



New Member Handbook

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota
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cs/opei#12

BOLDER STRONGER UNITED BOLDER STRONGER UNITED BOLDER STRONGER UNITED BOLDER STRONGER UNITED BOLDER STRONGER UNITED

Bolder, Stronger United

As a new member in SEIU Healthcare Minnesota you join over 17,000 members ; members who have made their voice heard and have a vision for the future of their union. The vision and goals for SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members are clear:

The Path to the American Dream

We need to build a bolder, stronger, and united movement to repave the path to a dream every generation of Americans has had.

Dreams of...

- A paycheck that supports a family
- Universal health care
- A secure retirement
- The freedom to form a union to give workers a voice on the job

Focused on Member Power & Leadership Development

Across the country, 3% of SEIU members feel engaged in their union... we must do better. Imagine how much closer to the American Dream we could get if just 3 or 4 times as many of our members felt engaged in their union?

Responding to the Crisis of Our Time: Health

The American Healthcare System is broken. We must build our movement of healthcare workers to respond to this crisis by becoming the most powerful voice in the state on the issue of healthcare.

It's Time to Be Leaders for Quality Care

We're on the frontlines of healthcare. We know what works. More importantly, we know what patients need. We need to commit to each other that we will build our collective power and use it to bring those ideas to life.

Knocking Down the Walls We Place Around Our Power

We are not an island unto ourselves. If our workplaces are healthy, but our communities are unsafe, we have not succeeded.

We are the Service Employees International Union, an organization of 2 million members united by the belief in the dignity and worth of workers and the services they provide and dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families and creating a more just and humane society.

WELCOME

Congratulations on your new job! SEIU Healthcare Minnesota would like to take this opportunity to welcome and give you some information about union membership. As you may know, we are members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare Minnesota and have a collective bargaining agreement with your employer.



1965: Retroactive pension paid to SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members in the first private hospital pension plan in the country.

By being a member of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota you will be joining with more than 17,000 other healthcare workers in hospitals, clinics and nursing homes throughout the state of Minnesota. SEIU is the fastest growing and strongest Union in the United States. With actual Healthcare Workers sitting at the negotiating table, we are guaranteed a real voice in determining the direction of Healthcare in Minnesota and across the nation!

According to the labor agreement with your Employer, becoming a member of our Union, in good standing, is a condition of employment. To be a member in good standing you must pay a standard initiation

fee and Union dues. Our dues money is used to increase member activism, improve the lives of our members and of all working families, win good contracts, elect officials who will support the interests of workers and their right to organize and build worksite leaders.



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Enclosed, please find an Application for Membership card and a Check-Off Authorization form, which allows your dues to be deducted from your paycheck. Please fill out the forms and return them in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. If you have already completed the Check-Off Authorization form at the facility where you work, you do not need to fill out a second one. However, if you do not sign and return a Check-Off Authorization form, you will be required to pay the initiation fee, Union dues or service fee directly to the union office each month. Your failure to make the monthly payments will subject you to termination.

As a union member, you have the right and responsibility to be involved in developing contract proposals, voting on union decisions and participating in other union activities. If you choose to refrain from becoming a member of our Union, which is also your right, you still pay an initiation fee and monthly service fee reflective of the Union's costs in representing the employees in its bargaining units. Please notify us if this is the route you choose and we will provide you with additional information. You should be aware, however, that by exercising this option you will not be a member of our Union and you will not have the right to be involved in any union activity, including the right to vote on your contract.

We wish you well in your new job and we hope you will become a proud part of your Union.

In Unity,
Your Sisters and Brothers at SEIU Healthcare Minnesota

1980: Twin City LPN's affiliate with SEIU Healthcare Minnesota



1985: Aspen (SHARE) strike

Who's who

Members

As members we need to stand together and support one another. We do this by reading our contract and holding management accountable. If a co-worker is wronged, it is important that we show our strength and support that person. To stay together, we stay informed by attending meetings and participating in union activities. In order to most effectively make contract gains and improvements to healthcare across the state of Minnesota, we need to stay united and strong.

Stewards

An important source of information and assistance is our Union Stewards. They work to develop a plan for communicating with members, while strengthening our Union through internal organizing - talking with members, getting them more active in their Union, etc., as well as assist in providing information to members about political issues that affect working families. They are members who are leaders in the workplace and have been trained to uphold our contract. Your steward knows the contract and can help answer questions and resolve most problems and grievances. If there is not a listing of your Union Stewards enclosed with this booklet, call the SEIU Healthcare Minnesota office.

