



**Upper Allegheny Health System**

*A Member of Kaleida Health*

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## **Nursing Statement**

June 8, 2021 - We know our nurses have stepped up, particularly over the past year to meet the challenge of patient care during the pandemic. They are true heroes. We are in full agreement with the union that we need more nurses.

From an organizational perspective we know there is a nationwide shortage of nurses, which became magnified in 2020. Nursing is our number one organizational priority. It's game, set match for the patients. Nurses are the eyes and ears for the physician and the advocates for the patients and we've got to get more nurses.

We are experiencing a census increase as an after-effect of COVID-19. Over the course of the pandemic people have put off getting medical attention. Now that delay is resulting in sicker patients, longer lengths of stay and stress on staffing, and pressing the need for nurses.

Upper Allegheny Health System has been pushing nurse recruitment continually. It has our highest level of attention. Like many health care systems, Upper Allegheny Health System has lost nurses during the pandemic due to retirements and nurses departing to accept traveling nurse positions elsewhere.

UAHS has taken the following steps in an effort to attract experienced nurses: double sign-on and referral bonuses for RNs and brought in 25 full time agency nurses to help support short-term staffing needs. UAHS has made progress in bringing on new nurses, recently hiring 22 graduate nurses, 10 in May and 12 starting June 21. Because of COVID restrictions the nurses didn't have a typical final year rotation so it will take additional time to orient them.

We are heading in the right direction. It takes four months before they are ready to care for patients on their own. We know nurses are taking care of more patients than we would like, but it's not probable to transfer patients to other hospitals because they are all facing the same issue.

We have worked closely with the bargaining unit that represents OGH nurses. No question we need experienced nurses, just like all hospitals and there are not enough in practice or in school to fill the need.

The hospital expects the nurse staffing issue to ease in the coming months as nurses finish orientation and the organization continues to aggressively recruit experienced nurses from other organizations.

While we understand the staff issue we also know that our patient safety metrics indicate that patients are safe. Harm events including falls, hospital acquired infections and medication errors remain very low through the first five months of this year through the hard work of our staff.

We will continue to aggressively work to recruit nurses to OGH and invite the union to help us in that effort.