

March 13, 2020

To OPEIU Local 8 members at Northwest Justice Project:

Please see the attached letter sent this morning by your Union Representative, Valarie Peaphon, to NJP's Executive Director, Cesar Torres re: COVID-19. Please direct any questions or comments directly to Valarie at valarie@opeiu8.org.



OFFICE & PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION LOCAL 8

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March 13, 2020

Cesar Torres, Executive Director
NORTHWEST JUSTICE PROJECT
401 Second Ave S, Suite 407
Seattle, WA 98104

Via Email and US Mail

Re: COVID-19

Dear Mr. Torres:

As you are well aware by now, we are in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic. While the complete clinical picture in regard to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is not fully understood, we know reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including death, and are quickly spreading person-to-person. Widespread transmission could overload our public health and healthcare systems as well as other essential infrastructure such as law enforcement and transportation.

Sensibly, the City of Seattle, King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties and the State of Washington are rapidly responding and issuing guidelines to contain the virus. Workplace contingency plans must be implemented to address this rapidly evolving crisis immediately. Normal operations and policies must now be changed to keep clients and staff safe and "strengthen our communities" as NJP's mission requires.

We believe NJP's status quo leave policies will be inadequate and inequitable as the COVID-19 outbreak escalates. Status quo limitations on sick leave could result in people reporting to work with symptoms to avoid disciplinary action, lack of payment, or depleting their accrued sick/vacation leave. This puts other employees, our clients and our entire community at greater risk of exposure. In addition, it is inequitable for employees with existing medical conditions who, due to normal necessary usage, already have less leave available and are more vulnerable to the virus.

During this emergent situation, the Union is advocating for the following:

- Halt all in-person client contact.
- Create immediate adaptive and accommodating teleworking options that reduce the risk to employees' health and well-being. This will necessarily include increased flexibility in scheduling as schools close, children will be at home and many employees will now be working full time providing care for their dependents on top of NJP's work requirements.
- Beginning Monday, March 16th, all employees in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties should be allowed to telework. Employees who cannot telework or who haven't been told how that will work for them should be placed on Paid Administrative Leave while NJP is able to execute a plan. Paid Administrative Leave is not charged against the employee's paid time off balances. With everything our counties and cities are doing, it would be unconscionable for NJP to delay making this call and leaving it up to individual people. Employees who traditionally have not been able to telework need to be given information ASAP.
- Employees who are quarantined, including self-quarantined, will be sent home immediately and able to telework. If technology has not been provided by NJP, employees will be sent home anyway and technology can be implemented later. If teleworking isn't an option, they will be released from work with no loss in pay during the time of quarantine for at least 14 days.

- NJP must help pay for all technology that employees need to work. Employees should not be expected to fund their own workspace.
- Create an exception to allow employees access to the shared leave bank without having to first delete all of their other leaves.
- Apply Paid Family and Medical Leave to all employees, not just those who have worked for NJP for 340 hours.
- Provide leave that would bridge the gap (1 week waiting period) before Paid Family and Medical Leave can be utilized.

Please also provide me the following information at your earliest convenience, but no later than March 20, 2020:

1. An explanation on how employees can donate leave to or access the Shared Leave Bank.
2. The number of hours the Shared Leave Bank currently has available.
3. The factors the employer will consider when making a decision to close its operations in a particular location and implement paid administrative leave.

I understand this is a particularly chaotic and stressful time with new information being released each day, but I'm confident there is a way to maintain services while also prioritizing the health and safety of employees. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at (206) 441-8880 ext. 103 or valarie@opeiu8.org.

Sincerely,



Valarie Peaphon

VP:slm

cc: Karen Holland, HR Director
Union Stewards

employer/NJP/2020/torres ltr re covid-19 3.13.20.doc
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