Over the last month, we have been working to support you during the COVID-19 crisis. After we filed grievances on HP’s employer-imposed float pool and other new personnel policies that violate our Collective Bargaining Agreement, and after a couple of weeks of inconclusive discussions about economic and benefit security for our members with HR, HealthPartners leadership authorized their attorney to have discussions with SEIU HCMN President Jamie Gulley regarding our economic and benefit security proposals and regarding HP’s proposed float pool. Jamie and Kevin Kuehn spoke at length about our concerns and proposals with HP’s attorney on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 31. We are still awaiting a formal response from HP regarding everything discussed in that conversation and the needs of our members during these unprecedented times. We are fighting for our members who are on the frontlines every day providing care in this pandemic and also for those who are being financially impacted by low-needs and lay-offs.

We will update you as soon as we receive a formal response from HealthPartners. If we reach agreement on a set of policies that appropriately honor and respect the work of our members, providing for economic and benefit security, then you will receive an email from the union with 1) detailed information about the proposed new policies, and 2) the time, date, and call-in number for a “Telephone Town Hall” meeting for all HP members to hear the policies explained, ask questions about them, and then vote (by pressing a number on your phone) on whether to accept/ratify the proposed policies. In this time of social distancing, we of course do not want to hold ratification votes in person, and we do not have time to wait for a mail-ballot voting process like we use for other union business. Our lawyers have advised us that a Telephone Town Hall is an acceptable alternative method for members to vote on ratification.

In the meantime, we have secured your health insurance benefits through April. And we will continue to fight for our members in order to extend benefits security for as long as this crisis lasts. (See below under FAQs for information about paying employee premiums.)

As we move forward, we know that the needs, demands and challenges of this crisis will change. We will continue to seek discussions with HealthPartners management to propose and negotiate with them responsible, respectful policies around issues related to PPE use, hazard pay, back-pay for lost wages experienced over the first two weeks of low-needing and clinic closures (3/20-4/1), and any other new developments that require new policies.

We recommend that all members who have experienced a loss in hours apply for unemployment. To qualify for a given week, you must have worked fewer than 32 hours that week, and you must have earned less than $740. While the benefits from the state of MN are only 50% of your lost wages, the new federal stimulus bill that went into effect this week substantially increases those benefits on a short-term basis (see FAQs below for more information). Here is where you can apply and get more information about unemployment insurance: uimn.org/applicants/howapply/index.jsp

How do I know if I qualify for unemployment? How much would my payment be?

- The rules for unemployment insurance (UI) have changed, on a temporary basis, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis. Both state and federal unemployment policies have
changed, in some cases dramatically. **Eligibility for UI payments** is much broader than previously, and the **amount of UI payments** is much greater. For many workers facing lay-offs or hours reductions, it will be possible to receive all their lost income, for up to four months. And in some cases, the payments will actually add up to more than 100% of their normal income, as part of the federal government’s effort to stimulate the economy in this time of crisis.

- If you lose income and it is COVID-19 related in any given week, you qualify for unemployment for that week, as long as you did not work more than 32 hours.
- ILS, VLS, and being low-needed should all qualify you for unemployment.
- If doctors are being asked to take time off and your hours and pay are impacted by that, you should qualify for unemployment for those lost hours (again, as long as you did not work 32 or more hours in the week).

**When does the federal supplement to unemployment from the stimulus bill kick in?**

- Our understanding is that these additional payments of up to $600/week begin to be available for unemployment claims filed for this week (the week of March 30). Those who lost hours during prior weeks, whether due to temporary clinic closures or low-needing/ILS/VLS, are eligible for normal unemployment payments for those lost hours, but not for the additional support provided by the federal stimulus.
- SEIU continues to demand back-pay for wages lost for the weeks of March 16 and 23, for anyone whose clinic was closed or was low-needed and used VLS/ILS during that time.

**If I refuse an opportunity to work by floating to another clinic, will I still qualify for unemployment?**

- If the circumstances of the request for you to float fit within the normal procedures outlined in our CBA, including that the location is within 16 miles of your normal location for that day, you should follow the CBA and float as assigned. Refusal to float under those circumstances would disqualify you for unemployment for those shifts/hours.
- If the circumstances of the request for you to float do NOT fit within the normal procedures outlined in our CBA, our union strongly believes that the answer to this question will be Yes. You will qualify for UI for lost shifts/hours. But it remains to be seen whether HP will contest this (will take the position that you don’t qualify because you didn’t sign up for their employer-imposed new float pool) in UI proceedings. If they do so, we will contend – and support you in the process of contending – that because the float pool in question transparently violates your CBA, and there is an active “all-affected” grievance seeking to resolve that violation, the employer cannot use your failure to sign up for the float pool as a basis for denying your unemployment claim.

**If my supervisor asks me to float to a different clinic, should I?**

- Please comply with your supervisor’s request, though – if the circumstances of the float assignment do not fit within the normal reassignment procedures outlined in our CBA – this is still a violation of your contract. Keep detailed notes of the request, and please contact the Member Action Center (651-294-8100 | mac@seiuhcmn.org) to file a grievance.
- If the request DOES fit within the normal reassignment procedures outlined in our CBA, proceed as normal in following the reassignment.

**Should I join the redeployment pool?**

- For the vast majority of HealthPartners employees, it would be more financially beneficial for you to collect UI, from the week of March 30 (when the UI provisions of the new federal stimulus bill went into effect) forward. For this reason, we recommend that you do not join the redeployment pool.
- The design of the employer-imposed redeployment pool also violates our CBA, and we have filed an “all-affected” grievance challenging those violations. We remain open to working together with HP on implementing a float pool, but one that makes sense for our members, does not penalize them, and does not try to move them in and out of our bargaining unit and CBA. **SEIU HCMN has indicated possible flexibility in floating if the employer were to agree to our economic and benefit security proposals.**
I work in St. Paul/Minneapolis. How does Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) work, and is it different from what’s in our contract?

