Social Justice & Worker Health

Work as a Social Determinant of Health

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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
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.


#1uSafety

AFL-CIO
Healthy Jobs

- Living wages
- Family and Community
- Benefits
- Dignity
- Safe
- Limit stress and workload
- Job security
- Healthy Lifestyles
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:

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.

   ![Stop the line if you see a needle](image)

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 vaccines and workers should be able to get it during work hours.
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