



Message from the President: Despite Covid-19 we are Still Here!

As the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 has come and gone we are STILL HERE!! Although we are battle worn and mentally exhausted, we as a local weathered the storm and are ready to move forward! Although most of us just want to push **all things Covid-19** to the back of our memories and are weary of hearing about Covid-19 related topics, it is vital to reflect for a moment and remind ourselves of what this past year meant for us as professional *Registered Nurses*. Before Covid-19 first hit our area last March most of us NEVER thought that a N95 mask would be our lifeline and that simply going to work meant that we would be risking our lives and possibly our family's life. No one should have to choose between getting sick—getting a family member sick—and getting a paycheck.

Our local fought back on and had a strong voice on the following issues!!

- PPE shortages
- Ever changing policies regarding PPE and Isolation
- Testing of patients and nurses (lack of)
- Quarantine pay denials
- Reassignments!!!
- Denial of unemployment
- Reprocessing/Decon of N95's
- Opening satellite ICU's
- MASC temporary closure
- Reopening of elective procedures
- Two OSHA complaints/investigations
- Issues with environmental services and cleaning supply shortage
- Work reduction Cardiac Rehab, Infusion center, CNS Intake, HCC, MCH, CCL
- Virtual Negotiations!!
- Establishing a Pandemic Preparedness Committee
- Vaccines approved for emergency use only
- Fake PPE KN95
- Fit testing (lack of)
- Exposures and illness (over 350+)
- Workers Comp denials
- Staffing shortages/increased pt ratios
- Poor and confusing communication
- Team nursing
- Safety agents
- Reassignment to other facilities
- Hotline issues
- CNS Layoffs
- Virtual Contract ratification!!
- New member Virtual orientation

Looking back on the one-year mark of the pandemic, there are many takeaways and lessons learned. This past year has taught us how much sharing our experiences and feelings with our colleagues and coworkers during shared stress not only builds comradery but helps with resiliency and burn out prevention. We as nurses had no choice but to show up for work despite our numerous fears and dread. My hope is that we all have more empathy and appreciation for each other, and I hope that there is a continued belief in science and evidence-based medicine. The last vaccine report from our employer showed that 65% of Local 5105 HPAE RN's have received their 2nd dose of Covid-19 Vaccine!!

Finally, on this one-year anniversary we also have to remember those healthcare workers that did lose their life doing their job caring for patients. We have yet to fully understand the full impact of Covid-19 on Healthcare workers! Although our local did track exposures and illness, the sad fact is that no one mandated that employers track and record healthcare exposures and illness during this historic pandemic. Although HPAE fought hard to educate legislators on the dire need for transparency related to the impact this virus had on healthcare workers it took 10 months to pass a bill that was very watered down and much of the valuable data was lost!! This historical data could have been part of a forward plan on how to protect healthcare workers and provide for a safe and healthy workplace for not only healthcare workers but the patients we serve. Reflecting on the past year as your Union President I can say proudly that Local 5105 RN's are still HERE- although battle worn, we are still mobilized and ready for action!

My heartfelt thanks to ALL Healthcare Workers!

Sheryl Mount President Local 5105



Easter Bunny visits 2 North!

Upcoming Meetings 2021

General Membership Meetings

5/18/2021—TBD

9/14/2021—Education Dinner

Unit Rep meetings

10/5/2021—TBD

12/6/2021—Holiday Party-TBD

New Jersey Whistleblower Laws

In New Jersey, both public and private employees have protection under the **New Jersey Conscientious Employee Protection Act**, commonly called New Jersey's "whistleblower statute".

Employer retaliatory action; protected employee actions; and employee responsibilities

https://www.nj.gov/labor/forms_pdfs/lwdhome/CEPA270.1.pdf

Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989, 5 U.S.C.2302b

S.20 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 | Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Basically, what this means is YOU ARE PROTECTED! Not only does the Union have your back, so does the law.

