

Nancy Sikora: What happened to work life balance?

February 24, 2010

I have worked in the health care system, in particular home care, since 1981.

We used to work split shifts. We might work three hours and then have a three hour break and then work another few hours. Our lives were not our own for that entire day. When we finished work after the morning shift, we really could do nothing with our families since we needed to be back to work in a few hours.

Finally, we achieved a breakthrough in our collective agreement: the employer recognized there was no balance between work and family life. They agreed to do away with split shifts unless mutually agreed upon by the worker and employer. The operative word is mutual.

If this farce of a collective agreement goes through, we are going to be forced by the employer to work split shifts. We will be under the employer's thumb for 12 hours per day. Where is the balance?

My next concern is the idea that we could be asked to work in our own region for part of that day and then in a totally unfamiliar region the remainder of the day. Our job requires that we be familiar with our clients, their care, their home, their particular illness and their location. How can we be expected to know or even remember any of this information if we work in an area that we know nothing about? Is someone trying to destroy a wonderful program because this ludicrous idea will do that in very short order?

We are having a very difficult time retaining staff as most people would prefer to work in a facility, in one place all 8 or 12 hours with other staff to support you as needed. If this "final offer" is accepted we will have no staff as this will be impossible to work with. Why would anyone be willing to work a few hours have time off and work a few more? Your entire day is used up for perhaps five hours of work. No one wants to travel to an unknown workplace at their own expense and work with clients they know nothing of. Client care will be very, very poor and they also will suffer as a result of this.

Please for the sake of wonderful program, staff and clients do not accept this final offer.

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