

Fact Sheet

Illinois' Resurrection Health Care Campaign: Quality of Care Initiatives

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The modern health care system in the United States has evolved into an industry dominated by the bottom line — corporations that are more concerned about dollars than patient care. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Resurrection Health Care (RHC) system, a multi-billion-dollar hospital chain affiliated with the Catholic Church in the Chicago area. It is not surprising that Resurrection is also fighting hard against AFSCME's organizing drive.

In 2004, a survey was conducted in which the overwhelming majority of nurses from across the Resurrection Health Care system reported low staffing levels, inadequate equipment and supplies and other alarming problems.

In March of 2005, 300 Resurrection nurses sent a letter asking Resurrection to engage in a dialogue about how to improve the quality of care at the hospitals, but their concerns fell on deaf ears. These concerns led Council 31 to conduct an in-depth investigation of quality of care issues at Resurrection hospitals. A report containing those findings was issued in December 2005.

The report brought attention to the misplaced priorities of RHC, highlighting the system's rapid expansions at the expense of patient care. Spending on bedside care had sharply declined, despite RHC's rising revenues. The study also drew attention to Resurrection's accreditation switch from the widely recognized leader in the field, to a less stringent and less transparent one. Public records revealed that health investigators had repeatedly cited Resurrection facilities for the same problems relating to staffing, delivery of care, privacy, safety, and failure to maintain adequate supplies and equipment.

Given the seriousness of the findings, and Resurrection's repeated failure to address the problems of which it had full knowledge, AFSCME has asked public and private purchasers to conduct audits of RHC's delivery of care. Several have already issued audit requests to Resurrection, and many — including the state of Illinois and city of Chicago — are considering doing so.

In the months following the report, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services placed RHC's flagship hospital, Resurrection Medical Center, under state monitoring, announcing: "We have determined that the deficiencies cited are significant and limit your hospital's capacity to render adequate care and to ensure the health and safety of your patients." This was the second Resurrection hospital within a year to fall under state monitoring for infection control problems. It was one of many investigation outcomes at a Resurrection hospital so serious that the federal agency mandated the Illinois Department of Public Health to directly monitor the hospital.

In June 2006, more than 600 Resurrection nurses signed a letter to RHC's CEO Joseph Toomey urging him to support safe staffing. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, who was frustrated in her attempts to deliver the letter in person to Toomey, along with a delegation of Resurrection nurses, was promised a meeting with him.

AFSCME is also launching a community alert campaign, describing quality of care problems and asking concerned residents to call or sign cards demanding that their local Resurrection hospital improve quality.