

Joint Message from  **SEIU Healthcare** United for Quality Care and  neighborcare health

# Recruitment and Retention is the Foundation for Strong Teams at Neighborcare

We have all experienced the impact of being short-staffed throughout our clinics. For those of us with more seniority in the organization, we have watched our colleagues leave for other opportunities. We know that staffing has been especially challenging during and post-pandemic. We have seen high turnover and challenges in hiring across several clinical roles. For example, we have experienced 50% turnover of our Medical Assistants within the 12-month timeframe, 37% turnover of Dental Assistants and have not been able to attract any Pharm Techs for the past 8 months.

Neighborcare Health and SEIU Healthcare 1199NW are both committed to providing market competitive wages to staff members. In response to a rapidly changing wage market for some of our clinical positions and to address the difficulty of recruiting and retaining key positions, Neighborcare leadership felt it was necessary to initiate a proposal to make several mid-contract adjustments to the wage scale. We reached agreement on the following changes:

JOB CLASSIFICATION	ORIGINAL PAY GRADE	NEW PAY GRADE
Pharmacy Technician	Grade 4	Grade 5
Medical Assistant	Grade 5	Grade 6
Dental Assistant	Grade 5	Grade 6
Medical Assistant II	Grade 7	Grade 8
Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary	Grade 7	Grade 8

The new wage scale for these positions was effective on Monday, May 8 and staff will see their new pay rate on the May 26 paycheck.

The wage scale can also be found on the HR Intranet page under the Union Information and Updates section.

Scan to download the wage scale



[1199nw.org/3q8GerO](https://1199nw.org/3q8GerO)

“I appreciate that Neighborcare is doing more to recruit and retain employees, especially those who are overcompensating due to short staffing. I have seen firsthand how hard working our Dental team is and I fully support the new wage increases for our Dental Assistants as well as Medical Assistants and Pharm Techs.”

- **Bianca Fuentes, Pac Tower Dental PSR**



“This raise is going to have a significant impact on my life. I was thinking that I would retire early and return to my home country of Mexico because cost of living here is very high, being a single woman makes it harder. With this raise I can now wait until my full benefited retirement age and live somewhat comfortably with less stress and worries. It feels like after 16 years of dedicated work I am finally being recognized by Neighborcare. Thank you to everyone who made this possible. It means very much to me.”

- **Patricia Burns, MA, 45th**



## Behavioral Health Updates

To support Neighborcare Health’s efforts to becoming a behavioral health agency, to provide career growth opportunities for BH staff, and to assist with recruitment and retention on the BH team, Neighborcare and our union recently bargaining the following changes:

- ★ Created a new job classification of Social Worker II
- ★ Moved the Mental Health Therapist job classification from pay grade 10 to pay grade 12

# MA Apprenticeship Program

Neighborcare is in the process of creating a new Medical Assistant Apprenticeship program to further address the MA shortage. An Apprenticeship program is paid, on-the-job training and creates a career pathway to become a Medical Assistant. We are beginning to gauge interest among staff. If you are interested in receiving more information on becoming an MA, email Carlos Lazaro Montes, MA Program Manager, [carlosl@neighborcare.org](mailto:carlosl@neighborcare.org)

**If you are a Medical Assistant wanting to further your career or education, don't forget to connect with the Training Fund!**

Here are some of the many resources available to MAs:

- ★ Tuition Assistance - up to \$3,500 a year
- ★ Career and Education Counseling
- ★ ESL classes and laptop lending
- ★ Tutoring (in-person and online)
- ★ Free unlimited CEUs Professional Development funding for CEU-related courses, books, materials
- ★ Cert exam costs & prep materials
- ★ Professional membership fees

Visit [healthcareerfund.org](http://healthcareerfund.org) to learn more! To get in touch with your direct liaison, contact Elena Bernardi at: [ebernardi@healthcareerfund.org](mailto:ebernardi@healthcareerfund.org) or (425) 919-6026.

## Credit for Past Experience Update

We are excited to announce that the Credit for Past Experience process has been completed. The last phase was completed recently, and changes were effective on Monday, May 8. All represented staff who submitted their Credit for Past Experience forms have been reviewed and have been notified of the results of the review. The average increase for staff who completed the review was 6.1%. We are proud that we were able to partner together to create a system that recognizes and compensates for the diversity of work and life experiences that staff bring to Neighborcare.

"I was moved up 6 steps to the appropriate spot on the pay scale because of work we did to get the union wage scale and credit for past experience review. Thanks to our union and bargaining team--I got a meaningful raise that accounts for my experience!"



- Sharon Levine, NCH Locum Physician

## Joint Labor Management Committee Update

As a refresher, the Joint Labor Management Committee is the primary way that our union and Neighborcare partner to solve issues at the clinic and organization level. We have been busy each month working on several key issues that include:

- ★ Inviting union coworkers from 45th St. clinic to debrief a potential safety threat from a patient situation that occurred and make recommendations around how we and our patients stay safe when there is a possible threat to safety.
- ★ Partnering together to ensure that we expand policies and practices when we learn new information—we changed the precepting premium policy to include MAs, DAs, and Pac Tower PSRs for the unique work they do in training students.
- ★ Review policies and practices through a racial justice lens to ensure that we are being equitable and make changes when necessary.
- ★ Inviting union guests from High Point to share staffing concerns and recommendations for short- and long-term solutions.
- ★ We brought forward some provider-specific feedback from the last union provider meeting in April to begin working on actionable items like easy to access universal smart phrases; prioritizing scheduling patients with PCP for better continuity; improving insurance assignment to avoid delays in care with referrals.

"Winning the preceptor pay is especially rewarding after initially being told it was not possible for PSRs to access this premium. Pacific Tower is a teaching facility, and it feels that this positive change is congruent with my job responsibilities. Thanks to our clinic delegate, Bianca, and to the union for actively advocating for the PSRs." - **Mona Prasad, PSR, Pac Tower**



## Committee Members:

### Union Team:

Hayley Nicholas, Co-Chair, RN, HHOT  
Elisa Apostle, NP, CC  
Kristin Ortega, MA, Float Pool  
Kristin Kurvink, MAII, 45th  
Valentina Warner, MD, RB  
Maureen Chomko, Diabetes Educator, RB  
Bianca Fuentes, PSR, Pac Tower

### Management Team:

Chip Weatherbee, Co-Chair, Senior Labor Relations Specialist  
Irwin Batara, Interim Chief People and Equity Officer  
Cora Weed, Interim Chief Operating Officer  
Stephanie Furtado, Director Clinical Operations  
Emilie Powell, Director Clinical Operations