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FEDERAL MEDIATION HELPS END 102-DAY STRIKE AT BUTLER HOSPITAL, RESTORES CRITICAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) assisted Butler Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island and Local 1199 SEIU New England in resolving a prolonged labor dispute and reaching a new four-year collective bargaining agreement covering approximately 700 healthcare workers. Following a 102-day work stoppage, FMCS mediators brought the parties to settlement on August 17, 2025, ending the strike and allowing union members to return to work providing critical mental health services.



Rhode Island Population Density by County
Source: 2020 Census - U.S. Census Bureau

People per square mile
■ 500.0 or more
■ 200.0 to 499.9

Estimated Total State Population:
1,097,379

IMPACT, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, & CONSTITUENT BENEFITS

Butler Hospital is the largest psychiatric facility in Rhode Island, providing specialized care that other hospitals are not equipped to deliver. When the strike began, emergency rooms across the state struggled to absorb patients in need of psychiatric services, diverting resources from other critical care. The prolonged dispute strained the healthcare system and created growing urgency for resolution to restore specialized care for Rhode Islanders.



FMCS entered the process on April 28, 2025, and conducted 15 mediation sessions over nearly four months. Negotiations were marked by deep divisions and strained communication, requiring mediators to use a variety of approaches—separating parties, shuttling proposals, convening smaller group meetings, and ultimately managing exchanges through email, text, and phone calls. In the final days of mediation, FMCS facilitated continuous engagement over August 15–17, culminating in a signed tentative agreement and a ratification on August 18.



This agreement ended the 102-day strike and returned 700 caregivers to work. The resolution preserved labor peace, restored vital psychiatric care capacity across Rhode Island, and alleviated strain on other hospitals that had been impacted by diverted patients. Both parties credited FMCS's impartial persistence in keeping talks moving despite repeated breakdowns. The settlement underscores the Agency's role in stabilizing employment and ensuring continuity of care for vulnerable populations.



Butler Hospital is Rhode Island's largest psychiatric hospital, and the resolution of this dispute impacts the entire state's healthcare system. FMCS's successful mediation positively affects the more than 536,000¹ residents of Rhode Island's 1st Congressional District and will:

- Reduce strain on emergency rooms across Rhode Island, allowing citizens access to specialized care and other hospitals to refocus on non-psychiatric patient care.
- Support economic stability by maintaining a large employer and major teaching hospital with around 900–1,000 roles in Providence, including both clinical and non-clinical staff, helping sustain local livelihoods.
- Reinforce collaboration between labor and management in a critical public health sector.
- Preserve labor peace and economic stability for hundreds of families and hospital operations in Providence.

"Our job at FMCS is to keep the parties talking, even when trust breaks down. At Butler, persistence paid off: we helped the parties push through difficult issues, reach an agreement, and get caregivers back to serving the people of Rhode Island who need them most."

Bill Domini
Commissioner, FMCS

Source: ¹U.S. Census 2023 American Community Survey