



Check out the Education Fund

A Great Benefit

A co-worker recently came to Kaiser member Jill Wire with a question about the laws regarding an under-age patient who was pregnant and didn't want her parents to know. Fortunately for the co-worker, Wire had recently attended a Law & Ethics class offered by the SEIU UHW-West and Joint Employer Education Fund.

The day-long class not only provided Wire with the continuing education credits she needs to maintain her license, but also gave her new insights into her field. "I was able to give my colleague two good resources to help her verify what the law is," said Wire a licensed clinical social worker in the Medical Social Workers Dept. at Kaiser Oakland. Wire is among 45 behavioral health professionals who attended the Education Fund's Law & Ethics course at UHW's Oakland office in May. The course, which provides six hours of continuing education credit required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, is one of nearly a dozen new Professional Development classes being offered by the Education Fund.

The summer and fall semester courses are free to eligible nursing or behavioral health professionals who are required to earn continuing education units or contact hours to maintain certification or licensure. Eligible employees are those whose employers have contributed to the Education Fund through collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the union. Currently, more than 70,000 members of UHW and other SEIU locals are employed by major healthcare systems throughout California and several western states that participate in the Education Fund.

"I was pleased to learn about the opportunities available through the Education Fund," said Wire, a UHW shop steward and 15-year Kaiser employee. "Many members of UHW's Medical Social Work Chapter are either licensed clinical social workers or they are working toward licensure. Having these classes available for continuing education is a great benefit."

The purpose of the SEIU UHW-West Joint Employer Education Fund is to provide eligible employees in the healthcare profession with counseling, education and training opportunities to advance their careers, ensure job security and provide the highest quality of healthcare possible. Recognizing the need to make prerequisites courses more accessible to working students, the Education Fund

has been offering free career preparation courses for the past year. These courses, which range from anatomy and chemistry to medical terminology and physiology, give students the chance to earn college credits often required for healthcare-related academic programs.

An influx of new members in need of courses to maintain certification of licensure prompted the new professional development offerings, said Associate Director Elizabeth Toups. "We're excited to launch our newest course offerings designed to meet the professional development needs of these employees. As the Education Fund continues to grow, we recognize the need to provide a valuable benefit for employees who may not wish to pursue college-based academic programs."

The response to the new courses has been positive, "especially from nurses and behavioral health professionals for whom our early course offerings have been targeted," Toups said.

New offerings, for dietitians, speech pathologists, and audiologists are in the works, added Education Fund Implementation Specialist Liz Campos. "As new classifications come into the Fund, we will continue to expand our schedule to support the professional development requirements of those employees as well."



"Having these classes available for continuing education is a great benefit," says Jill Wire, who recently completed a law and ethics class offered by the Education Fund.

Susan Tipton, MFT, a health educator at Kaiser Panorama City, said the new course offerings have given her a new understanding of the value the union and participating employers like Kaiser place on workers. "I am so impressed with the resources being put into these programs and the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff involved," Tipton said. "This isn't just lip service to professional development. Now we really feel part of healthcare team and feel supported and valued by our union."

The offerings have the added benefit of providing networking opportunities for workers, Wire and Tipton agreed.

To learn more about the Education Fund's professional development and other course offerings, please visit us on the web at www.seiu-uhweduc.org or call 1-888-872-4606.