When nurses come together to form a union and negotiate a contract with their hospital, they are able to create a fair and transparent process for staffing and scheduling. How many days in a row a nurse can be scheduled, weekend rotations, how often a nurse can be mandatory low-needed, and how nurses are mandatory low-needed are examples of what can be locked into a contract.

When nurses negotiate a contract with management, they can set a cap on how many hours a nurse can be mandatory low-needed. Fairview Southdale and Riverside nurses have a contract that prevents part-time nurses from being low-needed more than 16 hours, and nurses who are scheduled 64 hours regularly are not low-needed (pg 38-39, Fairview Southdale and Riverside CBA).

Nurses can also negotiate a process that has to be followed before nurses are mandatory low-needed. That process can include but not be limited to:

1. Asking for volunteers to be low-needed.
2. Asking for volunteers to float to another unit they are oriented or otherwise qualified.
3. Low-needing traveling nurses.

If the hospital doesn’t follow the contract, nurses have a process to address the problem in what is known as a grievance.

When it comes to scheduling and staffing decisions, do Fairview Ridges nurses have a voice in the process? Does Fairview management always follow the rules that they’ve created? If they don’t follow the current guidelines, do nurses have a process in which they can address the problem?

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