



SWNC Meeting Minutes March 8th, 2024, 0930-1530

1. Opening/introductions. Members present: Amy Pacholk, Vincent Ciatello, Jen Bratt, Cherie Stevens, Margaret Dobbins, Heather Crunden, Brian Matt, Jeff Taylor, LaKisha Alverest, Clara Shamatanga, Cynthia Walker. Absent: Michele Iorfida and Rachel Amodio Kopp. Invited guest: Susan Billi. Staff: Patricia Richardson, Scott Harms, Debbie Egel, Nora Higgins. Patick Lyons on for report (conflict in schedule).
2. Review/change Agenda and December Minutes. Unanimous approval of today's agenda and December minutes.
3. Lobby Day-Review of the current status and plans.
EOL for SWNC members on Monday 4/15/24. Accrual use 4/16/24. General members can use conference time /accrual 4/15/24. Accrual 4/16/24. Amy reviewed interest and attendance per region. Pros and cons of continuing with Lobby Day plans discussed at length. Unanimous approval to go forward. *Invite to go out by this Friday March 15th-or sooner. Hustle will be sent to notify members to check link in email.
4. Regional Nurse Committee meetings. All agreed this is a grass roots approach to bridge the Statewide issues with the local issues. *Amy and Vincent will speak with the Regional Coordinators at the Executive Board next week to encourage support.
5. Reduction in Medicare Funding-concerned about how it will affect public services, jobs, institutions, preventative services. Vincent discussed how the western NY area will be impacted. Amy discussed that SB Medicare to be cut by approximately 150 million. Fringe benefits have been cut by 117 million. Patrick was asked to help. LaKisha stated that her patient population is only 35% insured. * Resolution?
6. Decrease in funding to SUNY Hospitals/ Health Clinics. Heather (NP @ Binghamton) Clinic staff is paid by a student health fee- \$200 per semester, which provides unlimited care. Contract nurses are working in covid clinic with inflated pay. NP position does not have a Geographic, RN is \$4500. Student population is 22k with 10 RNs, 6 NPs, 2 part time MDs, and Med director who sees patients 1day per week. SUNY college budget is controlled by the director of finance and student affairs. NPs are told their position does not have a recruitment/retention problem-hence no geo. Amy stated that the Geo pay is at the discretion of the agency. Susan questioned if private health insurance is billed for clinic care. The answer is "no".
7. Downstate Medical Center. CNO states mostly Medicaid/Medicare patients. Public hospitals are already getting less funding.
Rally was well attended. Goal is to stay open. Actions to prevent closure will be ongoing. Most recent meeting was in Albany with clergy from the Brooklyn area. Some local legislators are still not in favor of keeping open. PEF, UUP, NYSUT, and CSEA are all



impacted. Collation is at ground level. NYSCOBAs not involved at this time.

*May have an action to march in community after approval with coalition.

8. POA upgrade? Database viewed that is used by CWA for POAs with Joe Cocci. The database offers many options and automatically sends POA to member, CL, hospital, and DOH. MOT can be sent to DOL. Having the system presented to AFT. *More to come.
9. Wasting of Narcotics- institutional practices putting licenses in jeopardy. SUNY upstate changing policy to allow Radiation Technologists witness narcotic waste. Nurses were witnessing for each other prior to nursing staff being minimized. Had 2 RNs on night shift. 1 is now scheduled. Rachel has spoken to DEA. State education may need to be involved. *More to come with Rachel's input.
10. OASAS-mandated around the clock. Do not have a nurse educator. Phlebotomy education is needed. Not being mandated in her facility, but in other OASAS agencies mostly ATCs. Agency nurses are giving first pick of overtime. Members are being called from home for mandatory overtime. Job description site that mandatory overtime is a possibility. Nora reminded that it is against the law. Agency nurses are not working holidays at OPWDD (per LaKisha's friends), and members cannot get holidays off.
11. Minimum staffing is not safe staffing. Not discussed directly.
12. Methadone in DOCCS facilities. Jeff stated MAT (Medication assisted treatment) program continues to grow in his facility. Facility is pre-mandating. 200 IIs enrolled in MAT program. Staffing hasn't increased with growth of program. Mandating is part of his profession at DOCCS. The MAT drugs are administered once a day. Suboxone can be started in CF, but methadone is continued only if used prior to incarceration. Some are on suboxone film, or tablets, others are taking liquid methadone, at providers discretion. When caught diverting- sublocade injectable is used. Other substances are getting into jails. Narcan use is increasing. Clinton has a pharmacy for suboxone and sublocade. Methadone is filled at Conifer Park and are individually labeled from outside of Jeff's correctional facility. Clinton MDs do not have special licensure for methadone to be prepared in house. Before this IIs were on gabapentin, tramadol, and a variety of other meds which they were weaned off. This caused many grievances by the IIs. New law had been passed for the MAT program in 2021. Brian added that each facility manages administration in their own way. LaKisha stated that methadone is for life. Chain of custody was always handled by those who held a health care license. Currently at OASAS a RN from methadone clinic comes to facility and RN from OASAS receives it. Jeff stated that currently a locked box is being transferred from clinic to jail by a security officer. Deb stated the facilities should have a policy. *Jeff, Brian, and LaKisha agreed to be on a subcommittee for closer look at the process. *Awaiting Deb coordinating discussion with OASAS expert.



