

# HOW WE KEEP MOVING NEIGHBORCARE FORWARD: Knowing Our Rights and Enforcing Our Contract

Our unity and strength made it possible for us to win our contract at Neighborcare. Because of our contract, we have rights in our workplaces that protect us and keep Neighborcare administration accountable to their actions. Our delegate and leadership team has been working hard to implement the provisions we won under the new contract, and we have achieved some great victories as a result of this work.

We worked hard and stood together to win this contract, but the work is not done! Our contract is only as strong as we are in enforcing it. Each of us needs to know our contract, make sure it's being followed, and continue sticking together as members of our strong, winning union. By speaking out to protect our rights in our workplaces and standing up for each other, we uphold the standards of care that our patients deserve.

## Together, we explore **SIX** key provisions:

- 1** The grievance process
- 2** Joint Labor-Management Committee (and our COVID-19 PTO bank)
- 3** Union response to the COVID-19 vaccine
- 4** Our union rights at work—FAQ
- 5** Legislative agenda and priorities
- 6** How to get involved

## **1** THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

**Working together so that our contract provisions are upheld and to ensure respect and fair treatment in our clinics**



“What is a grievance? A grievance is a process where, with a fellow union member at our side, we meet with the boss to resolve disagreements when they break our contract. Before the union, if we were unjustly disciplined or, as in this case, had a pay cut and loss of job title, we had no recourse. But now that we have organized our union, we have the right to due process—in the form of a grievance. The grievance process gives us the opportunity to have our perspective, our voice, heard by management when we have a disagreement. I had the opportunity to work with my colleague, Kristin, to help make things right when management made a bad decision.” **★Valentina Warner, MD, Rainier Beach**

The first-hand experience of our coworker Kristin Ortega, MA at Rainier Beach, helps us understand the grievance process and its applications, while highlighting the need for transparency, fairness and equity.



“ Because of underlying health conditions, I requested medical accommodations to reduce my exposure to COVID-19. I negotiated the terms and was comfortable with them, however, I later learned that management unilaterally decided to change my title from MA to Med Clerk, as well as take away my bilingual premium for my fluency in Spanish. When I learned of the pay cut and loss of title, I considered resigning. However, because we have a union I had recourse and filed a grievance.

My delegate and I approached this grievance as an equity and racial justice issue. We applied the racial justice lens and were able to explain to management that their decision not only had a negative impact on me as a Latina worker, but also created a hardship for the greater Latinx community we serve at Neighborcare. NCH’s mission to provide culturally appropriate care to the Latinx community means we must have staff who are both bilingual and from our patients’ community, making medical care more accessible and comfortable for the Latinx patients we see every day.

My MA title and bilingual premium were taken away because management did not take me as a person into account—rather, I was a line on a spreadsheet. They did not take into account the family and kids who depend on my pay. They did not take into account the Latinx patients and community I come from and support by translating in our shared language. Their actions had a negative economic impact on my family and left me feeling disrespected. This is an example of the unintended consequences that happen when management makes decisions solely based on their budget. The culmination of decisions like this amounts to institutional and systemic racism. While I don’t believe they had intentions to harm me as a Latina, that was the impact of their decisions. Because of our worker power and the support of my union organizer and delegate, I was able to show to management that I should maintain my MA title and bilingual premium. I won my grievance! And in the process, I was able to open management’s eyes to the negative impact this had on me, my family and community.

