



Factsheet

Answering Tough Questions

1. "I don't think it's worth being in a union because of the dues. Any raise I get just gets taken away by union dues. Dues are just so high. They are such a waste of money."

Answer: The amount you set aside for union dues is the best investment you can make for you and your family. We have a voice at work and are able to enforce respect and dignity. Workers in non-union facilities make less money than union workers. Because we have a union, we've been able to negotiate better pay, benefits, and working conditions.

2. "The union spends so much of its time and our money on organizing new health care workers into the union. What about us? We pay dues and nothing gets done around here."

Answer: Many health care workers are not yet union. Non-union employers can get away with paying less and providing fewer benefits to their employees. This holds down our wages and benefits. By organizing more health care workers into our union, we will have more power at the bargaining table. The more workers we organize into our union, the more power we'll have to raise standards in the health care industry.

3. "We have people on my shift who don't pull their weight. I end up doing my job and theirs! Why does the union protect lazy workers?"

Answer: The union can't protect anyone who is unwilling to do their job. It's about having a fair set of rules that apply equally to everyone.

4. "I'm concerned that the union will make us strike. I can't walk out on the patients."

Answer: Most of the time, workers negotiate a contract without striking. However, at some facilities, health care workers have chosen to strike because conditions for patients got so bad that they needed to draw attention to their demands for safe staffing levels. The main thing is that we decide whether we strike or not. The only time a strike occurs is when a majority of workers vote to strike.

5. "No offense, but I'd rather have the staff field rep represent me than a steward."

Answer: As a steward, it is my responsibility to represent members and process grievances. Our union has a training program that I've completed to prepare stewards for this responsibility. Plus, I'm not alone. We have a steward's council at our worksite where we help each other out. And, the staff rep is there to answer my questions, too.

6. "I don't think the union should be involved in politics. That's a personal thing."

Answer: Government plays a big role in health care. Government regulates the health care industry and provides important funding for health care services. Political action is needed to win safe staffing, to pass laws and regulations that increase health care jobs and services, to improve the quality of care, and to expand health care access. Many workers rights and protections have been won through the political process. It's important to elect pro-worker candidates that will help advance the interests of health care workers and our families.

7. "I don't know why we need a union. I get along fine with my manager."

Answer: Without a union the employer makes all the decisions at the workplace. With a union, we have a voice at the table. That's why unionized workers have better pay, benefits, and working conditions than non-unionized workers.

Building the union is not an attack on your supervisor. Just the opposite: it is about making our workplace a better place to work. You should expect your supervisor to respect our rights as health care workers to improve working conditions and patient care. And managers come and go—if your next manager is not as supportive, you still have support through your union and contract.

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Contact Labor Education: labored@nysna.org