



Organizing Model continuing to expand

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Today HSA stewards are facing ever-increasing difficulties in fulfilling their steward roles in the face of workload pressures on the job exacerbated by staffing cutbacks and lack of relief.

With many employers embarking on restructuring efforts, stewards have an increased role on Labour Adjustment and other committees.

Safety Stewards are learning and applying new regulations and taking on increasingly complex issues of occupational health and safety in the workplace.

Stewards struggle to represent members and stay in communication with other stewards, members and their LROs. Many are concerned about personal burnout and decide that they can no longer continue.

HSA embarked on the Organizing Model in the mid-nineties to help chapters in large facilities organize themselves to meet their needs more effectively and share the steward workload.

The goals of the Organizing Model include improving grassroots participation, taking charge of local issues and creating communication strategies to reach more members.

Members are encouraged to see themselves as the union and not apart from it.

To date, nine large facilities have implemented the Organizing Model. The implementation begins with workshops to outline the model and explore local issues. Stewards and departmental representatives are recruited and communication models developed.

A schedule of regular steward and membership meetings is planned. Local initiatives are implemented if necessary. Each facility implements the model in a unique way, so that it is responsive to their needs.

In the year 2000, HSA will continue to add to the Organizing Model facilities. Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster has already begun to organize and continued work will be done. In addition, HSA will break new ground in extending the organizing model to Providence Health Care (PHC)/ PHC has been formed from the amalgamation of Catholic Health facilities in Vancouver. Spanning eight sites around the city and providing a range of services from tertiary to extended care, it is a complex organization employing 1000 HSA members. This will be HSAs first experience in implementing the organizing model across sites.

Providence Health Care members are facing many issues which need their input and active participation. PHC is well into the process of implementing program management, is actively planning to reconfigure and move

services among the sites, and is considering the move to single certification (currently there are separate certifications for St. Pauls Hospital, Mt. Saint Josephs Hospital, St. Vincents(Heather and Youville), St. Vincents (Arbutus and Langara), Brock Fahrni, and HolyFamily Hospital. The broader the representation and input from HSA members, the better HSA is able to meet their needs.

I would encourage HSA members from chapters of all sizes and in all sectors to examine the elements of the Organizing Model ... participation, communication and local action ... and become more active at the chapter level. See what you might do to take up a small part of the work that needs to be done ... from putting up posters, talking to members, helping a steward, to being a steward ... there is an active role for everyone ... for WE are the union.

Rae Johnson represents Region 6 on HSAs [Board of Directors](#).

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