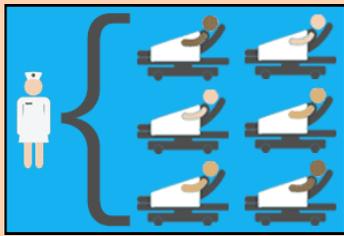


Backus Federation of Nurses

LOCAL 5149 | AFT CT AFT AFL-CIO | NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2022



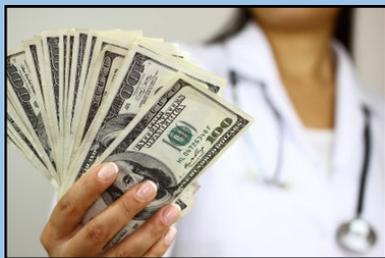
Hospital Increases Staffing Ratios

without Input from Staffing Committee; Grievance and Complaint to DPH Filed

The staffing committee is designed to be a partnership between direct patient care RN's and management to assist with meeting real time staffing needs and ultimately determining staff ratios reported to DPH on a yearly basis. This is required under our contract and by statute.

We had monthly meetings scheduled throughout the year, several of which were canceled for various reasons. The meetings taking place during the last few months of the year were not attended by the Director of Nursing, and therefore changes were made to the staffing ratios and sent to DPH without staffing committee consideration. Compared to last year's ratios, the Hospital made changes to technician and nurse ratios in the wrong direction – i.e., fewer techs and nurses to more patients. The Hospital increased the tech to patient ratio on the busy units of E4 and PCU, and also the nurse to patient ratios increased in PCU and CCU.

We believe the Hospital has failed to live up to its obligations under our contract and the law. We have filed a grievance and sent a letter to the Department of Public Health. The letter to DPH is reprinted on the back of this newsletter.



Agreement for Enhanced Incentive Pay Boosts Staffing Amid Surge

As a union, we have long been advocating for a better incentive that is comparable to other hospitals in the area. This new temporary incentive has resulted in the ability to safely staff the hospital. Nurses have been advocating for this by communicating about safety concerns to management on their rounds, filling out unsafe forms, and at times reporting unsafe situations to DPH. These courageous conversations, in

conjunction with pressure from union leaders, have facilitated management's decision to reach an agreement with the union to offer an incentive that is comparable to other area hospitals. **Editorial note:** This article was written before the Hospital refused to extend the incentive and offered us a lower one, which is addressed on the back of this newsletter.

Statewide Update:



We are happy to announce a major victory for the Windham United school nurses! Last month, Windham Public Schools' Board of Education approved their recently ratified three-year union contract. This new contract includes a wage increase, more paid leave and frees up the use of personal days. Congratulations!

We are also happy to report that the nurses and home health aides at the VNA of Southeastern CT recently ratified their contract, which includes 4% a year plus steps, freezes cost of insurance premiums, and increased PTO and no mandatory weekend work for home health aides.

Upcoming Workshops and Training

SCAN ME



SE CT Regional Legislative Meeting

MAR. 5, 10:30AM (on zoom)

This informal discussion is an opportunity for members and area legislators to talk about the issues our federation's Legislative and Political Action Committee (LPAC) is pursuing in the General Assembly's 2022 legislative session.



Defensive Charting Webinar

MAR 28, 7:30PM (on zoom)

One of the most important parts of nursing is documentation, and the scariest part of nursing is the threat of a lawsuit -- but those are the least covered topics in nursing school! Come join us as we cover what you are REALLY supposed to document, how the lawsuit process works, and what to do if you get named in a lawsuit. Presenter Lisa D'Abrosca, RN, BSN, LNC will also cover the pros and cons of nursing malpractice insurance.



Upcoming Elections Nominations

For the following positions:

President

Secretary

Email nominations to:

Logan Place

LPlace@aftct.org

by **March 1st**

If needed, election will be held on **April 5th**

Complaint sent to the Department of Public Health...



January 24, 2022

Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD
State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06134

Dear Commissioner Juthani,

Backus Hospital recently submitted its nurse staffing plan for 2022 without any input from the nurse staffing committee. In violation of Connecticut General Statute 19a-89e. The Backus Federation of Nurses and AFT-CT seek the Department of Public Health's assistance to ensure nurses have a voice in the hospital's staffing plan, as required by law.

As you know, Connecticut General Statute 19a-89e requires hospitals to submit a nurse staffing plan to the Department of Public Health annually. The hospital must develop the staffing plan in consultation with the hospital's staffing committee, and registered nurses who provide direct care must account for 50% of the staffing committee.

Per the collective bargaining agreement between Backus Hospital and Backus Federation of Nurses, the union appoints the nurses on the committee [1] Backus Hospital – when it did not cancel the meeting – would usually not send representatives with the authority to change the staffing plan. The nurses on the staffing committee consistently asked to review and revise the staffing plan to deal with inadequate and unsafe staffing levels. Backus Hospital refused to discuss the staffing plan with the nurses on the committee.

