



We Are Union and We Are Fighting for Better Working Conditions and Benefits During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nurses and other healthcare workers are on the front lines in the delivery of essential health services to patients in need. All employees are being asked to go above and beyond to stem the spread of the virus at our hospital. That's why healthcare workers deserve something extra during this pandemic.

We met with VM leadership on May 7 to discuss our working conditions and benefits during this time.

What the union is proposing around quarantine and sick	VM response/what management is proposing
Sick: A Virginia Mason Memorial employee who the Employer does not permit to work due to exposure to communicable disease shall be placed in paid leave status with no loss of pay, benefits, or accrued time off until the Employer permits the employee to return to work.	No
Quarantine: A Virginia Mason Memorial employee who is unable to work as a result of a quarantine status shall be placed in paid leave status with no loss of pay, benefits, or accrued time off until the employee is released from quarantine and able to return to work.	No
PPE: the hospital will follow CDC guidelines	PPE will be based on CDC guidelines. Caregivers who refuse to comply will be removed from the workplace and disciplined as appropriate.
Testing priorities: Any employee who within 14 days of developing symptoms has had close contact with a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19 will be considered a priority for testing.	VM will follow CDC guidelines and if an employee refuses to work, they may be disciplined.
Runners: The hospital will provide "Runners" for the sole purpose of providing nurses and CNAs relief to each unit and work with COVID-19 (or r/o COVID-19) patients and to work with the shift coordinator to ensure all staff have supplies and breaks.	N/A
Hero pay: All employees will receive an additional \$1.50 for hero pay.	"There are sources of compensation that don't come from employers. We aren't saying this isn't important, but we want to use resources carefully. Instead of us paying, there are state benefits that need to be explored first."

What kind of message is VM administration sending to patients, employees and the Yakima community when they say they don't believe there's a need to duplicate benefits the state is already providing? Although we could access those benefits, VM needs to offer better protections for frontline workers, including for those of us who are afraid of returning to work after being quarantined because we may be disciplined. This is neither fair nor safe. Each day, we as frontline healthcare workers are putting ourselves at risk and each of us deserves to know that our employer will provide us paid time to cover a workplace exposure, since Labor and Industry (L&I) only covers a portion of our pay.



"Every day is a struggle. You come in not knowing what the day will bring. We might have three COVID-19 (or rule out COVID) patients to care for with no runners, or we might have five non-COVID patients. A lot of the patients are heavy care. In the end, you're going to lose employees to burn out and that is going to cost the hospital even more in the long run. VMM needs to respect and support all employees. VMM can be a little more accommodating and even a little generous." **Trish Bowman RN, 3EW**



"We come to work every day to save lives and we want to feel appreciated. How are we being appreciated? By cutting our hours? I understand it's a numbers game, but if you're going to invest in something, INVEST IN US. People keep saying 'you signed up for this.' Actually, no, I didn't sign up for a pandemic. People are at work crying and ask 'why aren't they providing help? Why am I only getting food and drinks when other essential workers are getting bonuses?' They were already piling on more work during the

pandemic for the same exact pay. Nurses are providing total care on patients who are very ill, whereas ideally they should be independent. Ratios didn't change even with acuity. We are only asking for a few dollars, \$1.50 to be exact. Everyone is getting a little extra, I thought we were essential too." **Karen Mae Arreola, BSN, RN, 2EW
Oncology, Stroke, Telemetry & Medical Overflow, Clinical Informatics Champion**



"I work in IVCS and I was in the process of getting tested for COVID a few weeks ago. One of the patients I was taking care of tested positive for COVID and I was having symptoms

myself. I was tested on a Thursday and employee health called me Friday saying I tested negative, but I was still having symptoms so I was told to stay home until Monday. I was released back to work on Monday. I filed for L&I for those days I was off, and the next day L&I calls me saying since I wasn't positive for COVID, that I wouldn't be reimbursed for those days I was off. People should be paid to quarantine, it is wrong L&I claims are being DENIED and management thinks state benefits will cover my expenses while I had to quarantine when I was exposed at work." **Jackie Larson, IV Conscious Sedation**



CALLING ON MEMORIAL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We reached out to our Board of Directors because they need to know on what's going on inside our hospital. Our letter calls on the board to tell the hospital administration to collaborate with frontline healthcare workers to ensure standards for patient care and safety are met in this time of crisis as we develop our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our concerns about understaffing should be their concern. Reducing infection control, laboratory, nursing when we have high acuity with both COVID and non-COVID patients not only affects our patients and our co-workers, it most certainly could affect our board members and their families should they need to seek care at Memorial.

April 30, 2020

Virginia Mason Memorial Board of Trustees:

We are committed to patient and worker safety and to providing the best quality care at Memorial. As frontline nurses and healthcare workers, we are also committed to working collaboratively with hospital administrators to ensure our standards for patient care and safety are met in this time of crisis as we develop our response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our bargaining has been postponed and communication between the hospital and the members of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW about the employer's commitment to proceed has been minimal. And now, without input from frontline staff, the hospital appears to be reducing hours for some members of the bargaining unit. It is particularly alarming that management is pressing EVS staff to sign individual contracts regarding their reduction in hours. These actions represent a concerning violation of our collective bargaining rights and must be addressed.

We provide close, direct care to patients and we are responsible for their safety around the clock — no patient goes a single moment unattended. No room goes without proper cleaning and infection control. We are in a period of low census today, but many patients who are admitted present higher acuity and need more comprehensive care. Infection control measures take extra time. These patients are afraid and largely without family support. They require more attention. Memorial Hospital is now our community's only hospital. If you or a loved one gets sick, would you want them to be cared for by an overworked nurse at an understaffed unit? Would you be okay with knowing that the room your loved one is staying may not have been properly disinfected because of reduced infection control staffing?

At any moment, the patient population at VMMH could explode, and we could find ourselves without adequate resources. We are not suggesting that there is no need for reduced schedules, low census or voluntary furlough. We are asking for the opportunity to provide meaningful input and a fair process for determining where it makes sense reduce staffing and schedules and where we need the more flexible option of low census on a day-by-day basis.

We understand the need to conserve resources. We also understand that the hospital will likely receive federal funds to assist with financial challenges. We hope you recognize that we, the nurses and caregivers, are our hospital's best resource to effectively face the challenges ahead. We urge you, as Trustees of this invaluable community institution, to ensure that Memorial management will commit to sustained, open communication and will follow our bargained agreements.

In unity,

**The Nurses and Healthcare workers at Virginia Mason Memorial
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW Negotiations Team**



"We wrote the board of directors a letter to tell management to do the right thing and meet with the union to discuss bargaining and COVID-19 working conditions. On May 7, management came back to the table with a full team ready to discuss where we are in bargaining and how we will proceed. We know the board heard our message and we are going to continue the fight to get a fair contract!"

**Brenda Ponce, 2EW
NAC/UCA**



SEIUHealthcare
United for Quality Care