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota Representatives

Internal Organizers

The role of the Internal Organizer is to organize and mobilize. Organizing is capacity building -- organizing members into new and existing networks, activities, small groups, affinity groups, geographic groups, etc. Mobilizing is delivering members for various campaigns.

Member Resource Center Representative

Member Resource Representatives contribute to the building of a stronger union by being the first point of contact for members seeking advice or advocacy and to execute all aspects of contract enforcement as well as the advocacy needs of the membership throughout the Local.

External Organizers

External Organizers are union staff members who work to build the strength of our union by helping non-union healthcare professionals organize. External Organizers provide those healthcare professionals that are not yet members, the tools and education necessary to unite their co-workers to combat management's anti-union campaign throughout their organizing drive. External Organizers often work hand-in-hand with current members who are the best equipped to articulate how having a union has benefited their lives, as well as the lives of their families.

Officers and Executive Board

The three principal officers of SEIU Local 113 work together to provide leadership and direction for our union. The President, along with the other officers, Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Vice-President, act to the best of their ability to further the purposes and objectives of the union. They are elected by the membership of our union.

The President directs the day-to-day operations of the union office and along with the Secretary-Treasurer watches over the finances of the union. The Executive Vice-President presides and keeps records of the General Membership and Executive Board meetings and has advisory powers with the President and Secretary-Treasurer. The officers sit on the State Council to bring together programs and directives for all SEIU locals in Minnesota.

The Executive Board is comprised of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members from different facilities, who along with the principal officers, meet to direct and formulate plans to maintain a strong membership. The Trustees that sit on the Executive Board review the union's bills and finances.



SEIU State Council

The State Council coordinates the electoral and legislative work of the SEIU Locals in Minnesota to increase the effectiveness of our collective bargaining and new member organizing campaigns. By building the political involvement of SEIU members throughout the state, the State Council is working to improve the lives of all Minnesotans. SEIU is Minnesota's fifth largest labor union with 31,400 members statewide. Our sister locals are 284, 26, and 63.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Union?

A Union is a democratic organization run by us, the workers. By having a union we have the power to demand better wages, benefits, working conditions, job security, fair treatment, respect on the job and so on. Having a union legally obligates our employer to negotiate and uphold a contract with us. Without a union, management would have a free hand to treat people as they please. But, with a union we have a contract that guarantees our rights.

What is the Service Employees International Union (SEIU)?

With 2 million members, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is one of the largest and fastest growing unions in the country. SEIU Healthcare Minnesota represents over 17,000 healthcare workers in Minnesota. Our members work in all kinds of healthcare facilities, including hospitals, nursing homes and clinics.

What does it mean to be a union member?

By standing together, and continuously striving to increase member activism and improve the lives of our members and all working families, we have the strength to win and maintain good contracts. Members set the priorities of the union through democratic elections and work together to uphold their contract and make positive changes at work.

Union members have a greater access to resources that create the ability to enrich their lives through continued education, leadership development tools and connections made with other members in their communities.

May I pay an agency fee rather than become a member?

Every employee has the right to choose to become an agency or a fair share fee payer instead of a union member. However, by doing so, you will forfeit all rights and benefits of union membership, including voting rights pertaining to our contract and the right to participate in contract and wage negotiations. The amount of the fair share fee you must pay will reflect only the costs to the union of negotiating and servicing the collective bargaining Agreement. That amount is generally a significant percentage of the normal union dues and may vary from year to year. If you want to become an agency or fair share payer, you must call or write to the SEIU Healthcare Minnesota office and request the information for the agency/fair share payment.

What is a Union Contract?

A union contract is a legally binding, written agreement between us, the members of the union, and our employer. Union contracts guarantee union members many important rights that non-union workers don't have. Most importantly, we negotiate our contract and have a voice regarding how our workplace works.

Why is a union contract so important?

A union contract provides us with job security and a voice about how our workplace works. Unlike non-union workers, we negotiate policy, wages, benefits, and have a grievance and progressive discipline policy. Without a union contract, workers have very few legal rights against unfair treatment by their employer and are "employees at will".

Why do we need a Union?

As healthcare workers, we need a union and a strong voice at work to make the quality of care we provide better. With a union we are equal to management, have job security, and can easily voice our concerns. Our contract protects our wages, hours, benefits and job.