As workers in a union, we are stronger. Without the union, I would have had no recourse other than resigning from our already short staffed clinic in a regional MA shortage. We as a union have the workers’ and patients’ best interests at heart. We fight not only for each other, but for what is right. These are OUR workplaces; we work together better when the workers have a voice. Our patients and us workers are the neighbors that Neighborcare has sworn to serve, equally with dignity and respect. We should expect nothing less.” **★ Kristin Ortega, MA, Rainier Beach**

## **2** JOINT LABOR-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Collaborating in partnership to advance the Neighborcare mission amid the COVID-19 pandemic**



“ It is a huge honor to be the Co-Chair of the Joint Labor-Management Committee. The JLMC is a committee where we raise concerns directly to management—this is based on receiving feedback directly from you all, our colleagues across Neighborcare. The committee is made up of delegates from different clinics and job classes, and for the past six months the committee has been working hard on COVID concerns. For example, making sure we have enough PPE stored up, keeping track of members who have tested positive for COVID so that they are getting connected to the resources and support that they need, as well as making sure that any staff members who are on stand-by are getting the same vaccine information as their coworkers who are still currently working. At our most recent meeting, we discussed the effectiveness of the CPTO program that management rolled out in November 2020. If you have questions or concerns relating to COVID, we would love to hear from you!” **★ Paula Brown, PSR, Meridian**

## What is the CPTO bank?

CPTO (COVID-19 PTO) is an additional resource which acts as a bridge for people who don't have PTO. It can be used to cover absences related to unexpected illness for yourself or a family member. It can also be used to cover for a childcare-related issue or non-COVID related medical appointments.

- ◆ We can only use the CPTO if we have no PTO to access. It cannot be used to schedule vacation or personal days
- ◆ CPTO is prorated to our FTE, so 1.0 = 24 hours and 0.5 = 12 hours
- ◆ We can use CPTO if we are quarantining and out of PTO
- ◆ We can use CPTO if we need to take care of a sick family member and out of PTO
- ◆ We can use CPTO if we are sick from vaccine side effects and out of PTO

## 3 UNION RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 VACCINE

As a healthcare workers' union, we demand that the health and safety of every worker be assured through the distribution of safe, reliable and widely accessible vaccines. Because we fight for safety, justice, and equity for ourselves, our families, the people we care for, and for our communities as a whole, we call for an evidence-based vaccine distribution strategy founded on principles of equity, safety and priority.

We will continue to hold employers responsible for ensuring all working people have the appropriate PPE and equipment. Employers should not use vaccines as a substitute for worker safety, infection control or personal protective equipment.



“Receiving my COVID-19 vaccine was a humbling experience. The pandemic has brought such incredible hardship and challenges to our communities and the world. The promise of a vaccine was the first glimmer of hope in many months. Yet, as I prepared to receive my first vaccine dosage it was painfully clear that many of my family, friends, patients, and the global community would likely not receive their first COVID vaccine for several months, if not years, and yet others who had the option to receive the vaccine may decline due to fear and misinformation. I realized that the privilege I had to receive the vaccine provided me with both the opportunity and the responsibility to engage in meaningful conversations with patients and staff who were considering refusing the vaccine. My hope was that by receiving the vaccine and also engaging in dialogue it would help others to make an informed decision about their health and the vaccine process. The pandemic has made me acutely aware of my influence as a healthcare provider and I do not take this lightly. In the days to come I will continue to advocate for science, for my patients, and for the promise of a healthier tomorrow.” **★ Elisa Apostle, ARNP, CC**

Do you have questions about our union? Our contract? Do you have concerns related to COVID-19, your work environment, staffing?

## REACH OUT! Joint Labor-Management Committee Members

- ◆ **Paula Brown**  
Co-chair: PSR, Meridian
- ◆ **Renee Hopkins**  
DA, Rainier Beach
- ◆ **Valentina Warner**  
MD, Rainier Beach
- ◆ **Maureen Chomko**  
Diabetes Educator,  
Rainier Beach
- ◆ **Elisa Apostle**  
ARNP, Columbia City
- ◆ **Ginger Hartzell**  
Med Clerk, Lake City/45th
- ◆ **Hayley Nicholas**  
RN, HHOT

## 4 OUR UNION RIGHTS AT WORK— FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**We won our union! What's next?**

**Q: Can I wear my purple badge holder and SEIU button, and also talk about the union at work?**

**A:** Definitely! Our right to engage in collective union activities, like wearing an 1199NW badge pull or button, is protected by Federal Law. Management can't discriminate against us for wearing union symbols, talking or acting in support of the union if symbols, talk, and acts about other issues or events are allowed.