13. Healthcare Insurance-NYSHIP, concerns of cost and reduction of services. New increase for empire family plan \$680/month. Discouraged to use out of network providers-steep fees involved if using out of network. Limit of 20 visits/year for chiropractic, acupuncture, and massage services- previously unlimited. Empire showed a 20.6 billion profit. Members use these services in lieu of medication. Members want to know why the increase with less services. Can the union negotiate better for our cost and services? Lakisha shared the members don't think the PEP program is worth it based on their pay. Jeff mentioned the option for member plus 1. *Vincent suggested to create a resolution. *These issues should be addressed with the next contract team.
14. Contract Nurses converting to State Employees. Some Nursing agencies are allowing their clients to end their contract without penalty to seek local employment. HELP program is allowing converted agency nurses to be hired at the RN2 level. This is causing hard feelings with current staff. With HELP act discretion is by the employer.
15. Patrick Lyons-Input for 2024 Lobby Day.
Legislative department play a supporting role for lobby day. In person Lobbying brings something different compared to other avenues of communication. Patrick defers to SWNC for final decision. Budget may not be on time. Nursing Bills of interest are: Preferred entry to SUNY/CUNY, Bullying Bill, Preceptor Bill, NPMA extension and Tier 6. Assemblyman John Mac Donald (Pharmacist) Chair of government operations and on Health Committee was invited to address Lobby day group on Monday night. Deb Egel suggested local lobbying.
Legislative Report: Budget priorities as identified by SWPAC
State workforce has 3 prong approach 1) Compensation. 2) Pension reform. 3) Culture changes. Fixing Tier 6 progresses with multi-union support. Current overtime statute expires at end of month. The lookback is 2 years would include the covid overtime when calculating pension contribution. Looking to change 20-year calculation to 2%, reduce final average salary calculation from 5 years to 3 years, and change retirement age to be like the TIER 4.

Bullying bill and abusive conduct. Provides a statutory definition. Training with onus on employee. Addressing via contract. Leg looking to roll into workplace violence.
PEF looking to upgrade all PEF positions by 2 grades.
Eliminating lag payroll.
Added people to DOL for labor claims.
Covid sick leave policy due to expire 7/31/24 looking to extend. Amy reminded group that hospital needs to cover infectious disease sick time even if member has no accruals.



Prison closures: 5 may be closed by Governor within 90 days if special statutory language is granted- currently closures should be announced within 1 year. Union agrees with right sizing of facilities. Closures not being considered due to number of inmates, but due to staffing. Closures are not attracting people to work at the correctional facilities. 90 days is not a reasonable amount of time for IIs or staff. Another issue is with increased census, comes increased violence. No announcement of which CFs will close yet.