With a collective voice union members have the power to influence positive change beyond the workplace: through the community, by advocating for safer neighborhoods; in organizations, by educating around a cause and creating awareness; and in politics by lobbying. Members, when united, have the strength to build the grassroots power needed to improve the lives of all working families.

How do contract negotiations work?

Who decides if we accept a contract?

When a facility's contract is up for negotiations, you and your co-workers will hold a meeting and send a survey to assess the priorities of the bargaining unit. You will also elect a Negotiation Team and sometimes a Contract Action Team that works with the Negotiation Team to keep everyone informed. The Negotiation Team and your Union negotiator, will sit across the table from management and bargain the terms of your contract, including pay raises, benefits, and working conditions. Sometimes it is necessary for workers to show their strength during negotiations by wearing stickers and/or buttons and participating in actions. Once your team feels they have an acceptable contract you and all union members at your facility vote on whether or not to accept the contract offer.

Rights & Responsibility

When in trouble...

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Union Member

You have the right:

- To have your opinions heard and respected, to be informed of union activities, and to be educated in union values and union skills.
- To choose the leaders of the union in a fair and democratic manner.
- The right to a full accounting of union dues and the proper stewardship over the union's resources.
- The right to have your concerns resolved in a fair and expeditious manner.

Responsibilities:

- Read your contract.
- Know who your stewards are.
- Attend Union meetings.
- Help build a strong and more effective labor movement, by supporting the organization of unorganized workers, helping to build a political voice for working people, and by standing up for your co-workers and all workers.
- Be informed about the internal governance of our Union and to participate in the conduct of our Union's affairs.
- Contribute to the support of our Union.
- Treat all workers and members fairly.

Weingarten Rights - Right to Representation

The Supreme Court has ruled that an employee is entitled to have a Union representative present during any interview that may result in discipline or termination. These are called your Weingarten Rights.

If this happens to you:

1. Demand Union representation. You must request that a Union representative be called into the meeting.
2. You must have a reasonable belief that discipline will result from the meeting.
3. You have the right to know the subject of the meeting and the right to consult your Union representative prior to the meeting to get advice.
4. Do not refuse to attend a meeting if a steward is requested but denied. Refusal to cooperate on your part can be viewed as insubordination. If this fails, stay in the room, but remain silent, do not answer any questions, and take notes. If you proceed in answering questions without representation, you have waived your right to representation and any statement can be used against you.

The Weingarten Rights do not apply to everyday conversations between members and supervisors regarding job duties or work performance.

Grievances

Talk to your steward; if you and your steward determine that a contract violation has occurred, together you will file a grievance.

What to know:

Not all workplace complaints are grievances.

Winning a grievance depends on the facts and evidence the Union can collect.

Working closely with your steward improves your chances of success.

The key question that decides a grievance involving discipline is :
"Did Management have "just cause" for imposing the discipline?"

What to do:

Contact your steward

Call the Member Resource Center (MRC)

Read your contract and remember your Weingarten Rights

Talk to you Supervisor with a steward present

Review the facts

Member Resource Center

651-294-8100

The Member Resource Center (MRC) is a central place to call for information on your Collective Bargaining Agreement, events, contract negotiations, meetings and for advice on issues or answers to questions.

MRC representatives use 21st century technology to track issues and provide consistent, accurate advice and support to Stewards and members who are processing grievances.

Definitions

Just Cause: A reason an employer must give for any disciplinary action it takes against an employee. An employer must show just cause only if a contract requires it. Most contracts have just cause requirements which place the burden of proof for just cause on the employer.

Grievance: Any type of worker dissatisfaction including violations of the collective bargaining agreement, violations of law, violations of employer policies, violations of fair treatment, and violations of past practices. The definition of a grievance is usually part of the contract, and therefore may vary from one contract to another.

Political Action

The Labor Movement – The People Who Brought You the Weekend

As a member of SEIU, you are part of what The National Journal has ranked as America's most effective political program. The secret of our success is providing members the power to hold politicians accountable on the issues that affect them as healthcare workers.

- Politicians gave us a healthcare system that ranks highest in cost and lowest in quality. Would you like to change that?
- Politicians gave us an economy where wages for workers stay flat while CEO pay skyrockets. Would you like to change that?
- Politicians helped make healthcare the most dangerous job in America with more days lost to on-the-job injuries than any other job classification. Would you like to change that?
- Politicians hold funding flat for hospitals and nursing homes, then ask healthcare workers to make do with less equipment, staff, and training. Would you like to change that?

