

Negotiations

UPDATE

Negotiations Continue as Mercy Hospital Announces Diversions, Suspends Inpatient Elective Surgery and Labor & Delivery Services; Gov. Declares State of Emergency over Staffing and CWA Plans Picket

Negotiations about wages and staffing continue as the parties remain tens of millions of dollars apart. The hospitals are committed to negotiating in good faith with the union to reach agreement on fair contracts that provide market-competitive wages and benefits and enable us to continue providing safe, high quality care. We hope the union is as committed as we are to reaching a deal and averting a strike.

As part of its preparations in the event of a strike, Catholic Health and Mercy Hospital made the decision, in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health, to:

1. Temporarily divert ambulances from Mercy Hospital and the Mercy Ambulatory Care Center (MACC);
2. Temporarily suspend inpatient elective surgeries beginning September 29; and
3. Temporarily suspend labor & delivery services beginning September 29.

Additional information is available on our intranet at: <https://my.chsbuffalo.org/>. We believe these measures are in the best interest of our patients and community in light of the uncertainty regarding the potential strike, the COVID-19 vaccine mandate and a steady increase in the number of COVID patients at Mercy Hospital and throughout our system.

Meanwhile, Gov. Hochul declared a State of Emergency to deal with the state's healthcare staffing situation. Out-of-state and international healthcare workers are now allowed to practice in New York during the order. Retired nurses and healthcare workers also will be fast-tracked for work certifications.

CWA delivered a 10-day notice to engage in informational picketing at Kenmore Mercy Hospital on Friday, October 8. Presenting this notice suggests the union may not be as serious as Catholic Health's hospitals about trying to settle negotiations before the potential start of CWA Local 1133's strike on October 1.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are answers to questions associates are asking ahead of CWA Local 1133's strike.

Q: **Will my family and I still have healthcare benefits during the strike?**

A: Yes, Mercy Hospital associates and any covered members of their family will continue to have healthcare benefits during CWA Local 1133's strike.

Q: Will I be able to use PTO during the strike?

A: Mercy Hospital associates who requested PTO before CWA presented its 10-day notice to strike will be allowed to use approved PTO. However, any requests for paid time off made after CWA presented its 10-day strike notice will not be approved.

Q: As a CWA Local 1133-represented associate, am I required to walk the picket line?

A: Mercy Hospital associates have the legal right to decide for themselves whether or not to actively participate in CWA Local 1133’s strike. While Mercy Hospital associates will not be permitted to work at Catholic Health facilities during the strike (unless they have dual employment), they are not required to walk the union’s picket line. If Mercy Hospital associates choose not to participate in what CWA defines as “strike duty responsibilities such as picketing,” they may not be eligible for any strike pay benefits CWA may distribute after the first 14 days of the strike.

Q: If Mercy Hospital follows through with its strike threat, how will Mercy Hospital associates know when to return to work?

A: We will communicate to CWA-represented associates about when they may return to work.

Q: If there’s a strike, will Mercy Hospital associates be allowed into the hospital during the strike?

A: Mercy Hospital associates may not enter hospital property unless receiving medical care, visiting a patient or performing other legitimate business (e.g. picking up a pay check or paperwork).

Q: Will Mercy Hospital associates still have access to email during the strike?

A: Access to email and badge access will be suspended for the duration of the strike. You may still receive information related to ongoing negotiations by visiting www.chsbuffalo.org/negotiations.

Over the Next 48 Hours...

The union has the ability to withdraw its 10-day notice before its planned strike begins. Associates have the legal right to tell CWA if they don’t want to go on strike and prefer that the union settles negotiations with Catholic Health hospitals without a work stoppage.

Associates can share their views with CWA Local 1133 leadership at (716) 828-1133.

Associates also may want to attend the union’s meetings later this week to hear from union leaders in the days leading up to the strike the union plans to launch at 6 a.m. on Friday, October 1.

Location: Knights of Columbus, 261 South Legion Drive	
Wednesday, September 29	3:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, September 30	7:30 a.m.

Because it’s important to have the facts regarding bargaining, we will share regular *Negotiations Updates* 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 updates and other FAQs.