

Negotiations **FAQs**

Answers to some frequently asked questions about contract negotiations

What's the current status of contract negotiations?

We're in the midst of contract negotiations for six labor contracts covering more than 2,800 associates at three different hospitals. While some labor contract language is common across the different associate groups and ministries, several important areas of the contracts remain unresolved. We are making progress, and both parties are exchanging proposals and counter proposals. These are complex negotiations that take thoughtful consideration and we still have a lot of work ahead before negotiations are settled.

Why are negotiations taking so long?

This is an important set of negotiations for all of us. We have many operational, policy and economic matters to discuss. These can take time to research, explain, understand and consider as part of the collective bargaining process. While we began common table negotiations in mid-March, the parties did not begin talking about economic matters, which generally tend to be more involved because they focus on wages and benefits, until mid-May.

Some CWA delegates are talking about the possibility of a strike. If there is one, how long would it last?

It's impossible to predict how long a strike might last. Even if the union calls only a one- or two-day strike, it's likely associates would be out of work for at least five (5) days. We would prefer to settle labor contract negotiations without a strike. Since a strike is a possibility with any union negotiations, a multi-disciplinary team is working on a comprehensive contingency plan that would include the hiring of temporary replacement workers in the event that CWA announces a strike.

Will associates be paid during a strike?

Mercy Hospital is the only hospital where CWA could lead associates on strike per an agreement between Catholic Health and CWA. The hospital will not pay striking associates and associates will not be permitted to use PTO during a strike if there is one. Associates should ask CWA Local 1133 leaders whether the union would provide strike pay and under what conditions. Associates also may want to ask union leaders:

- Are associates required to participate in the strike?
- How many hours/day/week will CWA Local 1133 expect striking associates to walk its picket line?
- Can Mercy Hospital replace associates during the strike?

What can associates do if they don't want to strike?

According to CWA Local 1133's bylaws, local leaders must follow the rules outlined in CWA's Constitution. That union rulebook requires that the local provide reasonable notice of a member meeting and that a "majority of the members voting shall determine whether or not a strike shall be called." This is a reason it's important to participate in the union's meeting when it announces a strike vote.

If CWA Local 1133 members vote in favor of striking, according to CWA's Constitution, the local must still seek approval to proceed with the strike from CWA leadership in Washington, D.C.

If CWA Local 1133 were to engage in an unauthorized strike, CWA leadership in Washington, D.C., may impose penalties on the local. Penalties may include denying financial, organization and other assistance from CWA and/or revoking the local's charter.

What is Catholic Health doing to address staffing?

Staffing continues to be a challenge both locally and nationally. We are taking several steps to ensure proper workforce numbers in our hospitals including providing bonus pay for RNs and other clinical associates, and assigning an additional recruiter to Mercy Hospital. Additionally, we recently filmed a commercial focused on recruitment that will soon launch. The commercial is scheduled to run throughout the fall and will also be used online.

We have held or attended the following recruitment events since June 1:

- 6/16 - Open Interviews at MHB for EVS
- 6/17 - Sisters Health Center DYC HUB Event
- 6/17 - 3rd Annual Labor Expo in Niagara County
- 7/8 - D'Youville BSN Student Fair
- 7/14 - WNY Get Hired Job Fair
- 7/20 - OLV Open Interviews

We are currently scheduling into August and regularly adding additional dates to our calendar.

Besides the challenge of attracting candidates, we often face difficulty getting interested parties through the hiring process. Failed pre-employment screenings and poor reference checks are quite common. Though we want to increase our staffing numbers, we also want to ensure we are providing safe, high quality and compassionate care by hiring properly-qualified candidates.

Is CHS contracting more agency staff in lieu of hiring more permanent staff?

The root causes of staffing shortages – lack of qualified candidates, extended unemployment benefits, and extensive state-mandated leave policies – are becoming an increasing concern for all employers. Even with the addition of new positions to address our staffing needs, vacancies remain unfilled, forcing us to rely on agency staffing. Despite these challenges, we will continue to recruit and develop qualified candidates.

Because it's important to have the facts regarding the progress of negotiations, we will share regular Frequently Asked Questions with you. You may visit www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations at any time for the latest news and information related to bargaining and to review copies of these FAQs and other Negotiation Updates.