Federal law prevents SEIU from giving dues money to Federal candidates or communicating with the public on Federal legislation. To hold politicians accountable, members volunteer to donate a few dollars from each paycheck to our political account (C.O.P.E.). SEIU members use this account to fund much of our political program. Please use the enclosed form to sign up to make a small regular donation to C.O.P.E.

"I give to SEIU C.O.P.E. because we need to put patients and workers before profits. If we all give a little bit to C.O.P.E. we can raise the political money we need to compete with the special interest money of the health insurance industry and the drug companies."



Elsie Urman, LPN, HealthPartners Executive Board Member

If you are interested, join our Political Accountability Team. These members build the grassroots power needed to improve the lives of working families.

Their activities include:

- Distributing flyers to workers which highlight where candidates stand on health care issues.
- Volunteering with labor friendly local candidates.
- Meeting with elected officials to let them know the real world impact of their policies.

If you provide the commitment and passion, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota will provide the training and contacts to get started. Call our Political Director at 651-294-8130 to join.

Organize

to form or join an activist group, especially a labor union.

New Organizing is non-union professionals coming together to form a union and become members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota.

Why Organize?

Healthcare professionals organize with SEIU Healthcare Minnesota to have a say in how their workplace operates, giving them the opportunity to sit down with management in order to problem solve as equals. This puts them in a position to establish better staffing guidelines and more reasonable workloads, preserve professional standards, and stand up for quality patient care. Additionally they have the power to negotiate for the health, retirement, vacation, sick leave, and other benefits their families need the most. SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members have guaranteed rewards for hard work and a pay system that recognizes longevity and the cost of living. They have the ability to set fair rules and bring employment security into their workplaces.

Member Organizers

Many SEIU members are dedicated to organizing other healthcare professionals. SEIU members know that we must stand together and organize for strength in our industry and geographical area. The more union healthcare professionals we have in Minnesota, the more power we have to negotiate better health benefits, higher pay, good pensions and improved working conditions. The larger our union and the more healthcare professionals we have working together in our union, the more strength we have to change the direction of healthcare in our state and our country.

As a member of our Union, you have the opportunity to be at the forefront of helping our Union grow even faster. Unorganized healthcare professionals want and need to hear directly from those who perform the same jobs, but have the benefit of being Union. This is why every SEIU member must be an organizer!

If you would like more information or you are interested in becoming a Member Organizer, contact the Organizing Department at 651-294-8100.

Who are External Organizers?

External Organizers are union staff members who work to build the strength of our union by helping non-union healthcare professionals organize. External Organizers provide those healthcare professionals that are not yet members the tools and education necessary to unite their co-workers to combat management's anti-union campaign throughout their organizing drive. External Organizers often work hand-in-hand with current members who are the best equipped to articulate how having a union has benefited their lives, as well as the lives of their families.



Building Power!
In September, 2004, workers at Allina's St. Francis Regional Medical Center in Shakopee voted to join SEIU Healthcare Minnesota making our Union stronger. To kick off their organizing drive over 35 healthcare professionals participated in a "March on the Boss" to demand recognition and

Member Involvement Opportunities

Patient Care Advocates

Our members are the most credible spokespeople for a reformed care delivery system. We need an organized structure to educate, organize, and prepare members to speak publicly to the media and Legislature about patient care issues.

SEIU/ISAIAH Health Organizing Team (HOT)

The work of this team expands our work on healthcare reform, leadership development, and community action. It is our organizing committee for building support in our membership for real healthcare reform.

Regional Town Halls

We've all heard from Greater Minnesota members about the difficulty of getting to the Twin Cities for membership meetings. As we seek to engage more members, we need to increase our reach.



Leadership Development & New Opportunities

The Leadership Development and New Opportunities team constantly explores new pathways, structures, and roles to expand member engagement and leadership development.

Community Power Council

This structure will drive the work of connecting our union to the numerous communities that exist within our membership. Their charge will be to connect SEIU to efforts to build more just communities throughout our state.

Member Leadership Meetings

Member leaders of each sector gather together every other month to set the course for their sector for both the long and short-term. This structure is crucial to establishing credibility for our union and engaging members in a real and democratic way.

If you are interested in getting involved, talk to your Steward or Internal Organizer or call the Member Resource Center at 651-294-8100.

General Membership Meetings The third Thursday every month 7:30pm

At the Local Union Office
345 Randolph Avenue, Suite 100
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(unless otherwise noted.)