

## Union Negotiations Update



Our HPAE Negotiating Committee has had nine sessions with management as we negotiate our first union contract.

After reviewing and analyzing membership surveys and considering member input given to negotiating committee members in

various meetings, our committee went to work developing proposals. Within two months, our committee formulated nearly all of our contract proposals, which were submitted to management on September 21st and October 13th.

Our proposals include extensive safety and security proposals and comprehensive increases in wages and benefits, including paid holidays. All of our proposals can be viewed on our Sunrise House Member page at: <http://www.hpae.org/campaigns/sunrise-houseaac-workers-contract-campaign/union-contract->

### proposals.

We have negotiated tentative agreements which give protections to our members from management's recent layoff and their decision to change health insurance companies. Read the articles on our tentative agreements on health insurance (p.2) and on layoffs (p.3).

We have also reached tentative agreements on several issues, including the probationary period for new employees and changes in an employee's status (e.g. full time to per diem).



### NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| -Phyllis Belanger | -Phil Naran        |
| -Jennifer Diehl   | -Frank Piraneo     |
| -Donna McNamara   | -Christa Considine |
| -Sheila Schicker  | -Isiah Brown       |
| -Katie Vaughan    | -Colleen Jenson    |
| -Linda Fescine    | -Bill Semmens      |
| -Kim Wielgus      | -Frank McCafferty  |
| -Daniel Jodexnis  | -Stuart Miller     |
| -Steve Martin     | -Georgette Harris  |



## Union Delegation Forces Meetings with Management

On two separate occasions, more than ten members of our union met with management to highlight the need to find solutions to the staffing shortage and the unreasonable, and in some cases, unlawful duties added to some AAC staff's workload.

In a November 7th impromptu meeting with Candy Henderson-Grice, Phil Horowitz, and Fred Trapassi, our delegation discussed how understaffing at Sunrise House is dramatically and negatively

impacting the clientele and staff.

Management responded by saying that the issue had to be negotiated. Our delegation told them that we'd be bargaining the next day and asked that staffing be put on the agenda.

Our show of strength did lead to a discussion of staffing at the next day's negotiations. We told our stories and management responded by citing average daily census numbers and saying that we were fully

staffed. We asked for the full set of data to analyze for our next discussion of staffing.

While management said they'd negotiate over staffing the next day, to date they have not provided the data they cited or continued negotiations over staffing.

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## *HPAE Negotiates Improvements to AAC's new Health Insurance Plan*

It is not uncommon for employers to consider new health plans that might save them money prior to open enrollment. Unfortunately, that savings and profit motive causes many employers to gradually increase the share of healthcare costs that employees pay, especially if it means the employer will achieve significant savings.

AAC's nation-wide change from Cigna to AETNA will save AAC a significant amount of money while at the same time significantly increasing our costs in terms of co-pays, co-insurance and deductibles.

**However**, in our union negotiations, we were able to negotiate for Sunrise House to reimburse our members with single coverage and the base plan for all out of pocket expenses up to \$600.00 per year. We're now the only AAC facility which will have such reimbursements.

Our success in limiting out of pocket costs shows just how important it is to have a union and to be able to negotiate over wages, benefits, and other conditions at work.

Over the next year, we will work with AAC management to continue to look at other health

insurance plan options that will be better for our members pocketbooks, maintain our providers, and still be cost-neutral for AAC.



“Healthcare and social service workers face a significant risk of job-related violence.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 27 out of the 100 fatalities in healthcare and social service settings that occurred in 2013 were due to assaults and violent acts.”

From OSHA's *Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Healthcare and Social Service Workers*

## *Safety & Security Concerns Continue as Staff Member gets Assaulted*

Despite months of warnings AAC that Sunrise House staff are concerned about their security and safety, a counselor was assaulted by an unstable patient. There has been a dramatic increase in admissions of patients that are volatile or have co-existing disorders.

The very first bargaining proposals that our HPAAE negotiat-

ing committee developed and presented to management concerned health, safety & security issues. The proposals were designed to significantly limit or entirely avoid these kinds of violence against staff.

