

Northern California Certified Nurse-Midwives

Frequently Asked Questions

Joining UNAC/UHCP is a monumental decision. We urge you to explore the facts and ask critical questions. Together, we can strengthen our voice and protect our professional interests.

WHY ARE WE EXCITED ABOUT UNIONIZING?

- We can protect our current jobs, wages, and benefits. Currently, we are at-will employees, which means Kaiser Permanente, better known as The Permanente Medical Group (TPMG), can change the terms of our job, health benefits, 401(k) contribution, pension, and/or retirement health benefits at any time. Being unionized also means having union support during disciplinary meetings.
- In addition to protecting and growing our compensation, being unionized means having a seat at the table when discussing how we do our work. We are excited about working with Kaiser leadership to expand the exceptional care that we offer!
- To expand and grow midwifery care at Kaiser, we need to have wages and benefits that are comparable with our RN and NP colleagues as well as with local community standards. Being unionized will help us to negotiate rates to grow services to match the needs of our patients.
- Examples of things we hope to negotiate:
 - Fairer compensation for the value we contribute.
 - A clear and fair pay scale;
 - Transparent process for managing holiday work;
 - Fair overtime pay, incentive pay, and bilingual differential;
 - Increasing new hire/new grad mentorship and precepting rates;
 - A stronger collective voice in Sacramento to protect and advance our profession. (UNAC/UHCP supported and helped move SB1237, which modified physician supervision);
 - Practicing at the top of our scope and bringing our midwifery expertise to the table and partnering with KP leadership to improve reproductive health care in Kaiser and the state of California.

WHY UNAC/UHCP?

- After carefully vetting several unions, the financial and professional benefits of joining UNAC/UHCP far exceed any other option. UNAC/UHCP already represents many different health care professionals at Kaiser throughout California and Hawaii, including the CNMs in Southern California, and an affiliated union represents the Oregon CNMs. Kaiser Northern California PAs and CRNAs just joined UNAC/UHCP and are preparing to bargain their first contracts, respectively.
- With UNAC/UHCP, we would write our own contract rather than simply joining a master contract, which means we could stipulate exactly what we want without giving up the benefits that we currently have or existing practices that work for us.
- UNAC/UHCP is part of the labor-management partnership with Kaiser which means we would work collaboratively as equals with Kaiser to build an agreement that best serves our patients.

MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

AM I AT RISK OF RETALIATION IF I SIGN A CARD OR PARTICIPATE IN UNIONIZATION EFFORTS?

No. Retaliation is prohibited by the National Labor Relations Act. Additionally, Kaiser has a unique relationship with UNAC/UHCP called the Labor Management Partnership, which ensures consensus at the negotiating table and a pledge by Kaiser to maintain a neutral stance during unionization campaigns. If we suspect retaliation, we can let a UNAC/UHCP staff person know. **UNAC/UHCP has our back.**

HOW MUCH DO UNION DUES COST?

Dues will be just slightly more than an hour's pay per pay period, whether full-time or part-time employee. For per diem, dues are pro-rated based on the hours worked. However, no one will pay any dues at all until after we negotiate a contract and a majority of us vote to accept it. If dissatisfied, a majority vote can send the team back to negotiate.

It's essential to keep in mind that every group represented by UNAC/UHCP has made improvements to their contract, gained job security, and enhanced working conditions. The value gained from these improved contracts, job security, and better working conditions typically far outweighs the 1-2% cost of dues, making it a wise investment. Not unionizing puts us at risk of lower wages, frozen pensions, benefit cuts, and unwanted changes.

WILL MY WAGES GO UP?

This issue is one of the top priorities driving the urgency to unionize. In 2021, Kaiser did not even care to respond to our Chiefs' formal request for increased wages. Through unionization, we can negotiate directly, making wages a mandatory bargaining subject – ensuring Kaiser must engage if we propose a wage increase.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY BENEFITS AND RETIREMENT IF WE UNIONIZE?

After careful review of our current benefits, we now know our retirement plan and benefits are excellent. By unionizing, we could better protect these benefits, such as our pension, and make sure they cannot be taken away or reduced by the employer. We would also aim to enhance our considerable benefits by including, for example, additional options for our retirement health care.

WHO WILL DO MY SCHEDULE?

Kaiser Northern California CNMs can negotiate site-dependent terms in the contract. Various sites have effective systems in place, and our goal is to either preserve the current practices or empower each site to determine the best approach for them.

