

Social Justice & Worker Health

Work as a **Social Determinant of Health**

WestON

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Social Determinants of Health

The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.
-- WHO



Image: Jonny Goldstein



Work as a SDOH

Work *structures* factors that affect health

and,

Work is *structured by* larger social, economic, & political contexts

Work structures health

- Half of our waking hours spent at work
- Important exposures
- Structures access to resources, skills development, and power
- Provides access to benefits
- Venue for promoting healthy lifestyles

Work is structured by other SDOH

- Capitalism and global economy
- Racism, sexism, classism, other –isms
- Policies and politics

Health Disparities & Inequities

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Low income workers are more likely to be female, African-American or Hispanic, foreign-born and not have a high school diploma



Low income workers

- Relationship between income &
 - Life expectancy
 - Chronic disease
- Several of the most common low-income occupations have highest numbers of injuries and illnesses
- Low-income communities & risk factors

Why do minority and immigrant workers experience disparities?

LATINO WORKERS ARE AT GREATER RISK



Their job fatality rate is
18% HIGHER
than the overall job fatality rate.

#1uSafety

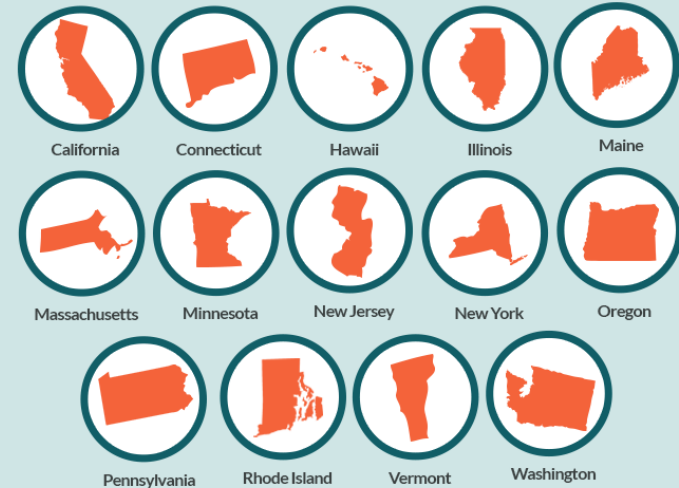
AFL-CIO

- Dangerous jobs
- Racism
- Long work hours/pressure
- Low awareness of rights and resources
- Burden of immigration status
- Language barriers/literacy
- Cultural differences
- Poorer occupational health care

Workforce trends & shifts

- Immigrant workers
- Service & global economy
- Decline of union representation & benefits
- Non-standard work arrangements

STATES WITH HIGH UNION DENSITY ARE AMONG THE SAFEST



Fourteen states rank in the top 20 in both union density and lowest rates of workplace fatalities.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014; AFL-CIO Death on the Job—The Toll of Neglect, 2017

#1uSafety

AFL-CIO

Healthy Jobs



What can we do?

- Union organizing
- Community organizing
- Training for Action
- Partnerships (CBPR & Research to Practice)
- Policy

Hotel Housekeepers

- Contract negotiations & collective bargaining agreement
- Workload



Restaurant Workers

- CBPR with workers
- Wage theft
- Community organizing & coalition building
- Policy success



Recycling Workers

- H&S training supported worker action
- Contract negotiations & community support



Making the Workplace Safer

The goal is to prevent workers from coming into contact with blood or body fluids. Ideally the public would be educated to not put needles, medical waste or other contaminated items into their recycling bins. This way, contaminated materials wouldn't show up at the facilities!

◆ What management can do:



Stop the line if you see a needle

1. Have a plan to handle needles and other contaminated materials safely.

- For example, workers who see a needle or bloody item are to stop the line and call a supervisor.
- Only a trained supervisor or worker should pick up needles or other bloody items.



Only a trained supervisor or worker should pick up needles

- To pick up needles safely:
 - Use a tool such as pincer tools, tongs or tweezers. Do not touch needles with your hands.
 - Use gloves that are called "puncture-resistant" (needles cannot go through them as easily). For example, Hexarmor gloves.
 - Bring the sharps box to the conveyor belt. The box must be sturdy and have a biohazard label. This label shows that the container has items that may have blood.
- Any area that had needles or other materials with blood should be disinfected immediately.

2. Train workers so they know how to protect themselves. The training should be in the language they best understand.

- They should also know what to do if they get pricked by a needle or come into contact with other material that has blood.

3. Check the speed and load depth on the conveyor belt.

- Make sure the belt is not too fast and that the load is not very deep so that workers can see what they are sorting. Otherwise workers may not notice a needle until it's too late.

4. Offer free Hepatitis B vaccines.

- It's a good idea to offer Hepatitis B vaccines to all workers. The employer pays for the vaccine, and workers should be able to get it during work hours.



Offer Hepatitis B vaccines

Asphalt Paving Workers



- Multistakeholder partnership
- Voluntary agreement to equip all new pavers with engineering controls for fumes

Domestic Workers

- Transform perception of domestic work
- Support safe, dignified jobs for domestic workers
- Promote use of non-toxic cleaning products

