

Statement from Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital on
Change in Benefits Status for United Steel Workers Local 4-200 Members

- All hospital employees are eligible to participate in the health system's medical, dental and vision benefits if they work 16 or more hours per week.
- If an employee loses coverage due to working less than 16 hours per week, or due to some other change in employment status, the employee may continue their health coverage by electing COBRA coverage.
- Any and all hospital employees are treated the same in the event of a change in employment status, whether the change is due to resignation, termination or strike.
- This standard is generally understood by all unions. In fact, the union advised its members of this twice when the members voted to authorize a strike. In addition, the hospital has provided full information to the union regarding how strikers can elect COBRA to ensure no lapse of benefits and how to transition back to normal status when the strike is over.
- Furthermore, beginning in July the union negotiating committee posted information on the members website regarding the transition to COBRA.
- When a union takes employees out on strike and employee services are withheld, employers stop paying employees and providing those employees with employer-paid benefits.
- Any notion that this was a surprise or somehow a punitive action betrays the facts and generally understood employment standards.
- If the union is so concerned about its members losing hospital-paid benefits it should settle the contract and return to work.
- We continue to urge union leadership to consider the hardship the strike is having on its members and their families. Perhaps the union could cover the cost of COBRA for its members, as opposed to airplane and boat advertising along the Jersey shore.