Over the past year, frontline workers have not only had to suffer stress and anxiety over the care of Covid positive patients, but they have seen the worst of the devastation of exposure in the unsafe working environment. Lack of PPE, inappropriate or disproportionate distribution of supplies, lack of supplies and supplies that were sub-par. Workers have become sickened, and even died. They have had to be vigilant daily on self-preservation when the pandemic struck. Reliability and trust were inadequate with many employers and required swift action. As the frontline workers, we saw what the day-to-day functioning was without safe and proper PPE, education on its usage and general fear for our lives and exposing our loved ones. But we came in everyday and did the job, despite the daily struggles and fear of not the best preparedness with poor staffing and lack of supplies we needed to survive the day safely. This created a work environment that required vigilance and self-education, double checking that our PPE was OSHA and NIOSH approved and truly protecting ourselves. Many of you googled and researched products when they just did not look right. Common sense led us to know that the gowns that were labeled unauthorized for medical use and blood was penetrating thru them – something was not right. When our masks kept breaking or a seal was unachievable – we “stopped the line”.

We had the right to inquire, we had the right to demand safe and appropriate PPE. We had the right to try and make it one more shift without becoming infected with this potentially deadly virus. When leaders let us down by not always being on top of it, we did. When something fell through the cracks, we caught it. We were there every day – we saw it firsthand. The responsibility of the employer is to make this happen and create an environment of safety and security. So that we, the frontline workers, could be in the trench's day in and day out without fear and to be able to perform our duties of patient care to our sickest patients who had succumb to the Coronavirus.

We educated and supported one another, we made sure that if there were insufficient supplies or fake N95's that the employers were notified immediately but they should have never hit the floor. A little too late. OSHA reporting has been at an all time high since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the failures of a safe workplace. This has prompted many frontline workers to expose the issues at their place of employment. Employers of course frown upon this and denial is always the first response, then possibly employee retaliation. Hence this protective law has come into play. Whistleblowing is the most basic of ethical traits and simply telling the truth in order to stop illegal, harmful activities, and unsafe work environments. As Nurses we took an Oath to do no harm and we deserve the same from our employer.

Our union and Local Executive Board have demanded to bargain over and to work hand in hand with employer for months on a Pandemic Preparedness Committee. Its main goal is for the frontline workers and the employer to maintain the utmost safety and establish an immediate response chain to address and correct safety violations in real time. WE demand and expect proactiveness not reactivity!

So, do not be afraid, your Union and the law has got your back. BE vigilant, takes notes, pictures, save evidence, document occurrence thoroughly and report it immediately. Safety is of the utmost importance – your life depends on it and so does your coworkers and patients. Be the vigilant eye you have so competently done for all these months. If you feel that there is any unsafe working issues or safety violation, “STOP the LINE”. Reach out to management and inform your union immediately. If at any time you feel that you have been retaliated against for bringing this information forward, please notify HPAE and HR immediately. We should be supported in our vigilance not silenced.

Be Safe, Get Safe, Stay Safe!

Yours in solidarity,

Bonnie Terwilliger, RN ~ BSN, HPAE Local 5105 ~ Grievance Chair



Since the fall 2020, healthcare workers have been reporting to HPAE concerns over highly suspicious ill-fitting, misshapen, sometimes torn and, often, odd-smelling “3M” masks they are being given by their employers while providing care for patients during a pandemic outbreak. Workers have reported that it is difficult to get proper seal with these masks to ensure they are fully protected. It turns out, the nation is inundated with fake respirator masks. HPAE has published a guide on how to tell whether the masks you've been provided is potentially counterfeit, <http://bit.ly/ExposedFaceMasks>

Staffing Committee and Pandemic Committee Updates

We are truly fortunate as a Union Local to have a voice in our working conditions!! All nurses are welcome to attend either the **Staffing Committee** or **Pandemic Preparedness Committee** by notifying me in advance via email tokidsbeth@aol.com or text or call 856-296-6439. We are required to send agenda items for these committees to the employer in advance of the meetings, so if you are debating on coming, just contact me and we can talk about your concerns. As per contract, attendees either are afforded time during working hours to attend or get paid base rate if you come during non-work hours.

