



INVEST IN PARTNERSHIP – ADD YOUR VOICE

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our Labor Management Partnership, the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions is working to enforce key provisions in the 2015 National Agreement providing for:

- staffing and backfill for partnership work
- joint union-management training
- onboarding and continued evaluation of managers in partnership skills

The first step in our campaign is a brief, 3-question survey on these issues. Please look for this survey from your local union. Your opinion is very important to us!

Here are the three issues in our survey:

Staffing and Backfill

The National Agreement includes provisions for ensuring partnership accountability and union participation at every level of KP operations.

The Agreement calls for “a planned replacement line item at all budgeting levels” (1.F.1). Many workers are unable to participate in partnership activities, such as unit-based team meetings or trainings, because there isn’t sufficient backfill

to replace them while they’re away from their regular work duties. The situation has only worsened as KP membership grows and staffing fails to keep pace, says Linda Bridges, secretary-treasurer for OPEIU Local 2 in the Mid-Atlantic States region. “Backfill was always on the back burner and now it seems even more so. This weighs heavily on our members’ ability to participate in partnership work.”

Joint Union-Management Training

The agreement also calls for joint, in-person training, with regular refresher courses, for mid-level union and management leaders. It also calls for improved learning opportunities for all employees and managers. Fulfilling this requirement is challenging because KP and LMP education are still not integrated, local managers often have conflicting priorities, and lack of adequate release time and backfill. “They need opportunities to build basic relationships,” says Denise Duncan, RN, president of UNAC/UHCP in Southern California. “Without a jointly administered, integrated approach to education and training, you will end up with more divisive relationships and polarizing conversations. People will not be committed to resolving the issues and will go back to their traditional behaviors.”

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Managing in Partnership

In addition, the National Agreement provides for the on-boarding and continued evaluation of managers in partnership. Department and mid-level managers, many of them hired from outside KP, often are unaware of the history and core principles of partnership. LMP training helps managers and union members build the partnering and performance skills they need to sustain the success of our partnership and to advance KP's business strategy.

"It's critical that our managers—new and veteran—recognize that the partnership is a fundamental part of our operational system, not simply a labor relations strategy," says Stephen Cousins, healthcare director for SEIU Local 105 in Colorado. "It is crucial that we hold Kaiser accountable for joint partnership training for new managers and reinforcing partnership in veteran managers, and put a stop to this 'business need' nonsense as a reason why Kaiser can't make time to train their managers."



CALL TO ACTION: TRY THESE STEPS TO GET RELEASE TIME

- **Plan in advance.** Talk with your manager to negotiate time-off for union and partnership work. Plan in advance so your manager can schedule your release time.
- **Teams that are Level 4 and 5 on the Pathway to Performance (P2P) meet consistently.** If your UBT meeting is frequently cancelled, your team could be moved to Level 1 at your next face-to-face assessment. Raise this as a concern with your management co-lead and ask to problem-solve together to ensure release time for meetings.
- **Escalate.** If you're still having trouble, escalate the issue to your union steward, UBT labor sponsor, or other advocate. "Don't stop at mid-level personnel," says Linda Bridges, secretary-treasurer for OPEIU Local 2 in the Mid-Atlantic States union. "We run it all the way up the flag pole. If Kaiser wants this, they will work with you."
- **Track your time-off requests.** The South Sacramento Medical Center in Northern California has implemented a time-off tracking system for partnership work. Under the process, created by labor and management, union stewards complete a time-off request form with their manager, who can approve, modify or deny the request—with an explanation. The agreement gives stewards, who serve as labor sponsors, time to meet with their teams regularly, every month. The process holds both labor and management accountable, while also allowing both to plan well in advance for departmental and UBT needs. Signed copies of the agreements are kept by each party and the facility's UBT consultant. Consider adopting this best practice in partnership with key stakeholders at your facility.

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