



- DOWNTOWN EMERGENCY SERVICE CENTER
- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES
- CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES
- COMPREHENSIVE LIFE RESOURCES
- COMPASS HEALTH
- NAVOS
- SOUND
- WELLFOUND
- LIFELONG

A Legacy of Unity, Strength, and Workplace Standards at Our Behavioral Health Facilities

Behavioral health has been foundational to our union since the beginning. Our first union president was a psych RN, and so the first chapters who were non-nurses were some of our behavioral health chapters. This is where we grew into our current industrial union model.

The earliest behavioral health agencies who organized with our union were BHR, Compass, and Navos. The issues then were similar to now: pay, recruitment and retention, safety, and staffing. **We had to look at union organizing in a new way, because the problems in behavioral health system are structural.** There is just not enough funding. Since the beginning, our members in behavioral health have been a statewide voice for improving delivery of behavioral health services. Before us, there was no statewide worker voice. The professional associations, the bosses, had the ear of our elected officials. Leaders came together and came up with a plan for all the issues we still work on now, and we had a statewide mental health strike around wages, aimed at the legislature. **This was the first time in history that we won statewide behavioral health improvements through the legislature, but it wouldn't be the last.** As part of that year's state budget, they passed dedicated funds for mental health. We won raises in the double digits. After that, we embarked on a huge push to

improve benefits, which were terrible, with unaffordable co-pays. There was a successful effort to improve those plans. All of the coverage was about the same for employees then as it is now for dependents. That difference still exists. There is more work to be done!

In 2007 we had a recession, and mental health workers were the hardest hit. State revenues dried up so Medicaid funds were on the chopping block. We had to fight to keep the improvements we had made. Non union workers' wages were frozen, but because of our unity, that did not happen in places that were unionized. **Together we beat back a wage freeze, and people continued to move up step scales, and there were even some increases.**

Paid advocacy days was an innovation of our union. Because of the success we had in our behavioral health industry wide strike, we realized that we could and should continue to use our collective power to influence the legislature. **Our behavioral health contracts now have paid days off to join us in meeting with our elected officials, to tell them what they need to do to support client and patient care.** This led to a huge win for safety in 2007: Marty Smith's law, stating that you can't be sent out on a home visit by yourself. To this day, sending MHPs out alone is illegal in Washington state.

Our vision for the next 40 years

Washington state will be a place where behavioral healthcare is widely available and easily accessed.

Because of our strength in numbers, our unified voice, and because we are coming together from all over the behavioral health world in a way we haven't seen before, we have set our sights on a future where inpatient beds are plentiful, safe and therapeutic, outpatient treatment is offered in every community tailored to the specific needs of those served, and no one is left out in the cold. Our collective power is growing by the day. We have it in us to move into a future where we are respected for our work, we are able to recruit and retain amazing coworkers, and our lives and our neighbors' lives are transformed.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the union. I see black women, white women, LGBTQ+ working at DESC in peace. It is because of the work our union does toward a culture where everyone is valued, everyone belongs, and has a voice. Because of our union we are making better wages, taking care of ourselves, our families, and we get to come to work and help people. Having a union takes the fear out of everyday life: will I be able to take care of my family? Put food on the table? With the union we were able to win the wages we need to care for our families and serve our community."



— **Ladedria Stalworth, Residential Counselor, DESC, The Lyon**

"The process of organizing our union at Comprehensive Life Resources has been a long journey. It has brought us a sense of community and has put us on a path to getting the recognition we deserve from our management team, to enact clear and tangible change. Our coworkers stood together and won our union vote by a large majority. Now that we are at the bargaining table, the bargaining team is dedicated to ensuring none of our coworkers are left behind, as we are the backbone of our organization. As someone who has been a part of this journey, from being on the organizing committee to sitting at the table with management, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for behavioral health organizations to unionize. By standing together as behavioral health employees, we clearly convey that we are tired of being overlooked, underpaid, and devalued by our employer. Organizing with 1199NW has been an amazing journey that will impact and empower behavioral health organizations for generations to come."



— **Mariya Gaither, Mental Health Counselor, Pearl Youth Resident, Comprehensive Life Resource**



Wins across our behavioral health workplaces:

We have worked to achieve improvements in our most critical areas: wages, benefits, case loads, and respect at work. When we achieve these improvements in all of our facilities, it will be because we worked together across our workplaces to do so. See below the incredible wins we've had! We will continue to work together to build the collective strength and unity across all of the behavioral health workplaces to achieve all of these wins and raise behavioral health standards everywhere.

Catholic Community Services

- ✓ We are organizing across CCS to make sure management delivers on the 15% increase we won in the legislature.

Lifelong

- ✓ We won a long and divisive contract fight by taking our unified actions to the board of directors. This led to the bad boss getting fired by the board, and a new management team came in with the explicit mandate to be collaborative! This is a huge step forward. We enjoy a labor/management relationship that is respectful, and as a result we are all able to care for our clients without the added stress of dealing with bad management.

Comprehensive Life Resources

- ✓ Organizing our union and fighting for a first contract has put management on notice – we won a wellness program, gym memberships, crisis pay, and a brand new weekend differential.

the newest part of our behavioral health team!

Behavioral Health Resources

- ✓ We just won a wage increase of 13%!

Sound

- ✓ We won our first contract and established a first in the state behavioral health apprenticeship program. This is through a combination of the 1199NW training fund and the state funding pathways to professional advancement. We won increased vacation, increased wages, and access to promotions before positions are open to the general public.

Wellfound

- ✓ We won our first contract, and we won the fight for home units, which are now in the works because of sustained unified actions.

DESC

- ✓ Through joint advocacy, we won life changing pay increases at DESC. Every job at that agency now has a starting wage that is a living wage. We can now congratulate the on-calls who have joined our union!

Compass Health

- ✓ Caseload caps won as a result of a big committee fight
- ✓ Stopped management from illegally collecting audio recordings within hours of finding out it was happening
- ✓ Extra required manager trainings
- ✓ Stopped management from calculating overtime in a self-serving way, winning significant backpay for many of our coworkers
- ✓ Took action when management was endangering patients and treating us with disrespect
- ✓ Stopped management from creating a duplicated labor management committee to compete with the union's (an unfair labor practice)

Navos

- ✓ Navos workers won significant raises between 8.7% and 17% last August, and significant improvements in shift differentials.

"At Compass Health, we had a lot of incidents of management doing the wrong thing. They miscalculated overtime, owing us thousands of dollars, they tried to create a shadow joint labor management committee, they had video cameras collecting audio without the knowledge or permission of affected workers and so much more. We used our collective voices to fight back successfully on all of these things, and at the same time we created a powerful caseload subcommittee which led to a historical first—caseload caps. I have worked for both union and non union companies. It is clear that having a strong union contract and strong union representative support has helped us improve our workplace in ways I did not see in non union companies. Our unity and our actions made all the difference."



— Gail Estes, Compass Health, RN, Triage

We continue to build our track record of legislative victories in and out of the legislature, and we are still fighting for better patient and client care. **In this past year, we have secured a 15% increase in Medicaid reimbursement and have also passed a bill demanding that the MCOs are accountable for providing funding for all kinds of care, all over the state. We also won a bill creating and funding apprenticeships in behavioral health.**