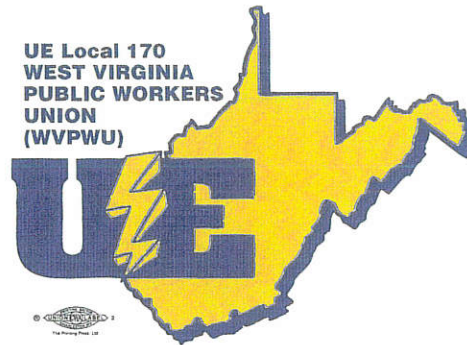


# United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)



## Members of UE Local 170 respond to allegations at Sharpe Hospital

The recent incident of patient abuse by contractual workers at Sharpe Hospital comes as no surprise to members of UE Local 170, West Virginia Public Workers Union.

Unlike most state workers, these contract workers often do not have to meet educational or work experience qualifications that are mandated for civil service employees. Yet, strangely enough, contract workers receive at least three times the salary of a regular state worker performing the same duties. A nurse employed by the state with over 20 years experience receives \$20 per hour while a contract nurse with less experience can receive \$100 per hour.

It's a similar story with Certified Nursing Assistants. DHHR has been hiring numerous contractual employees for the state hospitals for several years. Most are from out of state and are provided expenses for living quarters in addition to generous salaries. It is difficult to understand the logic of hiring expensive contract workers rather than offer a living wage to West Virginians.

Other serious issues at state hospitals concern safety. Hospital workers must at times deal with forensic patients sent by circuit courts for psychiatric evaluation. Due to understaffing, these patients present a danger to hospital workers and other patients.

The number of employee grievances filed over the past several years show that employee working conditions mirror patient living conditions. In addition, state hospital workers face a hostile work environment every day. In fact, one state worker, who is a legally mandated to report incidents, had filed a report on a member of management for violating state policy and has since faced constant reprisal from management.

DHHR offers only small-minded Band-Aid solutions instead of making serious changes regarding understaffing and the safety of staff and patients. Rather than properly funding our institutions, the Legislature has betrayed the state employees in West Virginia and the patients in their care, as well as its obligations to the local communities and their families.

In the past, some members of the Legislature have attempted to sell state hospitals and nursing homes to the private sector, either as a quick fix or for conflicting financial interests. This would place patient care at risk when it comes to cutting costs to show a profit. Publicly owned facilities offer the flexibility of providing services that the private sector cannot or will not perform.

Neither the use of expensive and improperly trained contractual workers or the selling off of state facilities will address the problems encountered at Sharpe Hospital or at any other state hospital. Only proper funding and responsible management can accomplish that task.

**Contacts:**

**Chris Wolford** – President UE Local 170, (304) 629-9248,  
chris.wolford170@gmail.com

**Kim Dawson** – Vice President UE Local 170, (304) 881-4411, kimkat48@gmail.com

**Angela Hollandsworth** – Recording Secretary UE Local 170, (304) 701-8457,  
angelasuehollandsworth@gmail.com