



Occupational and Physical Therapists

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



Dear Friend,

As you probably know, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Feb. 26 in *Janus v. AFSCME*, a lawsuit aimed at starving public-employee unions, including the UFT, of the funds needed to provide services to and advocate for workers.

We are preparing for a decision this spring in the plaintiff's favor. While we wait, union members must discuss the importance of unions with their colleagues. Our rights and benefits were not given to us; we, the UFT, fought hard to secure our salaries, working conditions and benefits. We must encourage each other and support each other. We are the union.

To get this message out, UFT members have been visiting other members in a city-wide door-knocking campaign. Our goal is to start a conversation about what *Janus* could mean to us and how members can protect their hard-earned rights and benefits by recommitting to the union. So far, we've visited thousands of homes and have had many wonderful visits with our colleagues. We've all been heartened to realize how much support our members provide each other and how so many of you realize the value of union membership.

Our next OT/PT Chapter general membership meeting is on Wednesday, June 6 at 4 p.m. at the UFT's headquarters, 52 Broadway. I'll send more information later this spring, but I hope you'll save the date. I thank those members who attend our general membership chapter meetings. Your presence is so important, especially in light of *Janus v. AFSCME*. To those who can't attend, we miss you. Please try to come — we need your voices!

We have staff available Monday through Thursdays to answer your questions. Call 212-598-7705, if you have an issue or a concern. I'm there on Mondays and Wednesdays. Catherine Szpant joins me on Mondays. Michelle Taylor is in on Tuesdays, and Nicole Ecker is in on Thursdays. If you prefer to use email, contact me at kevangelista@uft.org. (If you have a salary or leave question, please reach out to your borough office.)

Sincerely,

Kerri Evangelista
OT/PT Chapter Leader

UFT chapter elections to be held this spring

In the face of the Janus case, having a strong union is more important than ever. The foundation of that strength is provided by the union representatives at the school level. This May, UFT members will elect chapter leaders, delegates and para reps for the next three years, from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2021. Each school has a chapter leader elected by the members of that school. Functional chapters, which represent non-teacher members including occupational and physical therapists, secretaries, school nurses or school counselors, elect citywide chapter leaders.

UFT members have a right to run for office, nominate other members and vote for candidates. Electing a solid team is important to your interests, the strength of your school or professional community and the strength of our union. You must be a member of the UFT to hold office or vote in the union's elections. We encourage all members to vote.

Welfare Fund

The UFT Welfare Fund provides wonderful supplemental health, drug, dental and optical benefits for its members. But it provides even more to members than that. The Welfare Fund provides workshops and services that can help you manage your health or figure out what to do in the event of a serious illness.

Each year, the UFT Welfare Fund presents workshops on relevant topics. On May 17, Nina Brojan, an exercise physiologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering, will discuss the benefits of exercise and how to get moving. The workshop runs from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at UFT headquarters, 52 Broadway. To register, call Christine Jittan at 212-539-0667.

[Download the workshop series flier »](#)

The UFT Welfare Fund also provides UFT members with a health and cancer helpline. The Fund's fulltime social workers and case workers can help you understand your options and how to manage your health benefits to your best advantage. The Fund can also advocate on behalf of a member to ensure that member receives quality services.

For more information, please [download this flier »](#)

Please take a look at the website to see all of your benefits provided through the [UFT Welfare Fund](#).

Better communication with BERS

The UFT has met with the Board of Education Retirement System to address some of the concerns raised by occupational and physical therapists, specifically how the retirement system communicates with you.

The UFT Pension Department provided a presentation for all BERS members on March 23 at UFT headquarters. Approximately 150 of our chapter's members attended this event. This workshop reviewed the defined-benefit pension, the TDA, death benefits, health benefits, Welfare Fund benefits and more.

The UFT pension department will also provide group final consultations for our BERS members at each UFT borough office from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. on the Thursdays in May listed below. This workshop is geared for members who plan to retire within three years. Members will receive estimates of their pensions and necessary forms for retirement. [You must register in advance](#) if you are interested in attending as space is limited. You can find the locations of the UFT borough offices [on the UFT website](#).

Manhattan, May 3

Brooklyn, May 10

Staten Island, May 17

Queens, May 24

Bronx, May 31

SEGIS encounter attendance completion

DOE staff including compliance personnel and supervisors is monitoring encounter attendance. Please remember to complete your encounter attendance notes as quickly as possible. If your school or supervisor reaches out to you about your encounter attendance, please contact me if you have questions. However, it is a best practice to stay up to date with documentation.

2nd annual New Member Fair

I would like to thank those members who came to the Jan. 22 New Member Fair to learn about the benefits of union membership. We heard from a number of UFT representatives about salary, pension, UFT Welfare Fund, and political action. A special thanks to Catherine Szpunt, at-large OT regional executive board member, who helped coordinate this event.

Your advocacy for your chapter paid off!