Listed below are some details on progress we have made in these committees:

Staffing Committee (meets with employer 2nd Thursday of month at 3:00 pm)

- Increase observers through outside agency (20 observers hired and trained)
- Unit meetings for 2 North
- Increase staff for EVS terminal cleans in ER
- Increase secretary coverage for L & D
- Review of unsafe staffing forms concerning patient deaths r/t unsafe staffing/lack of staff
- Review & clarification of staffing r/t overflow units/holds
- Bonus incentives
- Focus on increasing safety r/t one to ones, telesits, psych & violent vs non-violent patients
- Increase training & clarification of job roles of observers (can physically touch pt)
- Increase awareness of need for more tele techs
- Clarification of traveler nurses' roles
- Increase ER staffing
- Psychiatry creating admission criteria and order sets to help with staffing issues and give guidance to place patient on psych unit vs medical unit
- Push for Staffing Office & Nurse Supervisor to be on same page r/t actual staffing in building and not to cancel down without clarifying needs on units
- Push for follow-up for staff well-being after patient death or sentinel event. No set follow-up process.

- Education of new supervisor r/t filing of unsafe staffing forms. Harassment and rude behavior addressed. Will be educated on this as concerted activity.
- 6 Stokes. Ancillary & nursing positions & safety issues r/t not enough staff to monitor pts.

Pandemic Preparedness Committee (5 meetings to date. Meets with employer 3rd Friday of month at 3:00 pm)

- Increase mgmt., HR & admin transparency r/t COVID-19
- Exposure notification, hotline availability & guidelines for work-related exposure quarantine and return-to-work
- PPE: fit testing, supply, vetting of authenticity, decontamination & cleaning procedures and products
- Quarantine pay for bargaining unit members (per contract guidelines) who are told to stay out per VIRTUA
- Increase clarification of bedding of patients and decrease unnecessary transfer of patients to other units
- Psych pt COVID bedding r/t medical or psychiatric needs (order sets currently being developed)
- Increase bids for nursing agency
- PPE training and education in person (PACU)
- Signage visibility of COVID guidelines throughout building
- Screening of visitors at front desk
- Staffing issues r/t COVID-19 on various units (2N, MCH)
- Clarification and education of all staff r/t COVID testing of inpatients and surgical patients

Your input makes a difference!! Please contact us if you would like to attend either of these committees and speak to the issues on your unit or if you would like to arrange a unit meeting with our Local Executive Board (LEB).

Reminder to invite new nurses to join our private Facebook page!!

Lastly, we are especially looking for Reps for 7 Stokes – experience does not matter, we will train you!!

Happy Spring and here's to better days ahead!!

Beth Cohen Vice President HPAE Local 5105, Chair of Staffing Committee and Pandemic Preparedness Committee

What the Secretary/Treasurer does for our Local?

Before I became Secretary/Treasurer of our local, I only had a vague idea of what exactly secretaries and treasurers did. Secretaries took notes or minutes, and treasurers did money stuff, right? Well, I found out that it is a bit more than that. A secretary treasurer not only records the aspects of all meetings and manages the finances but makes sure the local abides by the guidelines of the state union and Federal government. Every three months, and at the end of every year, I am responsible for sending all evidence of what our union has been doing to the HPAE State Secretary/Treasurer, Alexis Rean-Walker. The State HPAE officers holds each and every local accountable for what they do, which is incredibly important. Each quarter I send to HPAE State office the non-financial stuff, minutes and sign-in sheets, and the financial info, receipts, and bank statements for each month. Thankfully, I have become a pro at scanning! At the end of the year comes the yearly audit, and a few forms that have to be filed online with the IRS. This is yet another way our union is held accountable. The audit of the entire year's finances is looked over by a non-executive board member of the union, so there's little chance for bias. Beth Cohen, our former Local Secretary/Treasurer now VP, has been an incredible resource in my transition to this position, and the folks at the state level are a big help, as well. I want to say that I am not telling you all this to "toot my own horn", I just thought it would be interesting to know what happens behind the scenes in our union, especially since during Covid times we cannot meet like we used to or want to. I look forward to better days ahead when we can gather outside of work and relax in each other's company.

