



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **Cermak Mental Health Specialists Announce Intent to Strike**

**Chicago, IL** – The mental health specialists at Cermak Health Services of Cook County announced their intention to strike over the random assignment rotations. Department heads at Cermak Health Services, intend to implement a “musical chairs” rotation of assignments beginning April 1, claiming they improve patient safety and employee complacency.

“We have repeatedly requested evidence supporting their musical chairs rotation policy, said Trumaine Reeves, union representative from SEIU Local 73. “They have failed to supply any studies or evidence for these claims. Management has left us no choice but to notify them of our intent to strike.”

The union provided management and the Illinois Labor Relations Board with the official notice of the intent to strike on or after March 31, 2021.

“Cermak Mental Health management has consistently displayed a lack of respect for the safety, health, security, and morale of the mental health staff,” said Gregory Van Duan, mental health specialist. “We are professionals and our vested in providing the best in patient care for the people we serve which are primarily minority and indigent populations with recurring disorders. We come to work in this high-stress, difficult environment every day and service our patients with the dignity and respect they deserve.”

SEIU Local 73 filed notice with Cermak Health Services informing of the workers intent to strike on or after April 1.

“We as mental health specialists are customarily reassigned on an almost daily basis which represents a disruption of continuity of care for our clients,” said Lauren Cartwright, mental health specialist. “Unnecessary clinical rotations erode and compromise the relationship with our clients and leave the mental health specialists feeling helpless as we have no control over the areas we work. How can we provide help when we feel helpless? We demand better for our clients and ourselves.”

The union conducted a trial bid where approximately 70% of staff opted to move to different locations/shifts, while the remainder of staff chose to stay within their current position/location. Management rejected this proposal offering no compromise. The union also offered several alternatives to the issues of employee complacency and safety that were also rejected by management.

“Cermak conducted an employee satisfaction survey that showed Mental Health Specialists' employee satisfaction and morale is at an all-time low and distrust of management is at an all-time high,” said Reeves. “This imposed unlawful decision by management will not heal these problems, but will only make a bad situation worse. In fact, we filed unfair labor practice charges with the Illinois Labor Relations Board to hold management accountable for violating our members' rights and refusing to bargain in good faith.”

SEIU Local 73 and the workers have requested a meeting with Cermak COO Jesus “Manny” Estrada and Dr. Joyce Miller, Chair of Psychiatry at Cook County Health to resolve the manner in a way that is beneficial to both patients and the workers.

The union continues to bargain in good faith to resolve this issue.

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*SEIU Local 73 represents more than 29,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.*