

What exactly is a picket? An explainer.

Let's be very clear – there is no WSNA picket planned at Seattle Children's Hospital. With current contract language, a picket would not be permissible until the contract expires, but we know that there have been conversations and questions raised. We want to answer some of the questions we've heard.

So, what is an informational picket?

If scheduled to work, we still work. On our own time on a day off or on an official work break, we march, carry picket signs, and hand out leaflets on the public sidewalks in front of the hospital to amplify concerns to the hospital's leadership and to the community. An informational picket is **not** a work stoppage or strike.

Is it similar to a strike?

No, during an informational picket, nurses continue to go to work and continue to be paid for the work that they do. Staff scheduled to work should go to work. Patients scheduled for care should go and get their care. If a nurse is working, they are free to come join the picket line before or after their shift, or on a break.

At a strike, nurses do not go to work and do not get paid – nurses can't use annual leave to cover time during a strike either. A strike is an important tool that unions have, but they are a tool of last resort that only happens after a substantial majority of nurses vote to hold one.

Is a picket legal?

Absolutely. It's not just legal, it's your right as a union member. And it requires all nurses' participation to be successful! Federal labor law requires that healthcare unions send a notice ten days in advance of any picket or strike to the employer and to a federal agency so that the employer can make contingency plans. That 10-day notice renders a picket or a strike "legal."

Who can picket?

Everyone. By everyone, we mean EVERYONE: a nurse (all RNs, full-time, part-time, per diem, probationary nurses), family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, kids, pets, etc! Other unions (not just at the hospital) often join as well.

Note: members of other unions should check with their union rep to confirm whether their contract permits them to join a picket during the contract term. There are lots of ways for them to support the cause away from the picket line too.

Why involve the community?

Nurses serve and advocate on behalf of the community in which they work every day. The issues we are dealing with directly impact them. The community not only needs to hear but will understand and support why nurses are concerned about issues in the hospital like a lack of staffing, a hospital's inability to recruit and retain nurses, nurses not getting breaks, safety, etc.

How do nurses participate?

If a nurse is scheduled to work, they go to work. Those nurses should join the line before and after a shift and on breaks/lunches. If it's a nurse's day off, it is crucial for them to join the line and ask friends and family to walk the line with the other nurses.

What if a nurse can't be there for the entire time?

Nurses come when they can! A picket is usually scheduled for a few different blocks of time during the day so that multiple shifts can join. Nurses come before they clock in, come after they clock out, come on their break, come on their lunch (and if they can't get relieved to take a break or lunch *they should absolutely fill out an ADO*! Note: nurses should *always* fill out ADOs if they don't get their breaks – otherwise, management disputes that nurses are missing their breaks).

Can I get in trouble if my manager doesn't like that I'm picketing?

No, in fact, it is illegal for managers to question or discipline any nurse for talking about or participating in an informational picket. The National Labor Relations Act explicitly protects participation in this type of union activity.

Is this on paid time?

Nurses participating in an informational picket do so on their own time.

I live far away, though... No one wants to commute, especially on a day off, but by showing the strength of all a hospital's nurses on the picket line, we bolster our power at the table and improve our chances of winning a contract that benefits all nurses.

What about childcare?

Children are welcome! A picket line is an energetic, safe, fun place to use outdoor voices to express our demands for better working conditions so that more nurses come to work (or stay working at that hospital) so we don't have to pick up as much overtime and extra shifts and can afford to be with our families more! Hospital management often likes to spin scary stories about picket line violence or union thugs, but – while nurses may be righteously angry about working conditions – we do not endorse violence and do not allow people on our picket lines who behave inappropriately.

What are the next steps at Seattle Children's Hospital, are we going to picket?

Currently, there are no plans to picket. If we are unable to come to an agreement with Hospital management in our next bargaining days, we will continue to negotiate in good faith. If the bargaining team determines that a picket is necessary, there will be bargaining unit meetings to discuss the picket, and we'll ask all nurses to commit to attending on a picket pledge.

But why would I have to sign a picket pledge?

We need to know which departments and shifts are getting information about bargaining and about the picket, and where we need to concentrate more attention to get the greatest outreach. Also, the bargaining team needs an accurate assessment of what Seattle Children's nurses are willing to do – the numbers need to reflect a strong commitment from the bargaining unit so that the team can make informed decisions about which actions to take.

Questions? Contact Crystal Doll at CDOLL@WSNA.ORG