Melody Schantz 3NE, Secretary/Treasurer Local 5105

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A Newsletter for the members of
HPAE Local 5105 at Virtua Memorial

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Local 5105 Updates

With not a second to catch our breath from all that was thrown our way as a result of Covid -19 our employer wasted no time announcing a reduction of hours and layoff for our members working at the Memorial Ambulatory Surgical Center (MASC) across the street from the hospital. This announcement came shortly after they announced that Virtua had purchased the surgery center back from the shareholders (Physicians) that owned the majority shares of the center. Virtua insists that they are being transparent about future plans for MASC but we have seen a slow decline of the center with many of the surgical cases being brought over to the main OR. Shareholders (surgeons) majority voted to sell their shares back to Virtua because volume low – <50 %. In response to this announcement the Union has put in a Demand to Bargain over the effects of the proposed reduction of hours and possible layoffs and will meet with the employer to protect the rights of our members under our contract language.

As many of you remember our local just experienced layoffs with the employer's decision to combine our HPAE Community Nursing Service (CNS) field staff RN's with the Marlton and Voorhees (JNESO) homecare field staff to make one big happy homecare agency under the JNESO union. During these past negotiations we sorted through massive amounts of information and helped negotiate terms for our members so they could make informed decisions regarding their future employment with Virtua and/or take severance packages. Now-6 months later they announced to the Union that they want to layoff the Home Care Coordinators (HCC) that are part of CNS and work in the hospital coordinating home care services for our patients. The reason for this layoff is they are doing away with the service they provide for our patients and this work will now be done from a remote office on the phone? Not sure how this is going to save Virtua any money and/or how services are going to be provided in a timely manner for our patients? Again-the Union has put in a Demand to Bargain over the effects of the proposed layoff of our HCC CNS members. With a sad heart we cannot stop our employer from these "business" decisions, but we can ensure that our affected members rights are protected under our contract.

Virtua also announced a large renovation and building project at the 175 Madison location (present location of Memorial Hospital) instead of building the new hospital in Westampton! No wonder we have not heard of any recent plans for new the hospital! Timeline started December 2020 and completion of project is 5-7 years! Once the architecture firm, contractor and Virtua Board has the budget approved, user groups from all areas will get to have input to proposed changes. We are told that every area will see some kind of renovation project. There is a proposed tower addition to existing facility with a connection to old facility, on stage and off-stage separate hallways for patients and for visitors, 300 private rooms with 28 observation beds and new HVAC and power facility. I am sure we will be hearing more about this huge project in the days to come!!

In Solidarity,

Sheryl Mount President HPAE Local 5105

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Workers Memorial Day



Fifty years on April 28, Workers Memorial Day, the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) went into effect, promising every worker the right to a safe job. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inextricable link between workplace safety and health and our

communities. HPAE continues to lead the fight for greater workplace health and safety, at the bargaining table when we negotiate with our employers, through regulatory agencies like OSHA, and through our advocacy for stronger health and safety and pandemic preparedness legislation. **This year, on April 28, Worker's Memorial Day, HPAE is planning a statewide day of action to remember all the members and healthcare workers we have lost during the pandemic.** Local union leaders will be distributing "In Memory" black ribbons. We urge all HPAE members to wear their ribbon at work and to help send the message that our health and safety must remain a top priority.

The **HPAE Council of Retirees** (COR) is a great way to stay connected with our Union when we retire. To become a member or for more info., contact, Doris Bell at dbell-hpae@comcast.net.

For more information about the **HPAE Retiree Medical Trust** call 201-947-8000 or visit www.hpae.zenith-american.com