

Handbook for Staff Nurses: Top ten things to know about unions

- 1. Educate yourself. Then SPEAK UP!** In my hospital I began by educating myself and then sharing it with others. We created flyers and a website (www.stopunions.com) as the need for information began to grow. The union assigns a contact on each unit of your hospital-you need to do the same so that nurses receive another point of view.
- 2. You have a federally protected right to NOT join a union.** If you feel coerced or intimidated, tell someone:
 - a. Your HR department, your manager, a colleague.
 - b. You can personally file a complaint with the NLRB. Refer to the local National Labor Relations Board in your area to file an “unfair labor practice” www.nlr.gov.
 - c. You can also get free legal assistance from the National Right to Work Committee (www.nrtw.org)
- 3. Patient care comes from nurses-not unions.** Remember who the real voice for nurses is-YOU. No outsider will bring a voice for patient care-in fact the voice that unions promise is a voice for their own revenue. If you legally sign a union authorization card, you have just given a power of attorney to the union-you have given your voice away. If you want a voice for nursing, get together with your colleagues and make one.
 - a. **You** can send flyers,
 - b. **You** can sign petitions,
 - c. **You** can notify federal agencies of problems,
 - d. **You** can alert the media,
 - e. **You** can contact government officials, religious leaders, and community leaders
 - f. **You** can even strike without a union.
 - g. **You** can do anything that you see a union doing (that’s legal☺)
- 4. Be skeptical.** Do not trust promises from the union-make them prove it. If a union promises, “I can get you more money” have them put that in writing with a notarized guarantee.
- 5. Don’t believe the media.** The media prints stories about elections won by unions. They DO NOT print the stories of union losses but they are out there! In fact, many unions lose more elections than they win.
- 6. The majority of Americans are union free.** Unions are dying. Membership across the country has never been lower since the 1930s. Healthcare is their only hope for survival-they have ruined the steel, airline, and auto industry-don’t let unions destroy healthcare too. Network with other nurses who feel the way that you do. When you chose to be union free, you have joined the majority of the country. We have hundreds of federal and state laws that protect us for free.

7. **Unions say strikes are rare.** Strikes are not rare when they happen to you, your patients, and their families. Unions know that the only way to push the other side is to strike-many strikes fail. Nurses lose money that is never regained-but the unions continue getting paid.
8. **Learn to stand up to bullies.** Don't be surprised if your colleagues pressure you to sign cards, go to meetings, or threaten you. We teach our kids to stand up to bullies-now is the time to model this behavior.
- a. Make threats public-tell other nurses, tell someone what is going on
 - b. File unfair labor practices,
 - c. File complaints with HR, security, or the police department
9. **You are the only "union-busters."** If you have a union, only YOU can get rid of it. There is a process called "decertification." At certain times, if 30% of your colleagues sign a petition, you can have another secret ballot vote to decide whether or not YOU want to keep the union-take advantage of your right. If you do not have a union-only YOU can prevent it.
10. **If you are being forced to pay dues YOU can stop.** There is a process called "deauthorization" In some states (like California) nurses are being forced to pay dues. If they do not pay, the union can have these nurses fired. If you do not feel that this is right-you can get together with your fellow nurses to file a "deauthorization" petition with your local National Labor Relations Board. (www.nlr.gov). The National Right to Work Committee is a great resource for this process. Check out nrtw.org for more information

Contact information:

Sites of interest:

www.stopunions.com

www.losgatosnursesrock.com

www.onevoice-ourvoice.com

www.nlr.gov

www.nrtw.org