Organizing for a Stronger Voice for Our Patients
Survey of the room

• How many of you have been practicing nursing for over 2 years? (stand up)
  – 5 years? (stay standing)
  – 10 years?
  – 15 years?

• Raise your hand if you work in a hospital setting
• Raise your hand if you work in ancillary setting
• Other settings?
Survey of the room - discussion

• How do you think nursing is different from other professions and industries where workers have unions or are organizing?
• How are nurses’ jobs different from other jobs in a hospital/ clinic?
• How is the healthcare industry (employers) changing?
Survey of the room

• How many of you are part of a MAT structure in your hospital? (raise hands)
• How many of you are MAT leaders?
• How many of you are Shop Stewards?
• How many have served on a bargaining team?
• How many of you are elected leaders of your union?
• How many of you have filed a grievance?
• How many of you have gone on strike?
Discuss as whole group

- How many of you got involved in the union because of a specific problem or incident in the facility?
- How many of those problems were directly related to patient care? (trick question!)
- Who has power over the patient care setting, nurses’ scope of practice and working conditions?
Why Organize?

\[ R_x \neq \text{Power} \]

“When you build a big movement from down below, regardless of who's in the White House, you can bring about change.” – Tony Mazzocchi
AFSCME Organizing Model

- Thorough preparation
- One-on-one organizing to reach nurses and identify issues
- Strong committees to give nurses ownership
- Majority support
- Current members organizing new members
Who do we need to move?

• One third of nurses are usually easy to engage and will want to participate in a fight to improve working conditions.

• One third will be strongly anti-union, for a variety of reasons—want to become management, feel the union mistreated them, are politically opposed to unions, etc.

• Who does that leave?

• The middle third!
Importance of One-on-One Communications

- Not all communication is effective
- Goal of one-on-ones are to engage, not just inform
- 80/20 rule
- Assessments are often colored by what we want to hear from people, not what they really say.
- Continuous process: assessments change—why?
Practice

• Goals of conversation:
  – Establish rapport
  – Find out if they like their job

• Questions:
  – Why did he/she become a nurse?
  – What do they like most about it?
  – What do they do when not at work?
What Did We Learn?

- What did you learn about me?
- What follow up questions would you ask to learn more?
- What do you think might motivate me to get involved?
Assess the Worker

- The only way to build a strong, fighting union is if we can effectively move our coworkers to action

- How do we know if nurses are ready?

- What issues can make nurses hesitant to take action?
Move to Action

Nurses are in a unique position to affect change for their patients, if they act collectively.

- Ask yourself:
  - What is the strongest action…
  - the largest group of people will be willing and able to do…
  - at this moment in time?
- Repeat the process
Move to Action: Overcoming Objections

FORMULA FOR OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

- **Empathize:** “I hear what you’re saying about... (bad union experience, dues are too much, etc.)”

- **Bring it back to their issue and motivation:** “You were telling me that (issue) is a concern and that it’s negatively impacting (motivation).”

- **Ask:** “How will (issue) get better if we don’t act now?”
Taking Action Summary

Organizing is fighting for change in the workplace by increasing worker participation to build power.

- Power is knowing where people are at (continuously assessed)
- Having a plan (to build confidence)
- Setting clear attainable goals
- Using escalating actions (strategy) to move nurses to a deeper understanding of their power in the workplace, and in policy making.
Member Action Team (MAT)

- What is a Member Action Team (MAT)?

- 4 Roles of MAT
  - Leader
  - Communicator
  - Representative/Advocate
  - Organizer
Member Action Team (MAT) (continued)

MAT Captain

- MAT
  - 10 Workers
- MAT
  - 10 Workers
- MAT
  - 10 Workers
- MAT
  - 10 Workers
- MAT
  - 10 Workers
Responsibilities of MAT Leader

- Take responsibility for working with up to ten (10) co-workers in your department or work site
- Have regular one-on-one conversations with co-workers and listen to their concerns and issues.
- Explain the basics to co-workers about why our union needs everyone involved and working together to solve problems.
- Help mobilize members when action is needed on an issue or workplace problem.
AFSCME Member Action Team
Sign Up Form
Ways to Utilize the MAT Structure

- How will you use the MAT structure at work? What issues will you organize around?

- Who will you recruit to be on your MAT Team?

- Do you have any success stories when a MAT team won a workplace issue?
When We Organize, We Win