



March 19, 2020



At this time when the whole country is focused on the COVID 19 pandemic, our members and our unions are playing a critical role. Across Kaiser Permanente our members are stepping up and contributing to response and preparedness by being flexible and professional. The Alliance is participating in national calls with KP which occur twice a week, and UNAC/UHCP infectious disease specialist Larry Rick, PA is representing the Alliance on more specialized matters. At the regional level many of our leaders are engaged on a regular, sometimes daily basis. The course of this pandemic, and information available, evolves daily.

Operational engagement: Most of the operational issues will need to be addressed close to the ground as services are closed or changed. Local union leaders should engage with the operational point people at that level. If you are having trouble getting your leaders at that level connected to management partners, contact your assigned Alliance Director and we can work to set up the right local communication and engagement process.

Communications: There are a variety of communication structures regionally and within service areas. We should expect regular communication to our union members and unions. In this fast-evolving environment, some have better communication systems than others. Given the different structures of KP and our local unions, no single approach will work everywhere. If you have suggestions for improved communication, you and your Alliance Director should talk with your management partners about how to ensure appropriate information is circulated.

Our union protections: As KP is closing or moving services to react to this crisis, national partnership protections such as EISA and no cancellation policies, as well as local union layoff protections, remain in effect. Thanks to the success of our partnership and the strength of our unions, our union members have income guarantees that the vast majority of other workers in this country do not have.

Response to the pandemic:

- With income guarantees, and in the context of a pandemic, we should expect that many members will be reassigned as services are temporarily closed, consolidated, or otherwise changed. We should be flexible and

proactive in working through these temporary reassignments. Some of the issues to address include ensuring employees get training and orientation, and that they are protected against being disciplined simply because they are unfamiliar with a new job. We should work to facilitate these changes.

- Please stress to your co-workers the importance of showing up to work if they are healthy. Our patients and our co-workers will need us now more than ever.

Our commitment to worker and patient safety:

- Health care workers have worked through many epidemics from HIV, SARS, H1N1, Ebola, and others. The medical information on how COVID-19 is transmitted continues to evolve. The basics of infection control remain the same. It's important to maintain perspective and focus on proven infection control practices. For example, while COVID-19 does appear to survive on surfaces, the reality is that much more dangerous diseases also spread via dirty surfaces, so maintaining and increasing infection control practices remains the first line of defense.
- There is a national disruption in the supply of PPE, due in large part to the failures of the federal government. We should advocate for appropriate PPE for our members, while recognizing that KP is also trying to secure as much PPE as possible in this unprecedented situation. They are exploring all options, including securing PPE from the construction industry, and even working with the garment industry to secure or fabricate more PPE.
- Using supplies inappropriately or storing them away only makes this worse – and makes it more likely that health care workers who need them will be unable to have the protection they need. KP is stepping up security to prevent theft of supplies.
- Standards around quarantining and isolation are being reviewed. One thing we can expect if the pandemic escalates is that if every health care worker who has exposure through work, travel, or in the community is pulled off for 14 days, there will be no one left to care for patients. Quarantine is likely neither recommended nor sustainable as spread escalates. We are monitoring the quarantine policy. It has already been altered in one region.

Contractual procedures: Some unions have been discussing with management about a blanket extension of contractual grievance timelines both for filing and processing grievances, given the challenges of holding grievance meetings and focusing on these at this time. This is a local union decision.