



April 25, 2013

Arbitrator Awards D.C. Nurses Association Wage Increases in Bargaining Impasse with the Department of Mental Health

This week, Arbitrator Sean J. Rogers, ordered the District of Columbia, Department of Mental Health to adopt DCNA's wage proposals for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014. Arbitrator Rogers concluded that DCNA's proposals, seeking a 2% raise, effective October 1, 2012 and a 3% raise, effective October 1, 2013, would assist in alleviating the serious and "arguably chronic" recruitment and retention problems within the Department. The Department had proposed no wage increase for Fiscal Year 2013 and only a 2% increase for Fiscal Year 2014.

Edward J. Smith, Esq., Staff Attorney for DCNA, was pleased with the decision: "after not receiving wage increases since 2008 and having step increases eliminated for a year without bargaining, we are able to provide some relief to hard working registered nurses who care for the neediest of District citizens, the mentally and physically unstable." Ms. Shirley Jackson, Chairperson, DCNA/DMH, and a registered nurse working in the Department's emergency psychiatric program, advised that the "decision provides some hope that we can attract and retain qualified and experienced nurses to care for people in our community.

The District is required to submit the contract and arbitrator's award to the D.C. Council within sixty days for review. The contract will expire in September 2014 and will now require almost immediate bargaining over Fiscal Year 2015 and beyond. DCNA represents approximately 200 registered nurses employed in the Department of Mental Health, with over 170 working at St. Elizabeths Hospital. DCNA, an affiliate of the National Nurses United, AFL-CIO, also represents 2000 health care professionals in the District of Columbia.

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