

# UPDATE & FAQs

## NUHW Contract Negotiations

### WORKING TOWARD AGREEMENT

#### BACKGROUND

As we announced earlier this week, despite a day's work with a state-appointed mediator on April 12 we were unable to come to an agreement with NUHW.

Bargaining has been going on since July of last year and we went into mediation prepared to make real movement toward the Union. Our first priority is to find a path toward a new contract for NUHW-represented employees, and we believe Factfinding will help. Only the Union can request Factfinding, and at this point, the Union has not made the request.

We don't know what NUHW'S plans are from here, but we want to keep all of our employees informed as we work toward reaching a fair contract that rewards our valued employees with competitive pay, benefits and working conditions that support the quality care we deliver.

#### FACTFINDING OPTION

The state offers two primary ways to help employers and unions reach agreement when contract negotiations stall. One is mediation and the other is Factfinding. In our case, because mediation was not successful, the hospital has asked the Union to reconsider Factfinding.

There is no risk to Factfinding – it is simply another opportunity to get help from a neutral expert in negotiations who might identify ways each side can make movement in their positions to reach agreement. The Factfinder's recommendations are not binding on either party, so it makes sense to at least try it.

We know that many employees don't want this situation to deteriorate into an avoidable dispute or risk a strike when there is still a chance that if both sides move toward the other, maybe they can reach an agreement.

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

##### **Q: What is Factfinding and how does it differ from mediation?**

A: In Factfinding, an independent, neutral expert meets with both parties to try to resolve existing disputes. The Factfinder reviews the course of negotiations, looks at proposals in the context of what is reasonable, and provides advisory, non-binding recommendations to encourage the parties to reach agreement. Each side can choose to accept none, some or all of those recommendations.

A mediator also works to help the sides reach agreement, in part by identifying where the parties might be willing to compromise in their positions. The mediation process is confidential and, unlike Factfinding, does not produce public recommendations.

##### **Q: Why has the union not agreed to Factfinding?**

A: We can't speak for NUHW, but hope that the Union is willing to take advantage of every opportunity to work through our differences.

##### **Q: What are the major areas of disagreement?**

A: Unfortunately, we've made no progress in key areas since impasse was declared in February. Among them are wages, paid time off and subcontracting, along with other issues. For additional information on the unresolved contract provisions, please see the detailed grid on [www.negotiationsupdate.com](http://www.negotiationsupdate.com)

##### **Q: How does pay for NUHW-represented employees compare to pay in similar jobs in the area?**

A: Pay at SVMH is at or above market in nearly every position, and our proposal includes "market adjustments" to increase wages for a few job classifications where we believe we can be more competitive. SVMH is widely considered to have one of the best benefits packages in the area, which includes low or no-cost health coverage, a pension plan, retiree health benefits and generous paid time off benefits.

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### **Q: Does SVMHS want to subcontract NUHW jobs?**

A: No and the organization has no plans to subcontract union jobs. Our proposal would not allow wholesale subcontracting (such as an entire department) without mutual agreement with the union, nor does it envision any reductions in force.

Instead, we seek more operational flexibility where we might be able to better accomplish *specific* tasks or duties.

#### **Example:**

Take, for example, during routine office cleaning, Environmental Service staff had been charged with collecting confidential documents from shred bins that would later be destroyed by the vendor. This was a service offered by the secure disposal company and was included in the contract price of the service. The Hospital was able to shift that duty to the rightful, responsible party, reducing risk for our staff, without any additional costs or impact on staff, except to eliminate that specific task from their duties.

Just as technology continues to change the way hospitals communicate, chart, secure information, dispense medications, manage waste, protect facilities and do any number of other tasks, the future may provide other opportunities to improve the way we do things through services that offer a more efficient way to accomplish a task. It is our responsibility as stewards of public funds to be prepared to embrace that efficiency for the good of our organization and our community. That preparation depends upon the organizational flexibility this subcontracting clause would provide.

### **Q: What about NUHW-represented employees? Are they at risk working without a contract?**

A: No. All terms and conditions of the current contract remain in place until a new contract is signed.

### **Q: What comes next?**

A: Our hope is that we can come to agreement without unnecessary delays or disruption. We hope the Union decides to request Factfinding, a process that has been successful in the past with both NUHW and CNA.

Under state law, following impasse, if mediation fails and the Union does not seek Factfinding, the Union can call a strike, or the hospital can implement its last, best and final offer. Our clear preference would be a negotiated agreement.

### **Q: Will there be a strike?**

A: We hope not. Strikes can be divisive, disruptive and disturbing to patients and visitors, as well as very difficult on our co-workers and the employees who may not want to strike but feel pressure to do so.

If you have any questions, please contact Human Resources, your Director or visit [www.negotiationsupdate.com](http://www.negotiationsupdate.com)