WILL IT CHANGE MY DAY-TO-DAY WORKFLOW? WILL I HAVE TO CLOCK IN AND OUT?

No. Since we would negotiate the terms of our working conditions in the UNAC/UHCP contract, we will have the influence to keep our current workflow and salary status. We do hope to make positive changes to our working conditions and negotiate to practice at the top of our scope of practice. Together, we have the ability to determine the best path forward for our profession.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY CHIEF?

Roles with hiring, firing, and disciplinary responsibilities are not eligible to join the union. However, we value our chiefs and the essential role they play in our workflow and overall function. We eagerly anticipate discussing the involvement of midwives in leadership opportunities at the bargaining table.

EVERY NEGOTIATION INVOLVES GIVE AND TAKE, SO WE SHOULD EXPECT TO MAKE CONCESSIONS, CORRECT?

There's a common misconception that the negotiation process requires us to give up the benefits we currently have. This couldn't be further from the truth, especially within the Labor Management Partnership at Kaiser Permanente, which utilizes interest-based bargaining rather than a more traditional adversarial approach.

Joining forces with UNAC/UHCP empowers us to shape our future with strength and leverage, tailored to our unique needs, advancing our profession and valuing all CNMs.

WHAT HAVE UNAC/UHCP KAISER SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CNMS ACHIEVED BY UNIONIZING?

Before organizing, CNMs were at-will employees with no ability to increase their wages. After joining UNAC/UHCP, Midwives gained protection from retaliation and unjust termination, a one-year paid salary if laid off, guaranteed protection of current benefits, retirement benefits, 401(k), and pension, and an opportunity to improve wages with each contract renewal.

These examples highlight just a few of the gains CNMs achieved through unionizing. Health care professionals joining UNAC/UHCP have collectively made significant strides in improving wages, benefits, and professional standards.

WILL WE BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN OUR LOCAL AUTONOMY?

Other groups that have organized with UNAC/UHCP have maintained their local control of scheduling, vacations, and other critical topics at each unique clinical site. For example, the UNAC/UHCP Northern California rehab contract explicitly delegates vacation scheduling to local sites. Within the Labor Management Partnership at TPMG participate in unit-based teams, a long-running program where labor and management work together to solve issues at the local level. Again, our aim is to either maintain the existing practices or enable each site to decide the most suitable approach for their needs..

WILL KAISER OR MY MANAGER KNOW THAT I SIGNED A CARD?

No, your vote is confidential. Kaiser management will not have access to or knowledge of the individuals who have signed a card. Only UNAC/UHCP and the neutral arbitrator responsible for counting the votes will have access to the cards.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF I DON'T SIGN A CARD?

Not signing a card is considered a non-vote, which effectively counts as a "no" vote. If a majority of CNMs do sign a card in favor of joining UNAC/UHCP, we will succeed in establishing our union. Conversely, if a majority of CNMs choose not to sign a card, we will not succeed in establishing our union.

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THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS & FORMING OUR UNION

- 1 BUILDING OUR UNION:** Once we get majority support (50% plus one union card signed) and are recognized as UNAC/UHCP members through a neutral third-party count, all eligible certified nurse midwives in Northern California will elect our own representative bargaining team, made up of CNMs in every service area. We will survey our members to determine what improvements we seek in working conditions, pay and benefits. The input from our surveys will be used by our team to develop proposals on our most important issues and priorities.
- 2** Then, our bargaining team will meet with Kaiser to negotiate our contract as equals. We will be assisted by UNAC/UHCP professionals who have negotiated strong contracts with Kaiser in the past, though our team of CNMs will make all final decisions every step of the way. To ensure a successful bargaining process, we need to show KP that we are united as Northern California CNMs.
- 3** Once we win a strong tentative agreement (TA) in bargaining, our team will bring that proposed contract to the full membership for ratification. Before we vote, we'll have a chance to read the entire TA, discuss it, ask questions, and deliberate before we vote by confidential ballot.
- 4** If we believe the contract's improvements to benefits, pay, and working conditions are worth the dues we would pay, we vote yes to approve the contract. If not, we vote no and go back to the bargaining table to continue negotiations for a better contract.

We will not pay any dues until and unless a majority votes to ratify the contract.
- 5** Once we have a contract in place, we will elect officers from among our colleagues and take a seat on the larger union's governing body. We will also have a UNAC/UHCP staff professional who will help us enforce our contract. Nearly all UNAC/UHCP's professional staff representatives are also health care professionals, often from the ranks of the group they represent.