

Q&A on Lower Mainland Health Information Management consolidation

What is the Health Information Management (HIM) Lower Mainland consolidation project?

- At the direction of the Ministry of Health in 2009, the health authorities were given areas to consolidate services in order to centralize costs. Providence was given responsibility for merging Health Information Management (HIM) services in Vancouver Coastal Health authority, Fraser Health Authority, Provincial Health Services Authority to Providence Health Care.

Providence was appointed the lead authority to amalgamate services and to reduce the HIM operational budget by 10 per cent.

There have already been some operational changes at the senior excluded management positions.

Providence has now turned their attention to changes that will affect unionized staff.

How will Providence address the requirement to reduce the operating budget by the targeted 10 per cent?

- Their proposal is to:
 - » transfer Fraser Health, Provincial Health, and Vancouver Coastal Health Lower Mainland HIM employees to Providence Health Care;
 - » implement a new organizational structure; and
 - » standardize classifications and job descriptions.

We acknowledge that standardization of classifications will call into review the work that is currently being performed by:

- » HSA members;
- » other employees;
- » excluded staff;
- » coordinators; and
- » recent postings in HIM that have not been assigned to HSA.

Who is a union member and who is not?

- The Labour Relations Code provides definition of those employees who are not union members:
 - » a person who performs the function of a manager or superintendent; or
 - » a person who is employed in a confidential capacity in matter relating to labour relations or personnel.

What this has been interpreted to mean by the Labour Relations Board is: only those who have the final say in hiring and firing and/or who have access to confidential financial information should be excluded from the union.

Who is a health science professional?

- A number of cases have been heard by the Labour Relations Board to decide if a particular employee or group of employees meet the health science professional criteria outlined in the BCLRB decision 444/95.

That decision determined that health science professional employees:

- » Are engaged in the health care field in a position involving technical proficiency and scientific knowledge;
- » Hold a degree, diploma or other form of certification from a post-secondary educational institution appropriate to their particular discipline;
- » Are members of a professional or quasi-professional organization dedicated to the advancement of their discipline;
- » Exercise considerable independence of judgment and action;
- » Perform an important role in either :
 - (i) the diagnosis or treatment of patients, residents or clients, or
 - (ii) health promotion, or
 - (iii) the prevention of illness;
- » Can demonstrate that their collective bargaining aspirations and their community of interest are best met through their inclusion in the health science professional bargaining unit.

Each and every criterion need not be met in all cases.

Has HSA received the proposed labour adjustment plan for Providence?

- No, we have not. But Providence is required to provide this plan under Section 54 of the BC Labour Code. We have a joint union-employer meeting this Friday, February 11, 2011, and we seek to attain the employer's plan.

Will Fraser Health, Provincial Health, or Vancouver Coastal Health still be my employer?

- Providence is making employment decisions that signify that they are the true employer. Our negotiations with Providence will determine the composition of seniority lists, and employees' rights for access to postings and with impacts, negotiating options for employees to mitigate changes in the structural organization under a Lower Mainland HIM consolidation, and negotiating how any displacements will work.

What is Section 54 notice?

- The respective health authorities served Section 54 notice to HSA on January 10 2011. Section 54 is part of the BC Labour Code and is required to be served to the Union when the Employer introduces an initiative that will affect a significant number of its employees. The parties are required to negotiate a labour adjustment plan.

The Section 54 notice from the employer encompasses changes or transfers between various sites that could affect staffing levels, shift rotations, changes in classifications, number of full-time equivalents (FTEs), and skill mix.

What areas of HIM are considered for consolidation?

- We do not know what areas are being considered for consolidation. We will obtain this information in our negotiations with the employer. We have heard the same rumors you have, which is that only some areas of HIM are being considered for consolidation, leaving some of our members detached from HIM without future recourse to organization changes. We are troubled by this, and will address this directly with the employer.

How will my seniority be affected?

- We support a single seniority list in a consolidated system for all of HIM. Seniority is an earned benefit – earned by our members in recognition for their years of commitment to their work. It can be objectively measured, and has significant impact on career paths, mobility, and job security. As employer structures evolve and change, we must adapt in ways that preserve the importance and significance of seniority.

How are HSA members' jobs being affected by the amalgamation?

- The employer says there will be an overall staff reduction of 17 full time equivalents (FTEs). We are waiting to find out how many of these FTEs are HSA jobs. There may be changes to the configuration of supervisory positions but we don't have this level of detail just yet.

What is red circling?

- When the rate of pay for the job you were displaced from involuntarily meets or exceeds the rate of pay for the job you were placed in.

What if I am already red-circled from a previous labour adjustment?

- If you are affected by HIM consolidation and have been previously red-circled, please inform your union labour relations officer and human resources person.

What options are available for people whose jobs are being eliminated?

- HSA intends to negotiate a process that will mitigate and minimize the impacts to employees. We may negotiate "first consideration" on all new and vacant positions for placement.

What if my job isn't affected, but I'm ready for a change?

- HSA would like to give all HIM employees an opportunity to consider their options. The union is interested in negotiating a "Canvass of Interest" document for our members. The canvass options may include: job share, voluntary reduction in FTE, voluntary transfer to an unfilled vacancy, phased retirement, labour adjustment incentive, retirement, voluntary resignation, and transfer to casual status. If you have other suggestions, please let us know: contract@hsabc.org.

I work at two sites. Will I still get paid overtime?

- We will need to discuss this directly with the employer, but we have negotiated overtime waivers in other consolidated structures. This waiver is for employees working at an additional site where they hold a different employee number. For example, if you work at Surrey Memorial Hospital and Mission Hospital, you will continue to earn overtime at each site separately. At the end of a designated period of time, all hours worked beyond the normal scheduled daily or weekly hours, regardless of site, will attract overtime pay.

When will new postings be available?

- After all affected employees are placed, vacant postings will become available at transfer of employment. We wish to give affected employees first access to posting, and will negotiate this process with the employer. If any postings remain unfilled after the affected employees have been placed or have exercised other options, then they will be made available to HIM staff across the Lower Mainland.

When will the new organizational structure be implemented?

- The target date for implementation is 2011.

We have secured a meeting this Friday, February 11, 2011 to begin the Section 54 labour adjustment negotiations to develop a labour adjustment plan.

Your committee members are as follows:

- Rav Dhillon, Health Information Management, Richmond General Hospital, Vancouver Coastal Health
- Karen Hatchwell, Health Information Management, Surrey Memorial Hospital, Fraser Health
- Lori Pringle, Health Information Management, St. Paul's Hospital, Providence
- Shelley Scott, Health Information Management, BC Cancer Agency – Vancouver Cancer Centre, Provincial Health Services
- Sally Mastrantonio, Health Information Management, Lions Gate Hospital, VCHA, alternate
- Derek Wong, HSA Senior Labour Relations Officer, Classifications
- Dani Demetlika, HSA Senior Labour Relations Officer

