Advice RNs Guide to Kaiser’s Telecommuting Proposal

Kaiser has introduced a proposal for some Advice RNs to work from home. To protect nurses’ jobs from being outsourced and for numerous other reasons, CNA has rejected this type of proposal in previous Kaiser negotiations. We continue to have those concerns with Kaiser’s current work from home proposal. Below, we summarize those concerns and the history of dialogue, deliberations, and engagement with nurses on this issue.

Kaiser Nurses Have Previously Rejected Telecommuting

Several years ago, when Kaiser made a similar proposal, CNA engaged in a process of open dialogue, discussion, and democratic consideration of the issue, despite being opposed to Advice RNs opening the door to their and their colleagues own permanent replacement.

CNA held meetings at the local call centers, a three-hour meeting at CNA headquarters with more than 110 Advice RNs in attendance, and at the monthly Joint Area Bargaining Council (JABC) meeting. At these meetings, CNA discussed the Union’s concerns, Kaiser nurses voiced their concerns and rationale both in favor of working from home and against working remotely. At the end of the presentation and Q & A at CNA headquarters, several dedicated advocates for work from home reversed their position and voted to reject Kaiser’s proposal. There were still a dozen RNs in attendance who were not convinced and voted against the CNA recommendation.

To establish a clear policy recommendation, the "work remotely" proposal was then taken to the monthly JABC meeting, an elected, representative body of Kaiser RNs/NPs. Again, there was a presentation of the pros and cons. Several Advice RNs were active JABC members. After an engaging, thoroughly participatory discussion, the JABC voted nearly unanimously to reject the Kaiser proposal as a matter of policy. No one was denied the right to speak. There was neither rudeness nor antagonism, simply an absolutely committed group of elected RNs/NPs listening, debating and formulating their positions professionally.

The RNs in favor of Kaiser’s telecommuting proposal did not prevail. They may not have been happy, but no one alleged that CNA had not represented them, only that CNA had not agreed with them. The Union consequently rejected Kaiser’s proposal to have the Call Center nurses work from home.
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If a small minority of Union members believes that their interests override the majority, they might describe the Union as not supporting them. This would not be the general understanding of ‘democracy’ nor the manner in which CNA understands our obligation.

A First Step to Outsourcing Advice RNs
Part of what enables Advice RNs to maintain their wages, benefits, and nursing practice standards is the collective power that Advice RNs have from working in a physical community of like-minded professionals. Working remotely will create isolation from your peers. In this environment, it will be easier for Kaiser to degrade standards and pressure individual nurses. Additionally, CNA has concerns that the technology that Kaiser would use to enable RNs to work from home could ultimately lead to Kaiser shifting Northern California call center work to Southern California or even Georgia, where Kaiser recently completed a 1,000 seat call center.

Kaiser Surveillance in Your Home
Telecommuting would bring Kaiser’s micro-management of Advice RNs directly into our homes and increased pressure to reach Kaiser’s business goals. For example, TSRs are required to maintain certain performance standards, such as call handle time, to keep their remote status. TSRs are also required to be able to report to the Call Center within an hour at any time during their shift. TSRs must have a dedicated room with a closed door and Kaiser has a right to make a visit at any time.

Injured on the Job?
In addition, it is unclear how Kaiser would treat an Advice RN who is injured while working at home. TSRs have reported that Kaiser has denied workers compensation claims because of the difficulty of establishing that the injury was work-related due to working at home.

On-Demand Work & Just-In Time Staffing
CNA nurse leaders are concerned that working from home will lead to Kaiser pushing for split shifts, on-demand staffing, and variable start times. Our current fixed schedules with set start and stop times, allow nurses to have work-life balance and control of their non-working hours.