

August 12, 2021

Sent Email Only

Ruth Flint
Chief Nursing Officer
St. Joseph Medical Center
1717 South J Street
Tacoma, WA
98405-2197

RE: Letter of Concern - Insufficient Staffing Levels

Dear Ruth,

I am writing today because WSNA continues to repeatedly hear from nurses via ADOs and testimonials, which WSNA has shared in the conference committee meetings, you have reviewed during the ADO subcommittee meetings, and WSNA has sent to you reporting how nurses are consistently working under insufficient staffing conditions. WSNA believes this is a result of staffing matrices that are inadequate, shift adjustments not approved by the staffing committee, unaccounted for patient acuity/intensity, and a lack of sufficient support staff. In addition, we believe the current incentive programs are not equitable nor are they effectively incentivizing nurses to work beyond their FTE. Our nurses at St. Joseph Medical Center (SJMC) are tired and quickly burning out. Moreover, WSNA does not believe the employer is keeping its commitment to our agreement on staffing:

6.11 Staffing. Recognizing that quality patient care is the major goal for the Medical Center and that appropriate and safe staffing levels are an important objective, proactive nursing input into staffing decisions affecting nurses is encouraged. Nurse staffing questions may be presented by the concerned nurse for discussion to the Clinical Director, or CNO, or to the unit's staffing committee representative if not satisfied with the initial response.

The Medical Center's staffing plan and its implementation shall be in accordance with RCW 70.41.410-420. All changes to the staffing matrix in any unit shall be considered and voted upon by the Staffing Committee before they go into effect, in a manner consistent with RCW 70.41.420(6).

15.4 Nurse Staffing Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to develop, oversee, and evaluate an annual nurse staffing plan covering each shift and patient care unit in accordance with the provisions of RCW 70.41.410-420. The Association will determine how nurses will be selected to serve on the Committee. Committee members will be on paid time while attending Committee meetings.

15.4.2 The Medical Center will strive to maintain staffing levels that provide for safe patient care and the health and safety of nurses. To accomplish this goal, the Medical Center shall endeavor to:

15.4.2.1 Provide staffing levels that enable the nurses the opportunity to receive meal and rest breaks.

15.4.2.2 Provide staffing levels that enable nurses to utilize their accrued paid time off pursuant to Article 11.

15.4.2.3 Refrain from assigning nurses to provide care to more patients than anticipated by the agreed staffing guidelines and relevant safety requirements.

15.4.2.4 Avoid assigning Charge Nurses to patient care duties.

In an effort to resolve this matter without filing a grievance, WSNA asks that the employer do more to apply the above-referenced language. We ask that the employer do everything in its power to ensure that staffing levels are safe for both RNs and your patient population. This includes but is not limited to continuing to offer ESI, Spot Pay, equitable DTI on all units, offering a new negotiated "Crisis Pay" incentive, and offering a negotiated retention bonus to all RN staff. We would also appreciate a more visible show of gratitude to the hard work and dedication of the nurses who are fighting on the front lines every day for their patients, co-workers, and community.

WSNA strives to maintain a respectful and collaborative relationship with SJMC. Our RNs are charged with caring for the most vulnerable in the community. Staffing that may be unsafe for patients or working in a potentially dangerous work environment should never be tolerated. We are hopeful that you will do the right thing and fully rectify this situation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Friesen

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