

# Unionization Improves the Mount Sinai Postdoc Experience

## Before First Contract

## With First Contract

### SALARY

All salary levels and increases were unpredictable and set unilaterally by Mount Sinai. The minimum salary, \$58,661, had not been increased in nearly five years, since 2018.

\$72,500 minimum salary, the highest in the country for Postdocs (23-26% increase to minimum rates upon ratification), with minimum increasing by 1.5% in each year of contract. Guaranteed annual increases of at least 3%. Up to 43% salary increases over the duration of the contract.

### HOUSING

Mount Sinai unilaterally set housing policies and rates. Requested service and repairs were frequently slow and housing-related decisions lacked transparency. No guaranteed support for relocation costs.

Postdocs have a guaranteed right to 3 years of subsidized housing with a maximum rent increase of 2% per year. Postdocs receive a one-month grace period before the first month's rent and security deposit is due. Apartment repairs and service must be timely. Newly appointed Postdocs will receive a \$1500 relocation payment.

### FAMILY BENEFITS AND CHILDCARE

No guarantee of leave benefits for maternity, family, medical, bereavement or other reasons, and no childcare benefit. Requests for leave were frequently denied.

Guaranteed access to a range of leaves. Six weeks of fully paid parent leave for birth and non-birth parents after the birth or adoption of a child, or for family care, in addition to 6-8 weeks of medical leave. Mount Sinai will maintain an emergency support fund of \$50,000 per year for expenses related to childcare, housing, and more.

### PROTECTIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND BULLYING

Complaints regarding discrimination and harassment were handled solely according to Mount Sinai policies.

Stronger protections against discrimination, harassment, and abusive conduct including union representation, supportive measures, and the right to take complaints to a neutral arbitrator. Postdocs who file complaints are protected to ensure their career progress is not derailed.

### DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

Postdocs could be disciplined or dismissed arbitrarily, or "at will." Mount Sinai could lay off Postdocs at any time and for no reason with no notice or compensation.

Mount Sinai can only discipline or terminate a Postdoc's appointment with "just cause". This means that all discipline must be fair and performance-related, and is subject to the union grievance procedure.

### PAID TIME OFF (PTO) & SICK LEAVE

PTO was taken at the PI's discretion and Postdocs were often discouraged from using their accrued time off.

Postdocs have the guaranteed right to 20 days of PTO, 4 personal days, and 15 sick days available on the first day of appointment.

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### **WORKLOAD PROTECTIONS**

There were no limits on the number of hours or days that a PI could demand that Postdocs work.

Postdocs can only be required to work as much as is reasonably necessary to complete the project.

### **APPOINTMENTS & REAPPOINTMENTS**

Appointments could be for less than one year. Appointment notices often lacked important information about Sinai resources and benefits.

Initial appointments must be for at least one year and are renewable for up to 5 years. All researchers must receive written appointment notice including information about the position and union representation. For international workers, an extended DS2019 work authorization can be provided to minimize visa-related disruptions.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Mount Sinai unilaterally set and enforced health and safety standards.

Postdocs have the right to a workspace that is safe for themselves and their unborn children. Once reported, Postdocs cannot be required to work in unsafe conditions until an investigation is completed.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT & MENTORSHIP**

No guaranteed performance evaluations or right to mentored IDP development with your PI. Access to campus career development resources could be removed at any time.

All Postdocs have the right to protected time to participate in career development activities, create an IDP with their PI, and receive annual performance reviews. Mount Sinai is obligated to fund career activities (such as travel to conferences). Career development resources need to be available and maintained by Mount Sinai.

### **INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR RIGHTS**

Visa processing and tax assistance were often delayed, and Postdocs had to use vacation time to complete required visa renewal processes.

Appointments must be held open for at least 60 days if work authorization is delayed. Researchers are guaranteed visa renewal leave for immigration-related proceedings. Postdocs have a right to timely tax assistance and up to \$1250 in reimbursements for visa-related expenses, among many other improvements.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

No neutral, fair contractual process to resolve complaints. Mount Sinai had the final say over all disputes.

All workplace disputes arising under our contract are resolvable by a fair and expedient grievance procedure and, ultimately, appeal to a neutral arbitrator.

### **POLITICAL ADVOCACY**

No unified Postdoc voice in national policy making.

We are part of the UAW, a national union representing nearly 120,000 academic workers across the country. By working together with fellow UAW members we have a stronger collective voice to advocate for the issues that matter to us, both locally and nationally, in areas like visa policy making, climate change, and science funding. We can also play a key role in electing pro-science, pro-worker candidates.