HPAAE will be bringing this incident and past incidents to the attention of public officials and regulators in addition to possibly

bringing attention to these security concerns to the wider addiction recovery profession and community.

To date, AAC has not agreed with the most substantive HPAAE proposals that will truly guarantee the safety and security of staff or other patients. We will continue to fight for an acceptable solution.

## *Union Delegation Meets with Management (continued from pg. 1)*

Then on Tuesday Nov. 22nd, a union delegation walked in on management to object to a slew of new duties that have been added onto Sunrise House staff, particularly Discharge Planners and Counselors. Management agreed to hear some of the delegation's complaints formally at that evening's negotiations session.

The negotiating committee out-

lined all of the added duties and how they were impacting their ability to provide the best care possible to their patients. We reiterated our demand that management return to the job duties that were in place at the time of the union certification and negotiate over all new duties they intended on giving staff. We await management's formal response. The union has filed Un-

fair Labor Practice Charges (ULPs) and is prepared to file additional ULPs if these corrections are not made soon.

Management agreed in principle to having a union/management committee to review ongoing concerns about daily workload problems. Details are being worked out.

***Union Negotiates Recall Rights and First-Dibs on Open Jobs in Response to Layoffs***

As soon as management informed our union that they intended on laying off members from the Finance and HIMS departments, we demanded to bargain over the layoffs and submitted an information request. We needed to ensure that the purpose of restructuring the departments was really to bring Sunrise House into compliance with a preexisting centralized department in Nashville that handles these job duties, and not for some other reason.

Once satisfied that the layoffs weren't illegal and the rationale was not contrived, our negotiat-

ing committee began bargaining language that would guarantee that employees that were qualified to do the work of any current open positions with minimal routine training and any new positions and NJ AAC facilities in the future would have first shot at those jobs. We secured employees' rights to recall if their positions were reinstated.

Sunrise House members are the only AAC facility employees that have secured such written provisions over layoffs.

We also secured a commitment from management that there

would be no job duties that might be left over from the layoffs which would be added to existing overworked staff. Additional duties added to other staff positions would be an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP). HPAE has already filed ULPs with the NLRB over added duties to positions in the facility. Please let us know if any duties are added or work loads increased to your job since the union certification date of July 6th.

**Know your rights**

**File incident reports**

“SUNRISE HOUSE UNION MEMBERS ARE THE ONLY AAC FACILITY EMPLOYEES THAT HAVE SECURED SUCH WRITTEN PROVISIONS OVER LAYOFFS.”

***HPAE meets with Senator Vitale regarding Potential Legislation for Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Facilities***

HPAE met with State Senator Vitale to begin exploring potential legislation that would have a positive impact on ensuring that clients of substance abuse facilities in New Jersey and the dedicated staff that treat them have the greatest chances of successful outcomes. We look forward to the introduction of legislation in the near future that will reflect our members' concerns and proposals.

***Incident Reports Come Flooding into the Union***

Our union has collected just under 100 HPAE incident report forms that detail problems at AAC ranging from Unfair Labor Practices to staffing shortages to possible violations of the DHS guidelines and possible OSHA violations.

Most of the reports have been separated out by potential violation and are being used to bolster our demands for changes at Sunrise House as we appeal to management or appropriate state or federal agencies.

If you have incidents that happen on the job that you wish to report, please find your negotiating committee members and ask them for a report to fill out and give it back to them.

You can also find and file these reports online at <http://www.hpae.org/campaigns/sunrise-houseaac-workers-contract-campaign/document-problem-connect-local/>.



**HPAE**

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www.hpae.org

## **SAVE THE DATE:**

### **Full Membership Holiday Party**

**When: Monday, December 19th**  
**12 noon Lunch option**  
**5:30 pm Dinner option**

**Where: Unity of Sussex Church**  
**27 Mudcut Rd. Lafayette, NJ**



UNITY OF SUSSEX IN LAFAYETTE, NJ

Come Join our co-workers and fellow HPAE members to celebrate the holidays and all of the hard work that we've put in striving for better treatment, wages, benefits, security, and respect as Sunrise House professionals. .