St. Jude Health Care Professionals

HEARD SOME RUMORS AND GOT SOME QUESTIONS?

Together, health care professionals at St. Jude have an opportunity to create a stronger voice for patient care, professional respect, and a better workplace. We know you may have questions, so we've compiled answers to common questions and concerns about joining a union.

How does a union work?
A union is a group of workers who unite together and use labor law to shift the balance of power to allow them a true say in the matters important to them at their workplace. When you unionize, the employer is now obligated to sit down with you as a group and bargain a contract in good faith. A contract is a legally binding document that the employer must abide by.

Our union belongs to us. We elect our own officers, and a group of us will be trained in how to uphold our future contract and represent the interests of our coworkers (stewards). All decisions for our affiliate/chapter will run through our leadership structure. “The union” will not dictate to us. We are empowered to create positive and permanent change for ourselves, through an active and engaged membership.

MYTH: If we join UNAC/UHCP (a union that represents over 42,000 nurses and health care professionals), we will lose everything we have and will have to bargain from zero.
This is not true. Per the law, we have status quo after we vote to unionize. That means after we join UNAC/UHCP, our current wages, benefits, and working conditions stay in place while we negotiate our first contract. The unsettling truth is that right now, we are at risk of losing our benefits, and being non-unionized makes us more vulnerable. At this moment the employer can unilaterally alter whatever they want at any point. Joining a union provides additional contractual and legal protections. We are more at risk of losing what we have if not in a union.

Can the union guarantee anything?
What the union guarantees is that we bargain together instead of management deciding unilaterally. This is an opportunity to make improvements and protect the matters important us. We currently are at the whim of the employer to make any changes they see fit.

MYTH: I don't have any issues, and I like my boss, so I don't need a union.
That's great that you have a boss who works with you, but what happens when your boss retires or leaves? What if you get a boss who doesn't want to work with you or just doesn't like you?

One of the main reasons to form a union is to hold upper management accountable and create a fair system for all the staff. And remember, forming your union isn't just about changing the things that are bad; it's also about protecting the things we like by getting them guaranteed in writing.

What are the dues? Why do I have to pay them? What are they for?
The dues for UNAC/UHCP are a weighted average of your hourly wage, which equals about 1 hour of pay per pay period. They are vital to creating the resources needed to fight for what's important, like pay equity, better benefits, and a voice at our workplace. We don't have to pay dues until after we negotiate and vote yes on a contract that we want.

Will I be forced to go on strike?
Striking is a legally protected activity, and one of the most powerful weapons against an unreasonable employer. It is usually an option of last resort that is used during contract negotiations and is a completely democratic process. This means we will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not we want to strike. If a strike were anticipated, then there would be a 10-day notice of strike given to the employer as required by law.

MYTH: We're a family, you can just bring all your concerns directly to us so you don't need a union.
We appreciate positive relationships with our managers and coworkers. A union isn't about replacing communication; it's about making sure employees have a protected and collective voice.

Employees should absolutely be able to raise concerns directly with management, but the question is what happens afterward. A union gives workers a legally protected way to address issues and ensures that improvements do not depend solely on who happens to be in management at the time.

In many unionized workplaces, employees continue to communicate with management every day in a positive dynamic. The difference is that workers also have a collective voice and a seat at the table when important decisions are made. If management truly values their employees and wants us to have a voice, why oppose employees having the right to choose a collective voice through a union?