- If you work within the cities of St. Paul or Minneapolis, you can use up to 80 hours of what is called “Safe Time” under those cities’ ESST ordinances, because they define a) school closures and b) public-health emergencies as events that can trigger mandatory “Safe Time” coverage from employers.
- Your union worked together with a broad coalition of labor, faith and community partners to pass these ordinances – and continues to fight for the same protections to be extended by state law to cover all workers in Minnesota.
- Where you live has no bearing on whether the St. Paul and Minneapolis ordinances apply – just where your work is performed.
- HealthPartners has confirmed it will honor the ESST ordinances, which go beyond the sick-time provisions of our CBA.
- SEIU HCMN has urged the employer to make this benefit available for all members working at HP GHI, rather than making it specific to those who happen to work in St. Paul or Minneapolis. To date, they have not agreed to this proposal.

Are members able to work, or required to work, within other parts of the HealthPartners system not covered by our CBA?

- The employer-imposed float pool policy – which, again, we have filed an “all-affected” grievance to challenge, as it clearly violates our CBA – appears to say that workers can be floated from anywhere in the HP system to anywhere else in the HP system.
- We have expressed clearly to management our strong objection to any float-pool proposal that would include members moving across different bargaining units and contract, or into non-union/non-contract areas. The union remains very open to working together with HP (should the employer agree to our economic and benefit security proposals) on implementing a float pool, but one that makes sense for our members, does not penalize them, and does not try to move them in and out of our bargaining unit and CBA.

What should I do if I or someone in my house is high risk? Do I have to come into work?

If you have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms that suggest you may have COVID-19, call HP member service or the Careline. You should not be going to work. HR has sent out material suggesting a complicated process of determining whether you should use vacation and personal holiday time for days missed for this health reason or should report it as a separate COVID-related category of paid leave – basically, they are saying they will pay for the time and not have it come out of your vacation or personal holiday only if your potential infection with COVID-19 occurs at work and you can somehow prove that. Your union has taken the position that anyone staying at home for valid COVID-19 related reasons such as these should be compensated fully for that time, without having to use up their vacation or personal holiday or unpaid time such as ILS or VLS. That is obviously the right thing for the employer to do to protect both clinic workers and patients. In addition, on a practical level we have argued that in a pandemic with rapid community spread and extremely limited testing capacity it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty where infection took place.

Should I use my Sick Time for time off that is COVID-19 related? Should I use my Vacation or Personal Holiday pay? What if I already used up my time off?

- We do not believe you should have to utilize any of these benefits during a global pandemic in which you are on the frontlines, unless the reasons you’re using them are the same sorts of reasons you would have had to use them prior to the pandemic – i.e., being sick, going on a vacation, or taking a personal holiday.
• But the specific answers and advice vary by circumstances:
  • (Note: for those debating whether to use any of these forms of paid time off for any of the different reasons listed below who work in St. Paul or Minneapolis, see the above section on those cities’ Earned Sick and Safe Time ordinances.)
  • For those debating whether to use any of these forms of paid time off to cover hours for which you’ve been low-needed: you may use Vacation or Personal Holiday time for these shifts/hours, but you should first figure out whether it makes more sense for you financially to file for UI for those lost shifts/hours. For many members, you will receive as much or more income by filing for UI as you would by using your Vacation or Personal Holiday time – and you will also keep that Vacation and Personal Holiday time for use in the future.
  • For those debating whether to use any of these forms of paid time off due to the temporary closure of your clinic: our “all-affected” grievance for members in dental, eye care, and any other departments facing temporary clinic closures points to straightforward language in our CBA that provides for full pay for you under these circumstances, when there has not been a formal layoff. We will continue to pursue that grievance and expect to prevail in winning back-pay for those lost shifts/hours. In the meantime, you can choose to use Vacation or Personal Holiday time……in discussions of resolution of the all-affected grievance, we would insist that those hours be returned to your banks. However, going forward from the week of March 30, you should figure out whether it makes more sense for you financially to file for UI for your lost shifts/hours. For many members, you will receive as much or more income by filing for UI as you would by using your Vacation or Personal Holiday time – and you will also keep that Vacation and Personal Holiday time for use in the future when your clinic re-opens.
  • For those debating whether to use any of these forms of paid time off because you have to stay home due to possible exposure to COVID-19, waiting for test results, and related medical/public-health circumstances: while we continue to advocate that HR should hold you harmless (not require you to use any paid time off) for all absences required by proper public-health procedures to protect your patients and coworkers, we have not objected to members using sick time under these circumstances. However, if you do not have enough sick time available, SEIU HCMN strongly objects to anyone being told to use Vacation or Personal Holiday time, ILS or VLS or unpaid time when staying home for medical/public-health reasons. If you have been directed by your manager or HR to use Vacation or Personal Holiday time, ILS or VLS or unpaid time for hours you could not come to work because you were self-quarantined for medical/public-health reasons, please contact Executive Vice President Phillip Cryan directly at phillip.cryan@seiuhcmn.org

Should I expect to return to my former position?
• Yes.

Does it matter if I’m on probation?
  All the provisions of the contract apply to probationary employees. The unilateral changes that are being implemented should be followed, with documentation of violations of the contract, by probationary employees as well.

Legislative, congressional and agency changes are happening rapidly and we will work to update everyone as soon as possible if any of the answers in this document change or are updated in the weeks to come.