



# Nonprofit Employees United

Nonprofit employees uniting to empower our workplaces and strengthen our communities

We are the union for nonprofit employees. NEU is a collective of thousands of nonprofit union members who work in advocacy, social service and housing organizations all over the country. We belong to the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), and work in organizations such as:

ACLU MARYLAND  
AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE  
ASSOC OF COMM COLLEGE TRUSTEES  
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LABOR ALLIANCE  
ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT  
BHR - BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES  
BIOBUS  
CASA LATINA  
CENTER FOR BOOK ARTS  
CENTER FOR DOMESTIC PEACE  
CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE LENDING  
CITIBAR JUSTICE CENTER  
COMPASS HOUSING ALLIANCE  
COMMUNITY FORWARD SF  
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS  
CONSEJO COUNSELING & REFERRAL  
SERVICES SF.  
CRISIS CONNECTIONS  
DC SAFE  
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE  
EMILYS LIST  
ECS - EPISCOPAL COMMUNITY SERVICES SF  
FAIR SHOT TEXAS

FLORENCE IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE  
RIGHTS PROJECT  
FORTERRA  
GOOD SAMARITAN FAMILY RESOURCE  
CENTER  
HAMILTON FAMILIES  
HOSPITALITY HOUSE  
INCLUDENYC  
INNER CITY LAW  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL SELF-RELIANCE  
INDEPENDENT LIVING RESOURCES CENTER  
JEWISH COMMUNITY ACTION  
LA CASA NORTE  
LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT  
LOW INCOME HOUSING INSTITUTE  
LUCIE'S PLACE  
LYRIC  
MASSACHUSETTS SENIOR ACTION  
MINNESOTA FREEDOM FUND  
MINN. YOUTH COLLECTIVE  
MINNESOTA VOICE  
MOVE TEXAS  
NAT. ASSOC. OF COUNTY & CITY HEALTH  
OFFICIALS

NDI - NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE  
NED - NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR  
DEMOCRACY  
NEW ISRAEL FUND  
MDC - MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN  
COMMUNITY  
NORTHWEST IMMIGRANT RIGHTS  
PROJECT  
NORTHWEST JUSTICE PROJECT  
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY SF  
SF-MARIN FOOD BANK  
SOLID GROUND  
SENIOR & DISABILITY ACTION  
PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF  
METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON DC INC.  
PARTNERS GLOBAL  
PLANNED PARENTHOOD GLOBAL  
PLYMOUTH HOUSING  
PRINTED MATTER  
REPRESENT US  
YOUTH CARE  
UNITED WAY BAY AREA  
UNITED WAY CA CAPITAL REGION





# Five Steps to Form a Union

## 1 Talk to your co-workers and gather information

What are the issues your co-workers face? Do any common themes emerge? For example, is there a need for pay equity or improved safety procedures? Do your co-workers share your interest in exploring the idea of a union?

When talking to your co-workers about a union, be sure to talk only before or after work, or while on break. Joining a union is a protected legal right, but you don't want to "go public" until you've organized a plan to move forward.



## 2 Form an organizing committee

You'll want to organize a representative group of co-workers, usually called an "organizing committee," to make sure your efforts to form a union succeed. The organizing committee educates fellow workers about the benefits of unionizing and your rights under the law. Committee members will also motivate co-workers to take action with confidence, identify common workplace issues, and help plan how to build a union in your workplace.



## 3 Build majority support

Once you have a group of representative co-workers who are ready to take action, it's time to talk openly with other co-workers. This is the time to make sure co-workers have all of their questions answered. Now that your efforts are public, the typical employer will take an active role in trying to convince you and your co-workers that forming a union will be bad for you, your co-workers, and/or the organization you work for.

While some employers recognize that unions can be a partner to work with toward common goals, most do not like the idea of giving up any control whatsoever over their decision-making. The key is to stay united and focused on the reasons you wanted a union in the first place.



## 4 Make your union "official"

When you can show a strong majority support for creating a union, usually through the signing of "authorization cards" or a petition, the next step is to make your union official. There are different ways to do this. One common way is to request that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a neutral federal government agency, hold a secret ballot election. Another way to gain official recognition is to have your employer voluntarily recognize your union.

NEU organizing staff can help you and your co-workers decide which method might be best for your particular situation.



## 5 Win a strong union contract

Efforts to create your union don't stop after you win recognition. The next step — winning a fair contract — is just as important. Once your union is officially certified, your employer will be legally required to negotiate in good faith with your union to obtain a written, legally-binding contract covering all aspects of your employment.

You and your co-workers will elect a negotiating team and decide what changes and improvements you want to propose to your employer. Acceptance of the final agreement will be voted on by you. You can count on OPEIU staff to provide support every step of the way.

## **Q: HOW DOES A UNION HELP NONPROFIT EMPLOYEES?**

**A:** Employees who do nonprofit work need greater recognition and value from society. When we join together in a union, we have far more power to make a difference than we would alone. Frontline employees have the space and protection to share concerns, bring ideas forward and work together to come up with creative solutions. Our agreements go into a written contract to make sure there is follow through. Supporting a union can have a positive impact on morale, turnover and the services we provide.

## **Q: HOW DOES A UNION BENEFIT NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS?**

**A:** Through NEU, we advocate for ourselves and for the people we serve. We often share the same goals as our nonprofit organizations to eradicate inequality and raise standards for all. Union members can play a vital role in influencing decision makers to pass initiatives and laws that will create a better society. For example, in San Francisco recently, NEU members were instrumental in ensuring the passage of the Minimum Compensation Ordinance for people working in nonprofits.

## **Q: WHY JOIN NEU?**

**A:** Employees who work in the nonprofit sector are indispensable in the fight for a better, more just society. Nonprofit employees, like all working people, deserve both greater recognition for their contributions and better working conditions.

Our agreements with employers go into a written contract to ensure management's compliance with the wages, benefits, and workplace policies we collectively negotiate.

## **Q: IS JOINING A UNION LEGAL?**

**A:** Yes, absolutely! It is against the law for employers to ask you about your union activity or to threaten, harass, fire, discipline or discriminate against you because of union support. The long-standing National Labor Relations Act protects workers in their right to form a union.

## **Q: WHAT ABOUT UNION DUES?**

**A:** No one in your bargaining unit will pay a single cent in union dues until your first contract is negotiated, democratically voted on, and approved by you and your co-workers. There are no initiation fees for newly organized members joining NEU. And when you do start paying dues, you and your co-workers can democratically decide on dues structure and how your dues are spent by your union.

## **Q: SO HOW DO I FORM A UNION AT WORK?**

**A:** Forming a union can be a long process, but the benefits of joining a union are worth the effort. Look inside to learn more about the steps involved in forming a union for you and your co-workers.

## **Want to learn more?**

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