



KEY UNION TERMS

Understanding the Framework and Terminology

Forming a union creates a formal, legal structure for collective advocacy. Below are key terms that will frequently come up throughout the bargaining and representation process.

Term	Definition
NWMU	Northwest Medicine United The local union representing physicians and advanced practice providers across the Pacific Northwest. NWMU includes groups at PeaceHealth, Legacy Health, and Providence.
AFT – American Federation of Teachers	A national union representing healthcare professionals, educators, and public employees. NWMU is affiliated with AFT, providing access to national resources, legal support, and organizing infrastructure.
Collective Bargaining	The process by which the union and employer negotiate terms and conditions of employment as a group. Topics typically include compensation, benefits, schedules, staffing, and workplace protections.
Bargaining Unit	The group of employees legally covered by the union. In this case, the bargaining unit consists of the physicians at Mary Bridge.
Contract (CBA – Collective Bargaining Agreement)	A legally binding document that outlines the terms of employment. The contract will be negotiated between the union and management and voted on before implementation.
Good Faith Bargaining	A legal obligation requiring both the union and the employer to meet, exchange proposals, and engage in meaningful dialogue in an effort to reach agreement.
Weingarten Rights	A right under federal labor law that allows union-represented employees to request union representation during any investigatory meeting that could lead to disciplinary action.
Dues	Monthly financial contributions that support union operations, legal services, negotiations, and representation. Dues are not collected until a first contract is negotiated and approved.
Status Quo	After union certification, the employer is prohibited from making unilateral changes to wages, benefits, or working conditions. Existing terms remain in place until a contract is reached or changes are negotiated.
ULP – Unfair Labor Practice	A violation of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), such as retaliation for union activity, refusal to bargain in good faith, or unilaterally changing conditions of employment. ULPs can be filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).
NLRB – National Labor Relations Board	The federal agency responsible for enforcing the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The NLRB oversees union elections, investigates unfair labor practices (ULPs), and ensures both employers and unions uphold their legal obligations.
RFI – Request for Information	A formal tool used during bargaining that allows the union to request relevant data or documentation from the employer in order to develop proposals or enforce rights.
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding	A formal, written agreement between the union and employer that allows a specific change to be made outside of a full contract. MOUs are legally binding and typically used to address urgent issues, test a new policy, or implement mutually agreed-upon improvements while bargaining is ongoing.