

# Support workers in health care

F A C T S H E E T

*HEU support workers play a critical role on health care's front lines and behind the scenes. There are about 35 job classifications in this occupational area that span everything from food preparation to handling a complex inventory of hospital equipment and supplies.*

## WHAT THEY DO:

- prepare and serve patient and resident meals, ensuring the accuracy of special diets and appropriate food texture for specific medical conditions
- clean and sanitize all areas of the health care environment, including operating rooms, special care nurseries and intensive care units
- receive and deliver all supplies and equipment
- transport and dispose of bio-hazardous waste material
- ensure equipment and supplies are routed to the correct facility and department
- launder all facility linens including patient and resident clothing and staff uniforms

## WHY IT MATTERS:

- the safe, timely movement of supplies and equipment is essential to the provision of every aspect of patient care; without it, health care professionals cannot do their jobs
- a sanitary, hazard-free environment is key to every form of infection control, especially in this era of superbugs and the threat of major epidemics
- nutritious meals are absolutely necessary for patients recovering from surgery and illness -- and for the overall health and well-being of residents in care
- hospital beds cannot be opened for patient admissions unless sterile linens are available

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

- lack of understanding from decision-makers and public about the critical role support workers play in keeping patients, residents and staff healthy and safe
- working under the constant threat of further privatization
- short-sighted cost-cutting measures that have reduced staff, increased workload and made it more difficult to provide quality food and cleaning services

# OUR WORK MATTERS!

**Support workers make up 13% of HEU's members in the health facilities sector.**

food service supervisor • food service worker • food service cashier • food service checker • food service cook's helper • food service nourishment aide • building security officer • cleaner • custodial attendant • housekeeping aide • housekeeping supervisor • laundry worker • laundry supervisor • sewing machine operator • stores attendant • stores attendant (receiver) • stores supervisor • receiver-logistics • logistics supervisor • inventory clerk • dietary aide • transportation attendant • among others...

**In addition, HEU represents more than 3000 support workers employed by private contractors in BC's health care system.**



**HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION**

5000 North Fraser Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5J 5M3  
604-438-5000

[www.heu.org](http://www.heu.org)