If employees are allowed to wear a badge pull with pink ribbons, or a button supporting the Seahawks, then our union ones are allowed too. This right is guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act. Also, just as we have had the right to discuss our son's graduation, the softball game, or this weekend's barbeque, etc., we have the right to talk about our union.

**Q: How much are dues?**

**A:** Dues are 1.8% of your gross pay but the deduction will be 1.95% or \$1.50 per \$1,000 you make. The deduction is a higher % because there are two pay periods where nothing will be deducted (April/Oct.). For members making more than \$60,000/year, no one ever pays more than \$1,080/year with a cap of \$90 a month. There is a one-time new member initiation fee of \$30 (\$15 1st paycheck, \$15 2nd paycheck).

**Q: Where does my dues money go?**

**A:** Our dues pay the costs of building an effective organization including support for newly organizing chapters, our education and training programs, negotiating expenses including: lead negotiators, organizers, and full time professional staff who provide representation, legal, communications and research expertise. The union's budget is approved yearly by a vote of union delegates from every chapter and overseen monthly by a Secretary Treasurer and the Executive Board made up of members we elect. SEIU Healthcare 1199NW is a transparent and accountable member-run organization.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Resources for Members

Our union's COVID-19 response team has hosted virtual events, town halls and member forums—featuring union leaders, experts, state officials, frontline workers and more—to address questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, the science behind it, its safety, eligibility, general recommendations and how we expect employers to manage vaccine distribution and accommodations.

Access recordings of past events, resources and updates at [1199nwcovidresponse.org/category/vaccine](https://1199nwcovidresponse.org/category/vaccine)

## 5 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND PRIORITIES

**Building power in Olympia and D.C with our advocacy**

As a union, we are a voice for safe, quality care; we advocate for our patients both at the bargaining table and in Olympia and Washington D.C. It's important to build our power by helping elect leaders who will stand with us and ensure our issues are heard.

When we help elect healthcare champions, we can make an important collective impact on raising standards for our patients and our communities. This year, we held our annual Lobby Day virtually over Zoom, and were able to connect with senators and legislators from across Washington state. We shared our workplace stories and concerns and asked them to support our key legislative priorities.

Visit our website at [waleg.seiu1199nw.org](http://waleg.seiu1199nw.org) for more information on our top priorities during the 2021 legislative session:

- ◆ Health Systems Transparency
- ◆ The Worker Protection Act
- ◆ Revenue and Investments for our Communities
- ◆ Climate Action
- ◆ Police Accountability
- ◆ COVID-19 Response



“ Attending Lobby Day as part of the Delegate Leadership Assembly this year made me feel more connected with the core values of both our union and my workplace, especially during this pandemic which has made it harder to feel part of a larger whole. Hearing the experiences and triumphs from other union members and leaders through the different workshops and panels reminded me how recognizing and respecting the diversity of our co-workers leads is a necessary part of ensuring quality staff and patient care. The tools I learned during the workshops for building union power through a racial justice perspective taught me how to be a better delegate and gave me skills for how to be a more conscious and proactive healthcare leader. I had the opportunity to both learn and apply those skills in a setting where I got to speak with elected officials who listened to our experiences as healthcare workers throughout the state, which was a new but invaluable experience. It was empowering to know that my voice as a healthcare worker was heard, and I’m excited to apply those skills as a delegate to support my co-workers so we can be healthcare leaders for our communities.” **\*Andrew Nee, Eligibility Specialist, Meridian**



