

DIGGING DEEP INTO OUR MOVEMENTS:

STRATEGIES TO STOP GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST CHICAGO'S LOW-WAGE WORKERS

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AGAINST CHICAGO'S LOW-WAGE WORKERS

The authors are grateful to the following individuals for their invaluable feedback, expertise and research support in the creation of this report: Karla M. Altmayer, Amanda DePalma Gable, Julie Hilvers, Mike Maly, Lubia Núñez-Montelongo, and Matthew Schulte.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence initiated a multi-stakeholder research study to better understand movement strategies that were developing to address the intersecting inequalities of gender-based violence and economic exploitation experienced by Chicago's low-wage workers.

"Digging Deep" is the culmination of that study, and analyzes interviews, surveys and focus group discussions with over 20 Chicago-area organizations, including worker centers, rape crisis centers, legal aid agencies, public policy organizations, domestic violence shelters, and arts advocacy organizations. The purpose of our study was to gain a better understanding of three key questions within both the labor and anti-violence movements:

1. What strategies and responses currently exist within each movement when low-wage survivors of gender-based violence seek support?
2. What challenges does each movement experience with their current strategies, and what gaps do they identify in their existing capacity to support low-wage survivors?
3. What do organizational leaders see as the path forward? What is their vision for a more unified and effective cross-movement response to gender-based violence against low-wage workers?

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE LABOR MOVEMENT:

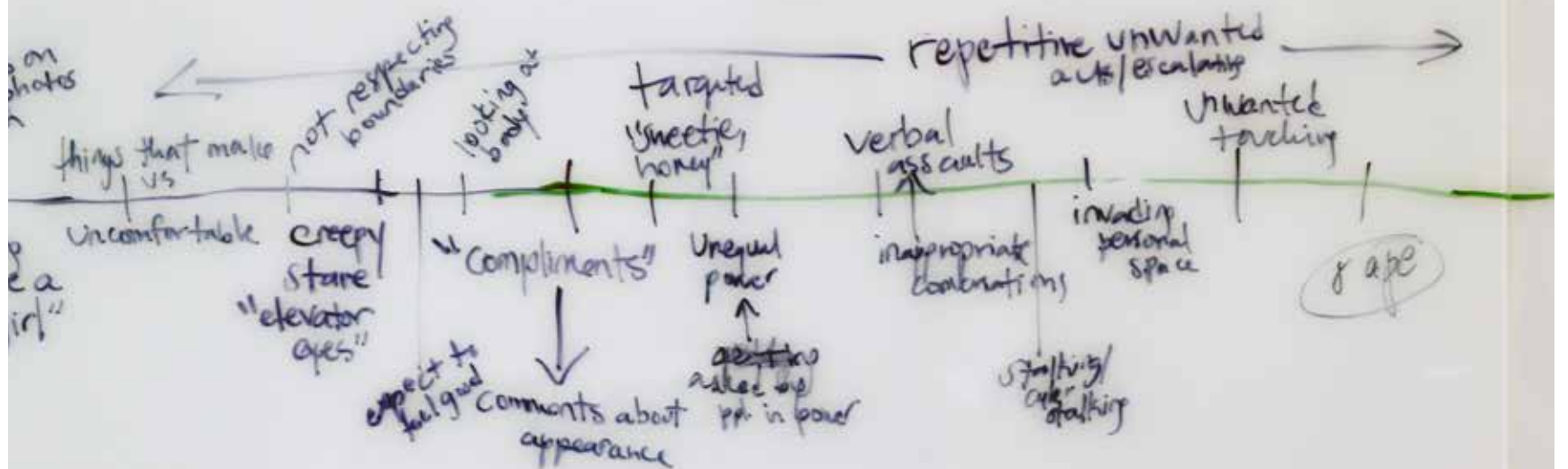
- Each worker center has experienced disclosures from survivors of gender-based violence, and uses varied responses when survivors come forward, ranging from connecting survivors to resources, referring survivors to attorneys, or supporting survivors in bringing complaints
- Major challenges: a lack of training and staff capacity to respond to sexual violence disclosures, inadequate legal protections, a lack of resources like attorneys and counselors to support survivors when they come forward, and a lack of gender-inclusive violence prevention strategies in the labor movement
- Visions for change: more intensive training and support for staff, stronger leadership development in preventing gender-based violence in worker communities, and the cultivation of safe, healing spaces within the labor movement for workers to share their stories and lift the social shame associated with surviving gender-based violence.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE MOVEMENT TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