The Hospital's staffing plan states that it developed the plan in consultation with the Professional Practice Council. The Professional Practice Council, however, is not the Staffing Committee at Backus Hospital. Moreover, the Hospital has not, to our knowledge, discussed the new plan with the Professional Practice Council either.

In addition, the statute calls for an evaluation of the previous year's plan and modifications if needed. Backus Hospital's staffing plan makes changes in three units to "described levels of staffing to the actual levels of staffing that exist". In fact, the changes from the 2021 to 2022 plans are an increase of patient assignment for both nurses and support staff on these units, something which we feel is inappropriate and dangerous, and something that the nurses on the staffing committee would not have agreed to or advised had it been discussed with the staffing committee.

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We feel that Backus Hospital is in violation of Connecticut General Statute 19a-89e for failing to seek advice from nurses on the staffing committee in the preparation of the nurse staffing plan. This not only violates the law, but also will lead to unsafe staffing levels for patients. We request DPH investigate and take all appropriate action necessary to enforce the law.

Sincerely,

Jan Hochadel
Jan Hochadel
President, AFT Connecticut

John Brady
John Brady, RN
Executive Vice President, AFT Connecticut

Sherri Dayton
Sherri Dayton, BSN, RN, CEN
President, Backus Federation of Nurses, Local 5149
Vice President of Healthcare, AFT Connecticut

cc: Barbara Cass, RN, Branch Chief, Healthcare Quality and Safety Branch
Jonathan Dach, Director of Policy for Governor Lamont
Donna Handley, Senior VP, Hartford Healthcare East Region President

[1] ARTICLE 13 -STAFFING COMMITTEE. The Hospital will continue to maintain a staffing committee as required by Connecticut state law. The staffing committee shall be comprised of up to four (4) bargaining unit nurses selected by the Union, and up to four (4) members of Hospital management and shall meet monthly, or as otherwise mutually agreed. The staffing committee shall assist in the preparation of the Hospital's nurse staffing plan, and shall review staffing issues, and recommend potential solutions. Meetings shall be one hour in duration, unless otherwise mutually agreed, and the Hospital shall pay the bargaining unit nurses on the committee their base hourly rate of pay to attend the meetings. The parties shall mutually agree to meeting times that will minimize the disruption on Hospital operations, and will mutually work to find coverage for bargaining unit nurses on the committee who are scheduled to work at the time of the meetings.



Financial review

Hi! It's your trusty treasurer here, asking for your help!! Do you want to see why you pay dues? Are you willing to help your union leadership be accountable? Once per year we are required to have our financial records reviewed by a committee of union members of at least 5-6 people. You will be walked through the process of reviewing receipts and checking them against bank transactions to be sure every dime is accounted for. It will be a 2-2.5 hour time commitment, one time only. Please email backustreasurer@gmail.com if you are interested. This a great way to be involved and help out your union.

Angela Leroux, Treasurer



We Rejected the Hospital's Proposed MOA for Critical Shifts – Here's Why

The \$75/\$100 incentive that the union and hospital negotiated was extremely successful. Instead of agreeing to extend it, Backus asked us to accept a \$50/\$75 incentive (except for CCU). Our research showed other hospitals are receiving more. This gave us serious concerns, but when we tried to discuss with management their response was "you have until 12:00 tomorrow to accept". We immediately polled union delegates and rank-and-file-members, and while there was not full consensus, the overwhelming

majority of the feedback we received was to not sign. We therefore did not sign. And neither did the nurses at Windham. We are urging the Hospital to extend the \$75/100 incentive, and if not, then a previously signed double time critical shift incentive will go back into effect until 2/12. Here are some of our reasons for refusing: **We deserve to be paid fairly:** Nurses at Hartford Hospital (HHC) are still receiving the \$100, and have been for weeks before we did. Nurses at L&M are also receiving \$75/\$100. Backus is paying travel nurses significantly more than we make. We deserve the same incentive other nurses receive, and if we keep letting them pay us less, they will. **It does not value our seasoned nurses:** Seasoned nurses are our strongest resources and our teachers. They have been loyal and deserve to benefit fairly from incentives. They were already excluded from the "market raises" and have not even received an answer about a longevity bonus

despite confirmation upper-level management has received our petition request. Nurses at top step will make more money under a separate MOA that provides double time for critical shifts that will be in effect until 2/12. **The separate CCU portion is divisive and hard to implement:** The proposed MOA would have a different incentive for shifts in CCU or "where critical patients have been assigned." Not only is this divisive and an attempt to split up our unit, will also create confusion and we have no faith the Hospital will properly administer it for shifts outside of CCU where "critical care patients" have been assigned. Thank you for everyone who provided feedback. WE are the union, and our ability to respectfully discuss and stand in solidarity together once a decision is made is what makes our Local great.

