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Study: Healthcare union positively impacts patient care, working conditions, civic engagement

New look at the impact of the state's largest health care union on industry and workers

MIAMI – On Monday, December 7, RISEP released the findings of a major study on one of the most powerful players in healthcare in Florida, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare Florida. With healthcare at the forefront of the largest U.S. policy debate in two decades, researchers from the [Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy](http://www.risep-fiu.org) at [Florida International University](http://www.fiu.edu) were given unprecedented access to more than four hundred frontline healthcare workers to determine what impact the union is having on the healthcare industry, the workers' jobs and their lives.

Based on more than 400 interviews in Spanish, English and Haitian Creole, the report finds:

- By a margin of over 2 to 1, those members who perceive a union impact on the quality of patient care rate their union's effectiveness in improving this measure "good or very good" rather than "poor or very poor."
- The union's impact on patient care is corroborated by a 2009 study by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration that found clear and in some cases dramatic improvements in patient care after the passage of the "2.9 law" in 2001 that increased required care-giving hours in nursing homes.
- The majority of members of SEIU Healthcare Florida feel the union has had a positive impact on their lives, their working conditions, and the quality of patient care.
- The union has transformed the lives of about a third of its membership whom it has caused to become more attuned to public affairs.
- The union is one of the most active organizations in Florida working for the rights of immigrants, most notably among its membership which is comprised of a large number of immigrant workers.

Study author and principle investigator Bruce Nissen, Ph.D. said, "SEIU Healthcare Florida plays a major role in incorporating both low-income workers and nurses who have not traditionally exercised their power as patient advocates into the civic and political institutions of the country." Nissen added, "Few other institutions can claim a similar record of impact on so many areas of people's lives, and by extension on society at large."

The findings of the survey, and interviews and focus groups are presented separately in the 88-page report.

Please visit our website at www.risep-fiu.org and sign up for our [Research Alerts](#) which are available in the areas of economy, housing, and health care.

[RISEP](#) publishes research and data on issues of concern to low and middle income workers and their families in Florida. RISEP is part of the [Center for Labor Research and Studies](#) of the [School for International and Public Affairs](#) at [Florida International University](#).

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