

## **Communication to Members regarding IIU Weekend/Holiday Schedule**

St Louis County, our Employer, presented our IIU teams North and South notice of a new policy on how to manage the weekend and holiday schedules which would be effective Jan 1, 2021. This new policy is in direct violation of the negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that has been part of our Union Contract for 4 years. The new policy included potential for increased risk to our members and the community and had aspects that would have been in conflict with MN Statute guiding reporting requirements of maltreatment and neglect of children. It also included morale ramifications of how the IIU employees, as County employees, did their jobs while working with families and children in need.

The terms of the current MOU in our Contract includes one staff on site and one staff on call for all weekends and Holidays both North, and South and was implemented due to MN Statute ensuring assessment and reporting is done within the 24 hour timeline.

The County's initial new policy stated an effective start date of 1-1-2021 with only one on-call staff scheduled for weekend/holiday time periods both in the North and South. It directed the on call staff they were required to check voicemail, faxes, and emails 2x/day and only act on imminent danger reports and not write up reports on the other calls, faxes, or emails received. There were many unanswered questions as to how this new policy would be better than the current practice, how the safety concerns would be addressed and why it was being presented with the numerous hardships to members and the community it had the potential to negatively impact. Due to the many unanswered questions and concerns a class action grievance was filed with St Louis County and the first meeting was held, December 17, 2020.

A member action was initiated in the form of a petition asking for support from members in the form of signatures. We were overwhelmed with signatures from current and former IIU workers, as well as workers from other units and these signatures were submitted to PHHS Administration asking our Employer to reconsider dismissing the current MOU and eliminate the initial policy they presented to the IIU units.

To date, the County has provided an updated policy assigning one full time IIU staff both North and South to be present on the weekends and Holiday 7.5 hours to respond to any calls, faxes and emails concerning child welfare. The on-call staff has been eliminated both North and South in this updated policy from the Employer. There are ongoing concerns regarding this change in policy which are being discussed with the members directly working with the Steward and AFSCME Representative and will be followed up with soon.

Our union members believe that the employer has misjudged the necessity of the on-call staff and we will be watching and evaluating the need. We will be following up with the workers who worked holidays and weekends, and if a need is apparent for the on-call workers to return we will stand up and fight for them to be implemented again.

This communication is being sent to inform all of our members that the IIU members believed the Employer was acting against the negotiated MOU by unilaterally changing the intent, language and current application of the agreement. The members contacted a Union Steward and together the

decision was made to file a class action grievance. A class action is when more than one group is involved in a Contract issue which was the case here with the IIU units both North and South. The grievance required discussion between the Employer, the Union and the IIU members which resulted in a positive change of the initial policy presented and allows for better practice and safety.

We wanted to keep members informed of Union Action and share in the celebration of the efforts and work done that resulted in a positive outcome! Thank you for everyone that was involved!