

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

You and your co-workers have a federally protected right to engage in union organizing activities. The National Labor Relations Board is a part of the federal government whose entire job is to protect your right to enforce your union rights. More information can be found on the NLRB website including how to file a complaint.



### You have the right to:

- ✓ Talk to your coworkers about the union at work to the same extent you can talk about other non-work related issues such as sports or the weather
- ✓ Read and distribute union flyers in any area where other non work-related flyers are distributed, such as party announcements or girl scout cookie sign ups
- ✓ Attend meetings to learn about the union
- ✓ Sign a union authorization card
- ✓ Ask other employees to learn about the union

### Management is not allowed to:

- ✗ Threaten to or actually fire, lay-off, discipline or harass employees for engaging in union activities
- ✗ Question you about union support (yours or your coworkers) in a way that you experience as coercive or intimidating
- ✗ Threaten to withhold any benefits in exchange for you not unionizing
- ✗ Promise a benefit or pay increase in exchange for employees not unionizing
- ✗ Prevent you from talking about the union on work time
- ✗ Remove union flyers from any area where other non-work related flyers have been permitted
- ✗ Poll employees to determine their support for the union



### What is RUNAP?

The Rochester Union of Nurses & Allied Professionals (RUNAP) is a union currently made up of the staff RNs at Rochester General Hospital. Originally organized in 2022, RUNAP won its first contract in 2023 with record raises and binding staffing commitments, ratified with a 95% Yes vote by RGH RNs. Other groups of healthcare workers can organize their own local unions and affiliate with RUNAP, providing the best of both worlds: sharing resources, experience, and support to increase our collective power, while ensuring each group controls their own contract and needs. A union is run by and for its members, and the directly-elected RUNAP Board are all working members.

What are the things management always says when workers talk about

# ORGANIZING A UNION?



When hospital administrators find out that workers are organizing a union, they hire expensive anti-union consultants (at approx. \$3,500/day per consultant) whose entire job is to stop people from organizing. Through mandatory meetings, flyers, letters, videos and scripted one-on-one meetings with managers, union busters communicate their message of fear and futility.

# What they say:

**1** The underlying message of everything that the union busters will do and say is that **the union is a third party** that will come between you and management.

A union is just you and your coworkers organizing a collective voice to advocate for yourselves and your patients. Once you win your union election, you will distribute bargaining surveys to each and every worker, form a representative bargaining committee, formulate a set of proposals for your first contract in order to improve standards in the hospital, and sit down with management to negotiate improvements.

All decisions about your contract are made by you and your coworkers at your hospital and, unlike any hospital-based committees, management can't ignore the input of unionized workers.



# What else will they say:

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

- Anti-union consultants advise hospital administrators to go to each employee 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 manager, director, or CEO and hire someone new whose job it will be to ask for a second chance.

**3** **You'll lose flexibility.**

- Anti-union consultants know that people value flexibility. So they'll make phony threats to take away self-scheduling, weekend programs, or anything that makes your life easier.
- Just remember, once you're organized, management can't make any changes to how things work now.

**4** **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 wouldn't stand to gain by organizing, why are they trying so hard to stop you?**

**5** **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.
- No one at your hospital will pay anything in dues until a contract has been negotiated and ratified by a vote of all the affected employees. 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 people want to stay at your hospital.
- Dues for RUNAP are 1.25% of your base hourly rate for hours worked or 1.25% of base salary (not including add-ons, differentials, time-and-a-half, or vacation pay or other leave). This rate was determined and voted on by the full membership when the RUNAP bylaws were ratified and cannot be changed except by a full vote of the membership.
- Dues are how we fund our organization, so we can stay strong and keep winning improvements and enforcing our contract. Finances are managed by the RUNAP Treasurer and Board, all working members, and the budget is discussed, amended, and approved at the annual RUNAP Convention, made up of elected delegates from all locals and open to all members.

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

- Going on strike is the most effective tool workers have to get management to do the right thing. Only you and your coworkers can decide to go on strike and you would only choose to strike if an overwhelming majority at your hospital voted to do so. Following repeated unfair labor practices, RGH RNs went on a 2-day strike in 2023 after an over 90% vote and they won the kinds of improvements nurses and patients desperately needed.
- Federal law requires healthcare workers to give a full ten days' notice before they strike. At that point, legal responsibility for the care of patients is fully on the hospital administration. The hospital must make alternative arrangements for patients, including transferring them to other hospitals and rescheduling elective procedures. Hospitals also hire expensive, out of state companies to provide temporary replacement nurses and other workers.

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

- Hospitals like to talk about how little money they're making. However, employees see ways that money is wasted every day—money that would be better spent on employee 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 finances to find out where the money is really going.

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

- Sometimes managers, consultants, or others claim to have had a bad experience in the past with a union (often a different union, or in a different state or industry). Management may also try to form a "Vote No" committee of employees 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.
- Promises are often made to individuals and groups, and just as often broken.

**9** **The union can't do anything about staffing...**

There are many ways that RUNAP members can address staffing issues through our union.

- Unsafe Staffing Forms are tools that allow bedside staff to document unsafe conditions that put patients at risk and to document that management was formally notified of the concerns. The forms are admissible in court, are protected under federal labor law, and can help protect your job or license in unsafe situations.
- RUNAP members negotiate patient care and staffing-related language into our contracts. A few examples are: financial penalties for short staffing paid out directly to members, restrictions and guidelines on floating, free charge, the reduction of forced rotating shifts, protections from unnecessary cancellation, elected representation on a staffing committee that sets grids and reviews unsafe staffing forms, and the creation of a rapid response team.
- As a union member, 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.

**10** **The union will harass you.**

The union is just you and your coworkers. The goal of the union busters is to create an atmosphere of fear and confusion and to stifle discussion. You have the right to organize and talk to your co-workers about the union at work, but management will make it clear that they don't want you to unionize (because they want to keep all the power). This makes some people afraid to be openly supportive of the union while at work. Your organizing committee may decide to hold union meetings away from the hospital or try to reach people via phone or at home in order to have an open conversation about the benefits of forming a union and why you will be stronger together. Unsubstantiated claims of "harassment" are projection on management's part and a tactic meant to distract and divide, when we should be focusing on the improvements we can win together!