SUNY Downstate Chancellor King announced that he was going to transform the hospital by pushing out services and moving inpatient to a wing at Kings County, and structurally close the hospital. No community outreach or research as to the health impact without the specialized services in that area (Renal transplant, trauma and NICU services). 100 million for operational needs, and 300 million for capital in prep for the change. Many efforts made to educate the community and the Legislators to stop the closure. Senator Myrie has championed this fight and has put out a bill for a long-term viability plan. It would include studying expenditures, revenues, services, demographics, and needs of the community by using the monies earmarked for the “transition”. Community leaders and clergy have been included in this endeavor. 4th largest employer in the community. SUNY Hospitals are the only state agency that pays salary and fringe benefits. Deb Egel remarked that the Governor is “pausing” on the closure, and that the organizing effort was amazing and should be looked at as a model going forward for future campaigns.

Nurse Licensure compact- Not looking as though it will pass for nurses, but for MDs. Conversations with legislature in lieu of compact, have been to expand scholarship programs, preceptor program, and preferred entry to SUNY/CUNY for those needing to complete the BSN in 10.

Preceptor bill may be moved to a current bill with NYSNA and CWA, which gives a 3k tax credit which would come out of your tax return. This alternative bill would cover many more HC professionals (MDs, LPNs). \$500 payout would need to be sought after annually on PEFs original proposal.

OPWDD is displacing the residents. Shouldn't be spending money on new housing while displacing those without a voice to defend themselves. Looking to get resources for this agency. Lakisha stated that her patients are having more mental health issues, beyond their addiction.



Mental health beds are up by 300 after over 1000 beds lost in the last decade.
Looking for \$10 million funding for universal on-site diagnosis to have an expedited treatment plan when presenting to OMH or OASAS.
Cut to retiree healthcare plan to limit reimbursement (IRMMA) which pays back a portion of the Medicare premium.
Restoration of skilled nursing care which drops by 100 days when a retiree transitions to Medicare.

Design build expansion-allows a single-source to design, build, and inspect their own jobs over \$25 million on public projects with taxpayer money. PEF wants to see PEF members on these jobs for oversight.

To secure these budget priorities, submitted written testimonies were sent to workforce, mental health, health, and public protection committees. VP DiAntonio testified at the workforce committee meeting. Multiple rallies: Tier 6 in capital, and SUNY Downstate. Met with the assembly republican conference and DOCCS regarding closures. Signed letters of support for bills that members have signed. have been sent to their legislators. Important to have nurses engage with the members getting the message out about these bills. Letters are also on the website.

Don Morganstern/COPE-not present. Cope mentioned and application sent to all members with their EOL forms.

16. Health Care workers Bonus-have not been paid out yet.
 - \$400 Dental Stipend coming within month.
 - \$600 Higher Education differential coming by May. RNs should automatically receive based on license being a term/condition for employment. Several agencies are still asking for license. *Can review employee folder. *Listen to Town Halls as they are addressing changes in requirements.
17. Convention petitions/plans. Will be held in Syracuse September 15-18th. Nora encouraged members be on the watch for when petitions are available and collect double the specified number of signatures. SWNC has a table, and there is a lot to learn about the union. Cynthia announced the petition window begins April 22nd thru May 13th, 2024.
 - *Committee members again encouraged to participate.
18. Deb Egel's strategic plan (as attached). This emerged from the request for proposal (RFP) that Debbie submitted for her position as a nurse consultant. Here are her ideas as to how to help the SWNC.



Nurse residency program was the preceptor bill which is now in progress.

The 24/7 issues are related to the POAs. Better databases had been discussed at an AFT meeting. CWA demonstrated a comprehensive database with PEF staff including Joe Cocci. Reports can generate evidence that can be used for LM, Art.44, contract, legislation, etc. Will meet with AFT and President Spence. More to come.

Skills pay- could we get an additional bonus for certification? The contract now has higher education pay of \$600. Susan discussed differential payments for degree, specialty certification, and years of experience given at many other hospitals. Susan had asked that the contract team consider this.

Digital communication- Debbie was to work with Cynthia Walker to create an Instagram platform for videos, education, and fun videos to get a following. Has not yet begun d/t Downstate transition. It would be great to alert members of calls to action.

*10 members voted that 24/7 should be the first priority for committee.

*8 members voted that digital communication with grass roots organizing be the second.

* Education with focus on in-house education and certification, be the third priority.

*Asterix indicates action items

Adjournment 3:25 PM

Next meeting April 15th & 16th for Lobby Day event

Following meeting June 14th, 2024. There is a SWPAC meeting that day.

