

GWC HEALTH CARE WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER



July 2019 | Vol. 1

Welcome to the Health Care Working Group Newsletter! We are so glad you are here!

We started this newsletter after our Town Hall event in May, where we heard from many student workers who both want to learn more about how the union is addressing health care related concerns and who themselves know a great deal about navigating Columbia Health, Aetna, and more.

This newsletter is a place for us to share tips and tricks we pick up from other student workers and to keep you updated on what the working group has been up to lately. Our first article highlights some tips we have gathered from other student workers over the past semester.

We hope this newsletter does not feel like a “data dump,” but a conversation. We will always include updates, ways to get involved with us (see to the right), and upcoming dates of meetings and events (see below).

Mark your calendars:

Next Meeting:

Thursday August 8, 2-3 PM
Joe's in the Northwest Corner building

Next Bargaining Session:

Wednesday August 14, 12:00-5 PM
Studebaker Hall (622 W 132nd St)
Room 459

Other Upcoming Events:

Stay tuned for the next newsletter!

UPDATES FROM GWC AND HCWG

Where do we stand in bargaining for our health care rights?

On June 21, the bargaining committee presented to Columbia's bargaining team our demand to re-instate the 100 Plan. This helpful [spreadsheet](#) shows how the 90 and 100 plans compare to the new plan Columbia's announced for the next school year.

The 100 Plan provided additional coverage, especially for workers with chronic conditions and large medical needs.

What is the health care working group working on now?

Creating channels to help graduate workers navigate health care and insurance (e.g., the Newsletter) and working with the bargaining committee to draft a Health Benefits contract article proposal.

How can I get involved?

[Sign up to receive emails from the Working Group or to get involved](#)

[Anonymously share your experience with insurance, campus health care services, etc. with the HCWG.](#)

[Fill out the GWC Healthcare Survey](#)

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING HEALTH CARE AT COLUMBIA

While we're pushing to get excellent health care coverage for all student workers through our contract, there are some things – like the American insurance system – that are unlikely to be solved by GWC alone! Here are a few tips we've gathered for dealing with Aetna and Columbia Student Health.

While our bargaining committee is working tirelessly to negotiate improved health care access for graduate workers, the HCWG recognizes that health insurance in the U.S. is a broken, fraught system and no contract article can itself change that.

In talking with other graduate workers, we have gathered some tips about navigating this challenging system and wanted to share them here:

1. If you can get to John Jay Hall on Morningside Campus, go there first!

Why? Most care that you receive off-campus, including over the summer, will come at a cost. This is problematic, and can come as a surprise to our colleagues who are newer to Columbia.
2. That said, the care at John Jay Hall is not always excellent and the appointment system is daunting. You can only make appointments up to 20 hours ahead of time. We're working to improve this system but in the meantime, we're seeking your suggestions and testimony about the appointment system (see first page for ways to get in touch).

Tips for getting off-campus coverage:

1. There is a major cost difference between attending "in-network" and "out-of-network" providers. You can use the Aetna website to find "in-network" providers.
2. When you're not sure about something, call the Aetna helpline. They are generally very helpful. The number is on the back of your insurance card. Instead of calling Student Health, call Aetna.
3. If you're going to use a provider, call them and explain you have Aetna Student Health and want to know what will be covered and what won't. Sometimes they'll know and sometimes they won't, but checking with them first can help avoid frightening or disabling costs in the future. If you do end up with a bill, we've found that providers can give more guidance than Aetna or Columbia.

Still confused about using your Aetna Student Health Insurance Plan? Honestly, so are we! However, we are looking into ways we might provide insurance training sessions. If we are unable to provide these sessions, we will be providing as much information possible to help graduate workers navigate the insurance plans.

Some topics we hope to include in the future are:

- What is covered and what is not covered by our health care plan
- What to do when you need something that is not covered or you feel like you're not getting the right advice
- How to find in-network providers
- How to deal with billing questions and concerns
- Other questions? Let us know what you think we should cover!

We believe that our union will be strongest when we work together. Please reach out to the HCWG if you want to discuss specific health care concerns or need help finding answers. We are here for you!

Solidarity forever, The HCWG