



**MI NURSES**  
Association



Wisconsin Federation  
of Nurses & Health  
Professionals AFT AFL-CIO  
*A Union of Professionals*



## ***Ascension Coalition of Unions Newsletter***

April 2021

Nurses and Health Care Professionals at Ascension Health have been working together for months as a Coalition. We have been advocating for fair contracts and fair treatment for our nurses, health care professionals and patients. Union employees need to stick together now more than ever. Ascension is determined to break our unions and deny our members a voice at work.

As the season turns to spring and there seems to be a light at the end of the COVID tunnel, with more than 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the US, we know that our battle has only just begun. **The pandemic did not mark the start of Ascension's toxic culture and it will not mark the end.** As we look ahead, we wanted to provide an update on where we are now and where we're headed.

Over the past few months at Ascension, we've continued to experience a culture of disrespect and mistreatment across our six hospitals, impacting our health, safety, financial security and our patients' wellbeing. **But we will continue to fight on these issues:**

- Ascension's failure to respond to information requests
- Unjust discipline and termination of nurses, techs and stewards
- Staffing issues, including short-staffing and staff resignations
- Denial of union grievances despite management not having just cause
- Unequal bonus structure; for example, Ascension giving bonuses to nurses in some departments and not others
- Forcing nurses and other health care professionals to use PTO when they test positive for COVID-19
- Attendance occurrences for nurses and other health care professionals who test positive for COVID-19
- Forcing nurses to work in different units without adequate training; for example, making a non-ICU nurse work in the ICU without proper experience
- Mandation and lack of hiring
- Using outside agency staff as full-time staff
- Ascension has continued to prioritize productivity as efficiency in numbers, instead of actual patient care

### ***What we're hearing from you...***

As many of you know, we conducted a survey of Ascension nurses and technical workers across six hospitals, asking about your working conditions, concerns, and experiences amid the pandemic. 97% of the hundreds who responded provide direct patient care. **Here is what that survey found:**

#### **Nurse & Patient Safety**

- **82%** report observing situations where staff who work with COVID positive patients are mixed in units with staff who do not
- **80%** report trouble maintaining staff at their hospital
- **72%** report that patients are not or *only sometimes* receiving safe, quality care considering the nurse-to-patient ratios
- **71%** report that since November 1, 2020, their facility has continued to perform elective surgeries during the pandemic



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- **60%** agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I have considered quitting my job due to stress, exhaustion, or safety concerns during the pandemic."
- **40%** agree or strongly agree with the statement: "I am afraid to go into work due to COVID-related concerns."
- **34%** report having been asked or forced to perform work during the pandemic that they feel they haven't been properly trained to do
- **20%** report the facility is having trouble finding rooms/beds for COVID-positive patients, while **47%** are unsure
- Despite the increased availability of PPE, over 1 in 10 report they're still not currently provided with the PPE needed to do their work safely

### **Pay, PTO, & Treatment**

- **75% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement: "Ascension is currently practicing its Catholic values and mission."**
- **30%** report being forced to use PTO, sick days or vacation time due to COVID-19
- **16%** report being denied quarantine pay or sick leave during the pandemic

To say we are exhausted, mistreated and scared is an understatement. But we cannot back down. We have strength in numbers and are in a position to truly make Ascension a better place to work and to get treatment. In future months, we may need to take an action together to raise our concerns with our communities and across Ascension Hospitals about the treatment that we endure and our continuing concerns for our patients.

***Where we're going next...Stay tuned, more coming soon!***

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***"Let each of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interest of others".***

***Philippians 2:4 ESV***