Frequently Asked Questions
Work Action, March 12, 2019

**Why is this work action occurring?**

Before the County acquired O’Connor Hospital (OCH) and Saint Louise Regional Hospital (SLRH), when these hospitals were privately owned by Verity Health System, the California Nurses Association (CNA) was the union that represented the nurses at OCH and SLRH. Since then, most of the employees who previously worked at OCH and SLRH have applied to work for, and been provisionally hired by, the County. Fortunately, the County was able to provide opportunities for new County employment to those individuals who lost their jobs as a result of the Verity bankruptcy.

Employees working today at OCH and SLRH are now public employees of the County and receive all the benefits conferred on public employees, including participation in the California Public Employment Retirement System (CalPERS) and various other County benefits.

New County employees may join existing labor organizations that already represent County hospital workers, including the County Employees Management Association (CEMA) and the Registered Nurses Professional Association (RNPA). The County is bound by agreements with these existing unions as the exclusive bargaining representative of certain County employees. Furthermore, the County has no legal authority to change which unions represent County employees. CNA wants to displace CEMA and RNPA as the union that represents these new County nursing employees.

**Is this work action lawful?**

No. State law and County ordinances provide clear processes to allow employees, free from County interference, to decide who will lawfully represent them, including the timing and process for a union that, like CNA, wants to displace an existing union by persuading workers to choose it. These same laws also allow the current unions, such as CEMA and RNPA, to make their case as to why they, as the existing union, should remain the workers’ representative. The difficulty here is that CNA has not complied with these laws in its attempt to represent some of the new County employees. CNA is not a County recognized employee organization; therefore, its call for a strike by employees represented by other unions is unlawful.

**How long will the work action be taking place?**

According to CNA’s notice to the County, the work action is currently scheduled to begin on March 12, 2019, at 7:00 a.m., and continue until 6:59 a.m. on March 13, 2019.
Where will the work action be taking place?

The Notice of Intent to Strike indicates that the work actions will take place at OCH and SLRH. It is also possible that picketing may take place at other locations. All picketers are expected to remain in public areas that do not physically interfere with patients, employees, or visitors who are trying to enter or leave the facilities, or with the County’s ability to care for its patients.

Will patient care be affected by the work action?

No. Necessary steps have been taken to ensure all medical services, patient care, and operations are unaffected by the strike. The County’s highest priority is ensuring safety and the maintenance of high-quality care. Any activity, including union-related activity, that disrupts patient care by causing distraction, impeding access, or otherwise interfering with the provision of medical services will not be permitted.

Are surgeries being rescheduled?

No. Appropriate steps have been taken by the County to prevent any interruptions to patient care during any unlawful work action.

Does the County expect its employees to join or not join any particular labor organization?

No. The choice to join or not join a particular labor organization is a personal choice to be made by each employee. County policy and applicable law prohibit discrimination or retaliation against any employee by the County, supervisors and managers, or other employees—including co-workers—for supporting or joining, or not supporting or refusing to join, any labor organization.

What should I do if work action participants are hostile or intimidating or are verbally abusive?

The County will remain vigilant and steadfast in ensuring your safety. Please contact security or any staff member immediately if you are subjected to hostile, intimidating, or verbally abusive individuals. Any such individuals will be met with a swift and appropriate response.