“ As a pharmacy technician, I am one of the first faces that our patients see when they come to the pharmacy. Working in such a diverse environment there are patients that do not speak English or English is not their first language. The aspect of my job that I am most passionate about is connecting with my patients and one of the ways that I can do that is speaking in Spanish with them. Being able to communicate with patients changes the interactions and experiences that they have. Communicating with patients I listen to their hardships and can often relate to experiences that they have. As a person of color calling on police is daunting, as the lack of accountability in police violence is nonexistent. It is a story that I hear all too often at Neighborcare Health, a fear of police. A fear in which a person will not call for aid when needed for fear of being met with aggression. I see the pain that my patients experience when they speak about the hardships that they go through but were unable to get the help, because that pain reflects my own pain. In my time at Neighborcare Health, I have become close to my patients. I have seen children grow into young adults, I have seen parents become grandparents, and have celebrated those achievements with my patients. But I have also felt their pain as my own. It is for this reason, why I stand with SEIU 1199NW, our union, in standing up for police accountability. Police need to be held accountable for their actions but on top of that they need to be trained to do better. They need the training to de-escalate a situation and not go into a situation with aggression and force. We all deserve better.” **\*Maria Vargas, Pharmacy Tech, Meridian**



## Protect Adult Dental Care

We joined with fellow dental care providers from various union clinics to send a message to our state lawmakers about the importance of funding for adult dental care programs. We are counting on our elected representatives to support funding for essential dental care for our most vulnerable patients.

Visit <https://1199nw.org/20IPwrP> to watch and share our advocacy video, featuring our Neighborcare coworker Hoda Mohamud!



“The work I do is essential, and it impacts my patients’ lives in many ways, such as boosting their overall health,

self-esteem, confidence and financial well-being. I am proud to serve our patients at Neighborcare and am passionate about what I do—that’s why I went to Lobby Day. I wanted to help ensure that our state legislators fund our adult dental programs. When adults have to give up dental care because they can’t afford it, it usually comes at a time when they need it the most. Putting off dental care can have painful, often serious, health consequences. I wanted my lawmaker to hear firsthand from me that keeping adult dental programs well-funded is essential.”

**\*Hoda Mohamud, Dental Assistant, High Point**

## 6 HOW TO GET INVOLVED

**Calling all coworkers—every voice matters to keep our union strong!**

As we move closer to bargaining our second contract, we are going to be hosting a series of meetings across the NCH system so that we can understand the key areas we need to make improvements on, as well as grow a strong bargaining team.

### If you are a:

- ◆ Physician/Physician Locum
- ◆ Physician Assistant/PA Locum
- ◆ ARNP
- ◆ Psychologist
- ◆ BHC
- ◆ Social Worker
- ◆ Diabetes Educator

## JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL ZOOM MEETING!

**Pick a date and time that works best for you:**

**Saturday February 20 at 11:00am-12:30pm**

**&**

**Sunday, February 21 at 11:00am-12:30pm**

**\*Don’t see your job title listed? We will be hosting a meeting for your job class very soon, so stay tuned for more details\***

**GO TO [forms1199nw.org/nch-2021](https://forms1199nw.org/nch-2021) to RSVP!**

### If you need to talk to a delegate about our contract or how we can keep growing our strength, please contact:

- ◆ Valentina Warner, MD, RB
- ◆ Renee Hopkins, DA, RB
- ◆ Maureen Chomko, Diabetes Educator, RB
- ◆ Kristin Ortega, MA, RB
- ◆ Liza Redding, BHC, Pike
- ◆ Elisa Apostle, ARNP, CC
- ◆ Monica Villalobos-Beltran, ES, CC
- ◆ Paula Brown, PSR, Meridian
- ◆ Maria Vargas, Pharmacy Tech, Meridian
- ◆ Andrew Nee, ES, Meridian
- ◆ Hayley Nicholas, RN, HHOT
- ◆ Hoda Mohamud, DA, High Point
- ◆ Ginger Hartzell, Med Clerk, Lake City and 45th