



Occupational Safety and Health of Immigrant Workers: Barriers and Recommendations

Cambio de Colores
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Overview

- Barriers
- Research
- Recommendations
- Conclusion



Barriers to OSH for Latino Immigrant Workers

- Knowledge
- Cultural
- Language
- Structural



Knowledge

- Unfamiliar with materials and technology
 - We do things differently here
 - Many working in jobs they did not do back home
 - Exaggerate qualifications
- Unfamiliar with regulation and safety procedures
 - Regulations differ between countries
 - Enforcement differs between countries
- Improve
 - Training materials
 - Access to training



Language

- Can't just translate – need to tailor

- Literacy Levels
 - Show me don't tell me

- Native Languages
 - Functional but limited

Language Cont.

- No bilingual infrastructure (new areas)
 - Use “best” English speaker
 - Often does not fully understand (telephone)
 - Dependence
 - Sick
 - Tells boss one thing, workers another
 - Dark side of Cultural Competence
 - Recognize diversity of Latinos
 - Race vs. Class
 - Develop bilingual capacity
 - “Special” treatment
 - English and Spanish Classes



Culture

- May Perceive Risks Differently
 - Border Crossing
- Different expectations
 - Boss
 - First time at wage labor – do it yourself
- Self –image
 - Hard Workers
 - Only positive image
 - Rapid pace
 - Resourceful but not always safe
 - Make it work



Structural

- Work Organization
 - Sub-contractors
 - Independent Contractor
 - Reduced responsibility

- Immigration Status
 - Fear of deportation
 - Local legislation
 - Vulnerability and disengagement



Structural cont.

- Economic insecurity
 - Fear of job loss
 - Hard to find job
 - Ineligible for social safety net

- Mobility
 - Driver's license
 - Racial profiling
 - More visible in emerging communities



OSH Research Needs

- Epidemiological Surveillance
 - Injuries
 - Illnesses
 - Psychological
- Better knowledge about the community
 - Hinders/helps advocating for safe work
 - Current research vs. worker responses
 - Avoid unintended consequences
- Improved interventions
 - From print to accessing resources



Our Research

- Basic Ethnographic Data
 - Immigrant work experience
 - Barriers to safety and how to overcome them
 - Avoiding unintended consequences
- Tailoring and evaluating OSH interventions
 - Message, format & content
 - What works best
- Dissemination
 - How to connect with this community
 - Access to resources

Research Principles

- Work with community
 - From planning to data analysis
 - Pick “gatekeepers” carefully
- Mixed Methods
 - Qualitative & Quantitative (Cognitive Testing)
- Ethical Concerns
 - Protect participants – Immigration status
 - Who does research benefit?
 - Results & Resources
 - Accurately portray community

Conclusion

- Involve the Community
 - Barriers seem insurmountable from outside
 - Resourceful community
- Emerging communities have advantages
 - Not burdened with generations of structural racism
 - Can learn from past mistakes or repeat them
 - Emerging definition of “Latino”
- Promote common destiny
 - Benefits for established and emerging workforce
 - ESL is not bilingual



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