



Advancing equality for internationally educated nurses

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**American
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Enterprise



Advancing equity for internally educated nurses (IENs)

St. Joseph Medical Center, Tacoma, a racially diverse community is served by a nursing workforce—and management team—that doesn't reflect its people.

- Located in the Hilltop Neighborhood ▪ 41% White, 30% Black, 12% Asian, 7% Hispanic, 3% Indigenous
- Nursing Demographics Do Not Match Neighborhood ▪ 58% White, 4% Black, 21% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 0.5% Indigenous
- Disproportional Terminations ▪ 47% White, 22% Black, 17% Asian, 9% Indigenous, 5% Two or more races
- Management not representative of nurses or neighborhood ▪ 76% White, 4% Black, 10% Asian, 5% Hispanic, 0% Indigenous



Story of Racial Justice

- St. Joseph Hospital, Tacoma Washington
 - Failed attempts to have Juneteenth as a recognized holiday into their 2018 and 2021 contracts
 - 2007 Washington made Juneteenth a day of observation but unfortunately many facilities and non-governmental employers still do not recognize the day as a paid holiday
 - At their facility a Racial Justice Taskforce pilot program into their 2021-2024 contract
 - Providing DEI education and training to the staff
 - Create equal recognition for internationally experienced nurses





Another Story of Racial Injustice

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, downtown Seattle

- Discriminatory practice of recognizing at least 50% of the experienced nurses from outside of the US and Canada
 - Filipino, Indian and Middle Eastern nurses were affected
 - At the time of discovery no nurse was identified as white
- In 2024 contract negotiations ALL nurses affected were brought up to the correct step



How Did the St. Joseph Nurses (SJMC) do it?

Summer 2024

- WSNA sent survey emails to the members inquiring about their nursing experience
 - At least 14 nurses responded that they received 50% or less for their experience
- Request for information (RFI) asked to the employer
 - Hiring documentation of the respondents
 - Any hospital policies and procedures related to crediting experiences of international nurses
 - The RFI revealed that there was no formal policy of the current pay practice

Late Summer 2024

- Association grievance filed for all affected nurses
 - Investigation showed that all nurses affected nurses passed the NCLEX-RN and worked in accredited hospitals
- Grievance was placed in abeyance due to pending contract negotiations



How Did the St. Joseph Nurses (SJMC) do it?

Fall 2024

- Contract negotiations began
- WSNA initial proposal on experience is to bring all affected nurses up to correct step and provide backpay for all years worked
- Employer rejects union proposals and proposes to keep current practice

Winter 2024

- Informational picket
- legitimate strike threat WSNA and SJMC come to a tentative agreement
- Employer agrees to re-step all internationally experienced nurses, but refuses backpay



2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit

Nurses with International Experience: RNs with International Experience: all recent continuous experience will be credited for placement on the wage scale.

All bargaining unit RNs who have not received full credit for international experience as of Ratification are eligible for a step adjustment. For a period of six (6) months following Ratification, nurses with international experience who believe they are not at the correct step will submit documentation to Human Resources demonstrating their nursing work experience outside of the U.S. to the Hospital. Within two (2) full pay periods following the six (6) months, the Hospital will place the nurse on the correct step retroactive to the second full pay period following ratification (that is, the step at which the International Nurse would have been on at ratification), plus any step increase the nurse would have gained in the interim. The Hospital will, within those two (2) full pay periods, provide those International Nurses with all due retroactive pay back to the second full pay period following ratification, including factoring in any step increases the nurse was due between the initial corrected placement to the date the nurse receives the retroactive pay. Any adjustment will be “upwards” (that is, to a more advanced step). The nurses will continue to receive any annual wage step on their anniversary, any wage step correction notwithstanding





2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit

WSNA and American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has passed resolutions supporting internationally educated nurses. In **2024**, the AFT unanimously adopted a resolution, "Defending The Rights Of Internationally Educated Health Professionals," which focuses on key ethical standards for recruitment and treatment.

This resolution specifically supports:

- Equitable Pay:** Ensuring pay parity for international nurses based on their experience.
- Ethical Recruitment:** Promoting fair contracts and informed consent, free from economic coercion or retaliation.
- Support & Integration:** Advocating for clinical and cultural integration support.

This national AFT resolution was adopted in 2024 following a similar 2023 resolution by the Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA), which highlighted the widespread practice of not giving proper credit for experience to internationally educated nurses.

- Impact:** The resolution supports efforts to end discriminatory practices where internationally trained nurses are paid significantly less than their U.S.-trained counterparts.





2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit

In March 2023, the advisory board of the Alliance for Ethical Recruitment Practices publicly released a revised voluntary [healthcare code](#) that sets standards for employers and recruiters hiring foreign educated health professionals (FEHP). The standards include the following language:

- “Provide compensation for work performed by FEHPs based on performance-related criteria, including education, experience (both in the U.S. and comparable experience in source countries), tenure, level of practice, and relevant skills.
- Compensation, length of contract, and/or breach fees shall not be based on national origin or gender.
- Inform the FEHPs of applicable prevailing wage (PW) requirements and explain which PW level will be used and why.”

IEN in Action

- WSNA and other organizations have been working to address this issue for a number of years. In 2023, WSNA membership adopted a resolution at the General Assembly on “[Rights of Internationally Educated Nurses](#)” that included, among others:
- **“RESOLVED, that WSNA supports equitable credit for nursing experience acquired in other countries.”** In 2024, AFT, WSNA’s national union with 1.8 million members, passed a similar resolution.
- WSNA will be looking to achieve justice at other facilities that give less credit for experience to internationally educated nurses.
- “This victory is a prime example of what a union can do in standing up for fairness and winning,” said WSNA’s Executive Director David Keepnews. “I hope it will spur further efforts to advocate for equity for our colleagues from other countries.”



