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
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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