



the Downstate Update

President's Corner

By Rowena Blackman-Stroud

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Dear Colleagues,

I along with the UUP Downstate Chapter officers want to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your dedication, caring and bravery throughout the current crisis of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Our hearts are with our members on the frontline, who are providing comfort and care for those with the virus. We are aware you are putting your lives at risk. We are all in your debt. You are truly our HEROES!!!!!!

Your Downstate Chapter officers and UUP's statewide officers are advocating daily to make sure your rights are protected on the job, and that your personal needs are met as you work to heal those with COVID-19.

On your behalf, below are some of the issues we've been working on and will continue to work on:

PPE

The Downstate Chapter leaders, have been working with UUP statewide, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) to advocate for personal protective equipment for our frontline health care providers.

Adequate PPE is even more important now that Downstate has been designated as a COVID-19 only facility.

We have been working with NYSUT, AFT, and the AFL-CIO to obtain more

cleaning agents for beds, testing kits, gowns, medical masks, shields and respirators, among other gear.

We have been in contact with the governor's office, state legislators and congressional leaders to obtain these important protective devices. Gov. Cuomo's office has heard our urgent requests and they have been open and helpful. We will continue this advocacy until our PPE shortage ends.

UUP, AFT and the AFL-CIO has also been in contact with congressional leaders to press for changes that would tighten up CDC guidelines to make them more favorable for workers.

We were successful in having one of our governing board members, Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, a Downstate emergency room nurse manager, participate in an AFT press conference advocating for PPE. She was listed as a media source in a March 20 AFT media release, ["America's Nurses Demand Testing for Frontline Healthcare Workers, Essential Supplies to Fight COVID-19."](#)

Childcare

UUP has worked closely with UFT to secure childcare for essential employees, who reside in New York City. This took a lot of back-and-forth with New York City to allow Downstate essential employees access to the childcare program.

UUP has also been working diligently to identify childcare for essential workers who live outside of the city. Here are several Long Island options that are available:

- In Suffolk County, call the Suffolk County Childcare hotline at 646-926-3784.
- In Nassau County, call the Nassau County Childcare hotline at 516-727-0331.
- In Suffolk or Nassau counties, contact Scope Education Services, at www.scopeonline.us.
- You can also call the YMCA of Long Island, at (516) 583-5539. Ask for Shannon Cussen, executive director for youth development and education.

Please contact the Downstate Chapter at brooklyn@uupmail.org or 718-270-1519 if you have childcare needs in other areas.

Overtime

We are strongly advocating for overtime pay locally and at the statewide level, and we will continue to do so.

Many of our members, who are being mandated to work overtime during this crisis are not overtime-eligible under FSLA guidelines. We are in conversations with administration about this important issue. Statewide, UUP leaders are working to push for change at the statewide level.

We will keep you apprised of any developments regarding overtime.

Parking

UUP was successful in negotiating temporary changes to Downstate parking rules.

These changes will assist more members in driving to work and parking.

UUP Telecommuting Agreement

Through a Telecommuting Agreement with the state, our chapter was successful in negotiating staggered shifts and approval to allow as many

workers as possible to work remotely. We will continue to advocate for members on a case-by-case basis.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Benefits for Empire Plan enrollees

There are several coronavirus-related benefits available for Empire Plan enrollees. They include:

- Cost-sharing, copay, coinsurance, and deductibles waivers for COVID-19 testing (the waiver applies to all active Empire Plan enrollees, early retirees and Medicare eligible retirees);
- Early prescription refills (one emergency refill of up to a 30-day supply for three prescriptions and one refill of specialty medications, during a 90-day period);
- Access to the Empire Plan Nurseline (1-877-769-7447, option 5), which provides information on COVID-19 and can help members who suspect they may have contracted the virus;
- Access to Beacon Lens (www.beaconlens.com), the Beacon Health Options blog, which provides tips on managing stress and anxiety during the coronavirus crisis.
- The Empire Plan has a new telehealth benefit, LiveHealth Online which provides no copayment tele-visits with board-certified doctors or licensed therapists on your smartphone, tablet or personal computer. Go to www.empireblue.com/nys to access the link to LiveHealth Online and obtain the coupon code for copayment free telehealth visits.

You can sign up for email updates on the coronavirus at the state Department of Health website at

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>.

UUP coronavirus resources site

UUP has set up a COVID-19 resource page for members.

To access it, go to UUP's website at www.uupinfo.org and click on the words COVID-19 Resources at the top of the page. That will bring you to the resource page.

There, members will find important information on their benefits, announcements from UUP President Fred Kowal, information on student loans and links to a number of health resources, including the New York State Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

At the bottom of the page, you'll find a question-and-comment portal where members can ask questions and express coronavirus-based concerns.

The direct link to the page is www.uupinfo.org/resources/covid19/.



**Dear colleagues,
UUP appreciates your hard work
and applauds you for your
dedication and service
to our community.**

Thank you!

REMOTE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2020

6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

UUP Downstate Chapter

President: Rowena Blackman-Stroud

VP for Academics: Karen Benker

VP for Professionals: Ellen McTigue

Secretary: Ellen McTigue

Treasurer: Fred Houston

Grievance Chair: Simon Abe Gerecht

Officer for Contingents: Donovan Lorde

Department Rep Coordinator:

Rowena Blackman-Stroud

Retirees Officer: Sandy Spier

UUP/NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist

Lisa Mouscardy Willis

Chapter Assistant

Jacqueline L. Bourgeois

Chapter information

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Downstate Chapter website:

<http://uuphost/downstatemedicalcenter>