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110 Nurses and Technical Staff at Eagleville Hospital Avert a Strike, Reaching A Critical Contract Deal That Further Protects Patients and Healthcare Professionals

The Members of PASNAP at Eagleville Hospital in Montgomery County win a new three-year contract with significant staffing improvements, ensuring safer conditions for both their patients and themselves.

Conshohocken, PA - Pushed to the brink by understaffing so severe that it was causing staff to leave the hospital and was exposing caregivers to the risk of violence, the 110 nurses and techs at Eagleville Hospital, a behavioral health and addictions treatment center in Montgomery County, made safer staffing the centerpiece of their campaign in bargaining for a new contract.

Yesterday, exactly two weeks after they had voted unanimously to authorize a strike over understaffing, the nurses and techs again voted unanimously in person, this time to ratify a new contract that directly addresses their staffing concerns and the safety risks that understaffing heightens for both patients and caregivers.

“A year and a half into the pandemic, the system that’s supposed to support bedside caregivers, and therefore patients, is in crisis,” says PASNAP President Maureen May, R.N. “Our workloads have shot through the roof while staff numbers have dwindled due to burnout and short-sighted, bottom-line decisions. This contract, with its emphasis on safe staffing, prioritizes excellence in patient care as well as the health and safety of frontline caregivers. We are thrilled.”

In addition to increased wages, the nurses’ and techs’ new contract addresses:

- **Increased Staffing in the Residential Rehabilitation Units:** Eagleville will create a new Residential Unit with better staffing that will handle the more acute patients currently in the standard Residential Unit, which has been severely short-staffed. The creation of the new, better staffed Residential Unit of higher acuity patients will help to alleviate the staffing crisis across all the hospital’s Residential Units.
- **A New Process to Prevent Short Staffing:** Staffing grids will be posted and remain posted for the duration of the contract, and management must make its “best efforts” to meet the grid. If management wants to change the staffing grids, they must go through a protocol with the union where objective criteria, including acuity, missed lunches and short staffing forms filed, must be taken into account. Saving money is not a metric.

“When we negotiated this contract, we put our patients first, and at the end of the day, management did the right thing--for them and for us,” said Kendra Barkasi, R.N., President of Eagleville Hospital Nurses and Techs United. “I’m really looking forward to the changes the new

contract puts into place and to providing the best possible patient care. But what's more, I'm looking forward to a new relationship with management for the sake of our patient community."

"This new contract gives us techs a sense of worthiness and is helping us feel that management finally sees that the work we do here matters," said Eagleville tech Brendah Polanco, a member of both the union's Executive Board and bargaining team. "Like the healthcare heroes we are, we negotiated a contract that benefits us all, and for the next three years, we can focus solely on doing what we love--caring for our patients."

The Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals represents more than 9,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across the Commonwealth.