I am happy to inform you that the UFT leadership heard your concerns about the fact that the chapter's functional chapter (me!) had only one day to serve so many of you. I would like to thank you for your advocacy; I now have a second day to take care of my functional chapter duties. I'd like to thank the union leadership for how responsive it was to your requests.

Our chapter is now 2,500 strong! I'm looking forward to having two days a week to address our needs and our concerns! You made this happen!

Questions on liability coverage

The city is required by law to provide employees with legal representation and indemnification against claims made against them in federal or state court as long as "the act or omission from which such judgment or settlement arose occurred while the employee was acting within the scope of his public employment and in the discharge of his duties and was not in violation or any rule or regulation [of the DOE] at the time the alleged damages were sustained."

The injury or damage cannot be the result of intentional wrongdoing or recklessness on the part of the employee. Further, DOE's obligation to provide representation to or indemnify an employee may be greater if the employee's actions arose out of discipline of a student. To receive this protection, employees must take specific actions within a short timeframe. Representation, if all conditions are met and all required procedures have been followed, is provided by the city's Corporation Counsel. Employees should contact the union immediately if they are served with legal papers in a non-criminal proceeding.

Contract negotiating committee and survey

More than 300 UFT members who comprise the UFT negotiating committee met for the first time on Jan. 10 at UFT headquarters. This committee is responsible for shaping the union's priorities for its next contract with the city. "The bargaining environment is difficult with an administration in Washington, D.C., that is targeting workers and unions and attacking public education," UFT President Michael Mulgrew said after the meeting. "Our negotiating committee has its work cut out for it." The UFT's current contract, negotiated in 2014, is set to expire at the end of November. The members on the negotiating committee from the OT/PT Chapter are: Kerri Evangelista, Joseph Marino, James Haughey, Danielle Pellegrino, Nicole Ecker and Yona Adika.

Thank you to all of those that completed the survey intended to get more information for contract negotiations. I am happy to report that almost 600 therapists completed the survey. The top issue you identified? You want to be paid more money for your highly-skilled services.

Consultation with the Department Of Education

We meet with the DOE regularly for our chapter consultation. Some of the key points discussed were:

Clinical Guide: This is an ongoing conversation with the DOE in response to member concerns we've heard at chapter meetings and voiced in survey responses. We will discuss this before our next DOE consultation. If you have any suggestions, please email me at kevangelista@uft.org.

Initial Evaluations: This topic is also part of our ongoing conversation with the DOE. Members say that with a full caseload and an inability to cancel sessions, it is impossible to complete comprehensive initial evaluations within the school day. When you complete an initial evaluation, you are still required to complete all other professional responsibilities.

For the time being, we will continue to bring up individual cases before the DOE. However, evaluations can be time sensitive, so please reach out to us in a timely manner on this topic.

Professional Conference Concerns: We have been successful worked with the DOE to fix individual issues at the school level. If you are having difficulty with getting approved to attend professional conferences, please email me at kevangelista@uft.org.

Article 8 says:

1. "Professional conferences of employees covered by this Agreement, called at the discretion of their supervisor, shall continue to be held during regular working hours.
2. Applications from nurses and therapists to attend professional conferences will be granted at the discretion of the program directors."

If you believe that your contractual right has been violated, you may file a grievance with your school chapter leader.

SEGIS Update: A number of you are concerned because there is no longer a Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code for consultative sessions. We have discussed this with the DOE, and were told that the DOE is working with the state on what consultative sessions should look like moving forward. The DOE and UFT will provide more information as it becomes available.

Save the dates for UFT and chapter events!

- We have one general chapter membership meeting left this school year. It's on Wednesday, June 6, at UFT headquarters, 52 Broadway, from 4:30 to 6 p.m.
- We're holding our annual end-of-the-year celebration on Monday, June 11, at UFT headquarters.
- The UFT Spring Education Conference is on Saturday, May 19. The conference is held at the New York Hilton Midtown, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Conference celebrates our work as public school educators. Join your fellow union members for great workshops, informative exhibits and the opportunity to network with colleagues. [Register for this event](#) on the UFT website.

5th annual 5K Family Run/Walk

Bring family, friends and colleagues to the UFT Middle Schools Division's 5th annual 5K family run/walk on May 5 at Coney Island's MCU Park!

The proceeds from this event will go to the UFT Disaster Relief Fund, which has helped UFT members following Hurricane Sandy and has contributed thousands of dollars to international relief operations following natural disasters in Haiti, Japan, the Philippines and Colombia.

You can run/walk as an individual or as part of a team. We will have complimentary water, snacks and giveaways for each race participant. The cost to register is \$25 per participant and \$15 for children age 12 and younger. UFT members may [register online](#) but please note: **You must be logged in to the UFT website to access the online registration.** You can also [download the registration form](#), sign the release of liability and submit it with your check or money order to: United Federation of Teachers, 52 Broadway, 14th floor, New York, NY 10004, attention: Derly-Mikaella Charles.

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