- While the majority of organizations that work on gender-based violence issues provide direct services and advocacy to low-wage workers, eradicating poverty and advancing workers' rights are not explicitly stated as a part of most of these organizations' mission statement or strategic priorities
- Major challenges: geographic and language limitations in engaging low-wage survivors; funding restrictions that prevent low-wage survivors from obtaining desperately needed services,
- Visions for change: increasing worker rights and economic justice training, reaching low-wage survivors through direct participation in labor rights campaigns, peer support models to reach isolated survivors and innovate new, worker-led solutions to gender-based violence.

As a result of these findings, the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence has transformed its own strategy to create more sustainable, impactful solutions to addressing gender-based violence against Chicago's low-wage workers. In 2016, two of the Coalition's co-founders formed Healing to Action, a new organization whose mission is to build a worker-led movement to end gender-based violence through building the capacity of labor and anti-violence organizations, training and organizing low-wage workers to reach survivors in their communities, and coordinating Coalition partners to support workers' visions for policy and advocacy change to address the root causes of gender-based violence in their communities.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?



I. INTRODUCTION

“A guest placed a tip on the counter then stated he wanted to ‘put the tip on my ass.’ I refused and he took the tip back.

- COCKTAIL SERVER¹

“As a survivor of sexual harassment, I would not want any of my peers to feel the way that I do.

-DOMESTIC WORKER⁴

“It was taking a toll on me mentally. I was constantly afraid and anxious at work.

-FAST FOOD WORKER²

“I did what the company wanted, which was to treat it like it wasn’t a big deal.

-JANITORIAL WORKER³



Stories of gender-based violence are far too common in low-wage workplaces across the United States.

Over 60% of restaurant workers in a national survey by the Restaurant Opportunities Center reported experiencing sexual harassment on a weekly basis; nearly 80% of women and 70% of men experienced some form of sexual harassment from coworkers; and close to 80% of women and 55% of men experienced some form of sexual harassment from customers.⁵ 40% of fast food workers surveyed by Fight for 15 Chicago reported sexual harassment on the job. Two separate studies of agricultural workers, one in central California and the other in Iowa, found that eight in ten women farmworkers interviewed experienced harassment.⁶ A recent union report by UNITE HERE revealed that 77% of casino workers and 58% of hotel housekeepers have experienced harassment on the job.⁷ In many of these industries, gender-based harassment and violence is just “accepted [as] part of the culture.”⁸ Only one in four survivors of workplace sexual violence ever tells anyone.⁹



Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence members join the Women's March on Chicago, January 2017

There is also a strong correlation between precarious economic status and gender-based violence in the life of a low-wage worker. In recent years, more than 95% of violent incidents happened in households with incomes of less than \$75,000. Women in the lowest income bracket are anywhere from three to six times more likely to experience gender-based violence than women in higher earning brackets.¹⁰ With the cost of a single rape ranging from \$87,000 to \$240,776 for lost productivity, medical care and other expenses,¹¹ minimum wage workers who currently earn approximately \$15,080 a year lose a much larger percentage of their earnings than survivors in higher income brackets.

