

We're Joining Together to Form a Union!

A few more questions

How do I correct my address if I find out Friends of Youth had the wrong one?

Send an email to winnie.willmore@nlrb.gov that says something like: "My name is [Name] and I am a voter in the upcoming Friends of Youth election. My correct address to mail my ballot to is [insert correct address]. Please confirm if my address has been updated or if anything else is needed." You can also call Winnie Willmore, who handles the ballots, at 206-220-6341.

What happens after the vote?

If we have a majority vote to make our union official, our employer will be required to negotiate with us. We'll choose a representative Bargaining Team of coworkers, survey and identify issues we want to negotiate over and meet with management to bargain our new contract. OPEIU staff will help us every step of the way. When we reach an agreement our Bargaining Team is happy with, it will be shared with all union members at Friends of Youth to Vote to approve (or reject) our new contract and then we start enforcing it.

How much are the dues again? When would they start?

No one will pay dues until **after** we negotiate, review and vote to approve our own union contract. The decision to approve or reject the contract lies with the employees. This way we will see the results of our efforts first before paying any dues. The OPEIU Local 8 dues rate was set by the members in 1994 at 1.5% of our gross monthly income. A quick way to calculate this is \$15 for every \$1000. We won't pay any initiation fee or any other kind of fee. New employees hired after our contract is in place pay a one-time initiation fee, 50% of which can be refunded for attending a meeting.

How long will it take to negotiate our union contract?

It really depends on how we are able to work together with management, how much time can be regularly spent on negotiations, as well as how much we are able to keep pressure on Friends of Youth by staying organized around the changes we most want to see. It's our goal to reach a fair contract as soon as possible, but it must meet the needs of employees and be supported by a majority vote.

Although we do not pay dues during this period after we win our union election while we are negotiating our contract, we do have the right to representation, meaning changes to our wages, hours, and working conditions can only be made during with our input. For example, when Crisis Connections workers voted to form their union with OPEIU 8 in June 2020, they first spent time negotiating policies over the most urgent needs relating to the pandemic before beginning negotiations on their first contract, and necessary policy changes continued to be implemented as they were agreed upon between management and the union throughout negotiations.

Will becoming union change how we work with our managers?

Maybe, as the balance of power shifts from upper management toward frontline staff, there will be changes. But that doesn't mean what's working now with your manager needs to change. We all have in common the desire to work together for the benefit of the people we serve and to make work enjoyable and productive. Nobody wants to be bound by rigid rules or constraints that create more stress. A Union Contract – a legally binding document agreed to by employees and management - provides a framework for fairness and consistency. It's not a rule book. In between contract negotiations, we can form or work within existing committees to work out workplace issues that are best resolved in a cooperative, collaborative manner.

Should I still vote if I'm leaving Friends of Youth soon?

Yes! Only employees working during the eligibility period can vote, so future employees are counting on those of you working now to participate in making this important decision. It will be meaningful what portion of eligible voters turn out to vote. We want to send a strong message about how much employees want to unionize. The higher the turnout, the stronger the message.

Why do some positions have two questions to vote on?

Under labor law, for "professional employees" to be included in a bargaining unit (meaning in the same union contract) with "non-professional employees," they need to vote to do so. Our goal is to have the strongest union possible, and all employees coming together accomplishes that. In some union environments like building trades, the different classifications prefer to have separate unions, but at Friends of Youth, although some of us are therapists and some of us are case managers or youth specialists, we belong in the same union. We can still negotiate terms that apply differently to different classifications if needed; you will see this, for example, at [Northwest Justice Project](#) or [Northwest Immigrant Rights Project](#), where attorneys, legal assistants, and all other non-management staff are all covered under the same OPEIU union contract. If "professional" employees vote "Yes" and "Yes", we will all be covered under one union contract.

Is a union a third party?

We, employees of Friends of Youth, are our union. The staff of OPEIU Local 8 will support and advocate for the changes identified by our staff through conversations and meetings, surveys, and bargaining team representatives who we will elect. While we can look at ideas that have worked at other OPEIU represented workplaces (and other union workplaces), ultimately everything in our contract will be based on the specific needs at Friends of Youth. Once our Union Contract is in place, Local 8 staff will also help us ensure that it is enforced.