up as a Strike Captain. Let your nurse managers know how you feel about your team's proposals. Be an open, proud WSNA supporter! Wear WSNA insignia at work, let your co-workers and your manager know you support your WSNA bargaining team's objectives, and come as an observer to our bargaining sessions in the coming weeks. Those interested in becoming strike captains can email SCHstrike@wsna.org.

How many nurses will it take for a strike to be effective?

A successful strike requires the participation of every nurse. A large active picket line is vital to a successful strike. Every nurse needs to participate – dues-paying members of WSNA or not. The more members we have out on the line, the harder it is for people to cross it. Being at the picket line is also the best way to get the latest information on how the strike is going and to show the community that nurses are united in the strike.

For further information, reach out to SCHstrike@wsna.org.