

How does the process work?

By forming a union, you are forming an organization in which nurses from throughout the hospital come together to represent themselves collectively. This includes nurses from each department, each shift, per diems and staff nurses, both part time and full time. The first step of this process is one nurse talking to another nurse.

Once a majority of nurses in the hospital want to form a union, they petition the National Labor Relations Board to hold an election in order to make their status as a union legally official. When the NLRB certifies the results of a winning election, the employer has an obligation to negotiate over changes to your working conditions and nurses have an opportunity to negotiate a full contract.

Whether you are winning an election, bargaining a contract, or addressing day to day issues in the hospital, the goal is to have an organization of nurses who effectively and consistently advocate for themselves and their patients.

What are the eleven things
that management always says
when workers talk about

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ORGANIZING A UNION?

What is the Northeast Nurses Association?

The Northeast Nurses Association (NENA) is an alliance of unionized nurses throughout the region. Encompassing the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) and United Nurses and Allied Professionals (UNAP), nearly 40,000 nurses and healthcare professionals have come together to improve the lives of their patients and restore dignity to their profession.

Since 2015, our staff has helped nearly 5,000 nurses and other healthcare professionals join together to form a union at their facility. We believe that when the people who actually do the work and provide the care gain a stronger voice, standards rise for everyone.



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HINT:

They come directly from the consultants' anti-union campaign manuals

Did you know...

When HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATIONS find out that workers are talking about organizing a union, they usually hire expensive (approximately \$3,000–%5,000/day) anti-union consultants whose entire job is to STOP WORKERS FROM ORGANIZING. Through mandatory meetings, letters, videos, and scripted one-on-one meetings with managers, anti-union consultants push their message of FEAR, INTIMIDATION, AND FUTILITY.

1 We had no idea there was a problem. Give us a chance and we'll make everything right.

- Anti-union management consultants advise hospital administrators to go to each nurse and ask for a second chance.
- They make promises that things will improve.
- They give raises, improve benefits, and restore cut-backs.
- They may even fire an unpopular Director of Nursing or CEO, and hire someone new whose job it will be to ask for a second chance.

2 You'll lose flexibility.

- Anti-union consultants know that nurses value flexibility. So they'll make phony threats to take away self-scheduling, weekend programs, anything that makes your life as a nurse easier.
- Just remember, once you're organized, management can't make any changes without negotiating with you.

3 You start from "scratch" in negotiations.

- Management will say that you start with a blank slate at negotiations, and that you could lose benefits that you care about. Remember, you start with what you have now, and work from there in the negotiating process.
- **CONSIDER THIS: if management really thought you would lose by organizing, why are they desperately fighting your attempt to organize?**

4 Unions aren't for professionals

- Anti-union consultants know that professionalism is important to nurses. So they'll talk about unions as organizations for blue collar workers, not for educated professionals.
- Northeast Nurses Association is a coalition of professional healthcare workers' unions whose members believe that there's nothing more professional than being able to advocate for their patients and themselves: at the bedside, at the negotiating table, and before the legislature.

5 The union is a third party that will come between us.

- Anti-union consultants will tell managers to say that the union is a third party that will come between management and nurses.
- Remember, the union is the nurses. Nurses elect their co-workers to be their representatives and all decisions are made by nurses.

6 Union dues are...

- While management never seemed to care how you spent your money before you started talking about organizing, now they're very concerned about how much you may contribute to your organization in union dues.
- Nurses at your hospital will pay nothing in dues until a contract has been negotiated and ratified by all the nurses. That means that you pay dues only after you've voted on a contract that contains the kinds of improvements to salaries, benefits, and working conditions that will make nurses want to stay at your hospital.
- Typically union dues are 1–1.25% of base pay, but you will decide together with your fellow nurses what your dues should be in order to maintain a strong level of organization.



Hospital executives know nurses have a lot to gain by organizing with their co-workers and winning a voice in the workplace. In fact, most Hospital CEOs are willing to spend patient care dollars on expensive anti-union consultants to script department managers on what to say to get nurses to vote no. How do we know the administration has hired an anti-union consultant? Because managers always say the same thing; don't be fooled by consultant rhetoric.

7 The union will make you abandon your patients and go on strike.

- Going on strike is the most effective tool nurses have to get management to do the right thing. Only nurses at your hospital can decide to go on strike and you would only choose to strike if an overwhelming majority of nurses at your hospital voted to do so.
- Federal law requires nurses to give a full ten days' notice before they strike. At that point, legal responsibility for the care of patients is transferred from the nurses to the hospital. The hospital must make alternative arrangements for the patients, including transferring them to other hospitals and rescheduling elective procedures. Hospitals also hire expensive, out of state companies to provide temporary replacement nurses.

8 We don't have any money, so it's futile to organize.

- Hospitals like to talk about how little money they're making. However, nurses see ways that money is wasted every day—money that would be better spent on nurse retention and patient care.
- When you're organized, you have a say in how the money is spent. You also have access to information about the hospital's real finances and help from union experts to find out where the money is really going.

9 Management often makes promises of money, benefits, or promotions to employees who will speak out against organizing.

- Sometimes nurses even claim to have had a bad experience in the past with a union. Management may also try to form a "Vote No" committee of nurses who will be encouraged to use work time to fight their co-workers' attempts to organize, all in an attempt to keep things just the way they are right now.

10 The union can't do anything about staffing...

- There are many ways that union nurses can and address staffing issues through their union.
1. Documentation-Objection and Documentation of Unsafe Staffing/Unsatisfactory Patient Care—these forms are a tool that allow the RN to document unsafe conditions that put patients at risk (i.e. unsafe floating, too few nurses) and to document that management was formally notified of the nurse's concerns. The forms are admissible in court and are protected under federal labor law.
 2. Union nurses negotiate patient care and staffing related language into their contracts. A few examples are: restrictions and guidelines on floating, right to refuse mandatory overtime, staffing committees that meet with management to review unsafe staffing forms, staffing ratios.
 3. Union nurses have patient advocacy protections. As a union nurse, you will no longer be an "at will" employee. This means that you can only be disciplined for just cause and cannot be retaliated against for insisting on adequate staffing and safe practices.

11 The union will bully you.

First of all, the union is only the nurses at RGH. Hospital administrators are aware of the power that nurses have when they come together and because of that will take great efforts to prevent you from communicating. While pressuring you non-stop to vote against forming a union, managers will tell you in a huddle or in written statements that some anonymous nurse was bullied by union supporters. All this will be done in an effort to silence union supporters and distract from the actual issues you will fix together. Check-in with your co-workers and don't allow management to stop you from speaking honestly and freely.

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