

# The Frontline Healthcare Workers of Cascade Behavioral Health Deserve A Fair Union Contract

Parent company Acadia Healthcare must respect their experience and honor their sacrifice

The nurses and healthcare workers of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW and UFCW 21 at Cascade Behavioral Health care for some of the most vulnerable psychiatric and chemical dependency patients in our community. But instead of prioritizing safe patient care or treating workers with respect, Cascade parent company Acadia has fostered an abnormally unsafe work environment, with severe understaffing, decrepit facilities, a shocking lack of COVID-19 protections, and escalating, unchecked workplace violence. Cascade workers' main concerns are:

## Severe understaffing

- The understaffing makes it extremely difficult to provide the care their patients deserve
- Understaffing is preventing workers from taking their state-mandated rest and meal breaks

## An unsafe, violent workplace

- **Abnormally unsafe working conditions:** Workers have repeatedly reported getting injured by patients due to understaffing and lack of security support. On August 1st, after an incident of workplace violence hospitalized one worker, injured others, and threatened the safety of numerous patients, nurses and other health care workers at Cascade felt they had no choice but to go on a safety strike.
- **Lack of COVID-19 protections:** A Cascade coworker died of Covid-19. In addition, a Washington State Department of Health investigation found that Cascade was not providing workers with adequate PPE, had deficiencies in providing cleaning materials, and inaccessible COVID-19 safety policies and protocols.
- **Inadequate facilities:** Workers have documented broken ceilings, sewage leaks, and broken doors not replaced properly, all of which create unsafe conditions for patients and staff.

## Unfair wages

- Make it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff on top of the dangerous working conditions.

## Inadequate medical benefits

- The current base plan offered by Cascade (that most workers are enrolled in) is a high-deductible health plan (HDHP) which threatens workers' ability to keep themselves and their children healthy.

## Union member intimidation

- Cascade has retaliated against workers for trying to collectively improve their working conditions. For example, Cascade recently engaged in an unfair labor practice by not allowing a member to wear stickers that say "1% [wage increase] is disrespectful." Management sent a member home mid-shift because they refused to take off the sticker, and the next day management pointed the member out to other management as the troublemaker who refused to take off his sticker.

## High turnover

- The problems at Cascade have become so grave that nurses and caregivers often feel overwhelmed and burned out, resulting in a dangerously high turnover rate and workers calling in sick to avoid unsafe working conditions.

Management has shown disrespect to its employees over and over again in many ways. Management said, 'not interested in your safety.' Management has forgotten that employees are the biggest assets for this hospital. Now the disrespect is in full display. Management is saying, 'you do not deserve a wage increase of more than 1%.' At a time when turnover is high, when cost of living is skyrocketing and when other hospitals treat their employees better, you are not counted as important. So, it is time to buckle up and stay united and stronger more than ever."

**-Biniam Berhe,  
Nurse**



**SEIU Healthcare**  
United for Quality Care

# Our Contract Proposals Put Quality Care First

Issue	Union Proposal	Management's Response
Safe Staffing	Workers proposed creating a Joint Labor management Staffing Committee, which would meet quarterly to develop and oversee an annual patient care unit and shift-based nurse staffing plan, based on the needs of patients No sub-contracting of environmental services (EVS) members who are the frontline of infection control.	Cascade management has not replied to this proposal.
Wages	Workers proposed 7% wage increase across board to address high turnover and bring Cascade in line with other behavioral health workers like Harborview.	Cascade management came back with an unacceptable proposal for a 1% wage increase.
Health Benefits	Healthcare options that would allow members to stay healthy and keep their families healthy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% employer-covered cost of Base Plan premium for individual full-time employees, dependent covered at 90% by the employer.</li> <li>• Medical benefits with an affordable deductible of \$300 for an individual, \$600 for family coverage and an out-of-pocket max that does not exceed \$700 for employee, \$1,400 for family.</li> </ul>	Cascade Management has not replied to this proposal.
Safe Working Conditions	New safety measures proposed by workers include hiring four security guards on site at all times as well as cameras that will be monitored. In addition, a Joint Labor Management Staffing committee to review workplace violence data and evaluate additional interventions and trainings needed.  Hero Appreciation Bonus: Every worker would receive \$1,000 in appreciation of their work during the pandemic.	Cascade management came back with a proposal to install eight cameras outside the facility that they will not monitor.

## Who are the workers?

220 workers at Cascade Behavioral Health are members of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, a union representing approximately 32,000 healthcare workers in Washington and Montana. Licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants, food and nutrition services workers, housekeepers/EVS, MHS, social workers, therapist, drug and alcohol counselors are among represented members at Cascade Behavioral Health. The workers at Cascade represent a diverse range of BIPOC and immigrant communities, and the majority of workers self-identify as Black (African American, African, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Gambian, Amhara, Somali, Oromo).

## Who is the employer?

Cascade Behavioral Health is a private for-profit psychiatric hospital located in Tukwila. Cascade Behavioral Health operates 137 inpatient beds (44 for chemical dependency, 93 inpatient psychiatric including involuntary psychiatric treatment). Cascade is a subsidiary of Acadia Healthcare Company, a Tennessee-based publicly traded for-profit company that operates a network of 227 behavioral healthcare facilities with approximately 9,900 beds in 40 states and Puerto Rico. Acadia operates a total of 8 facilities in Washington state — Cascade is the only inpatient psychiatric hospital, the rest are Substance Use Disorder Treatment centers.

Acadia is a for-profit company whose primary purpose is to maximize profit for its stakeholders, yet over 50% of its revenue is taxpayer funded Medicaid/Medicare reimbursements. In 2020 Acadia brought in \$183 million in operating profit, reported \$6.4 billion in net assets and had \$378 million in cash and cash equivalents. While offering workers at Cascade a 1% increase in wages on their contracts, in 2021 Acadia offered CEO Debbie Osteen a contract base salary of \$1 million with a target bonus of an additional \$1 million. She is also set to receive stock that, depending on Acadia's 2021 performance, could be worth up to \$5.2 million.

**Tell Cascade Behavioral Hospital: It's time to put patient and worker safety over corporate profits. Sign our petition at: [CascadeSafetyMatters.org](https://CascadeSafetyMatters.org)**