Gender-based violence harms all people and is used as a way of forcing them to behave, dress and speak in a particular way based on their birth-assigned gender.¹² In a 2011 survey, ninety percent of transgender respondents reported some form of workplace discrimination.¹³ Up to forty-one percent of LGBTQ workers have experienced vandalism or physical or emotional abuse as a result of their sexual identity.¹⁴ Violence against workers for failing to conform to gender stereotypes has devastating economic consequences. Gay and bisexual men earn over thirty percent less than their heterosexual counterparts.¹⁵ A survey of transgender workers who had lost a job due to bias found they were 85% more likely to be incarcerated and up to four times more likely to experience

homelessness than those who were not discriminatorily fired.¹⁶

Despite evidence that economic and social inequalities increase workers' vulnerability to gender-based violence, existing labor policies often fail to produce the conditions necessary to enable workers to assert their rights. Enforcement of existing legal protections is already weak in low-wage industries where incidents of wage theft and safety violations are rampant.¹⁷ Even though federal law prohibits workplace sexual violence, many low-wage jobs in small businesses, homes, and arrangements made through independent contracts do not qualify for these protections.¹⁸ The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is only able to resolve a small fraction of the sexual harassment charges that it receives each year.¹⁹ In Illinois, there is less than one civil legal aid attorney available to represent every 10,000 people living in poverty.²⁰



Workers gather for the Restoring Dignity Symposium, June 2016

The labor rights and anti-violence movements also face barriers in addressing gender-based violence against low wage workers. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence reported that approximately half of federally funded sexual assault service programs in the country have waiting lists for counseling services.²¹ State budget cuts in Illinois have caused rape crisis centers and domestic violence agencies to furlough and downsize their staff, creating further barriers for workers who cannot afford to pay for mental health or legal services.²² Unions and worker centers acknowledge that gender-based violence is an impediment to workers' ability to fight for better labor conditions, but many report the lack of training and resources to handle disclosures, refer cases for representation, and provide other ongoing support for workers dealing with gender-based violence.²³

In short, the problem of gender-based violence against low-wage workers is both deeply pervasive and also exceptionally difficult to address with existing strategies and resources. So too is the devastating impact of

Fight for 15 protest signs in front of building site for new McDonald's corporate headquarters, May 2017



gender-based violence on the economic security of low-wage workers, as well as the difficulty of accessing services, legal representation, or other supports in the aftermath of violence. It is increasingly clear that existing legal protections and policies against gender-based violence are insufficient because of shame, trauma, fear, cost, distance, time, and other barriers which prevent low-wage survivors from exercising their rights.

What receives less attention, however, are new movement strategies and best practices that are emerging in both the labor and anti-violence movements to address the alarmingly high rates of gender-based violence in low-wage workers' communities. In 2012, Chicago area worker centers, rape crisis centers, advocacy organizations, policy groups, and legal aid organizations formed the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence to develop a cross-movement response to gender-based violence against low-wage workers in Chicago.²⁴ Member organizations recognized the need for new interventions, organizing strategies, and political analyses to strike at the intersecting inequalities of labor and gender exploitation. One facet of this collaboration has been collecting and distilling the best practices and challenges of different organizations that interact with low-wage workers. This report provides a snapshot of trends, challenges and best practices in Chicago to better understand not just the problem of gender-based violence against low-wage workers, but potential pathways to transform community responses.

Fight for 15 leaders speaking out about employee reports of sexual harassment at Burger King in downtown Chicago, March 2017.



The research team collected data from over 20 Chicagoland worker rights and anti-violence organizations to understand how they perceive the problem, and how to forge a shared vision of safe, just and equitable conditions for all workers. We contacted all worker centers operating in Chicago in 2016, and conducted in-depth interviews with seven of them to learn how they see and respond to gender-based violence against their members, and to identify new interventions that could advance their existing efforts. We also conducted a survey of Chicagoland organizations that work on gender-based violence issues to better understand their accessibility to low-wage workers, their self-identification as workers' rights organizations, and their interest in building capacity to advance the rights of low-wage workers. Our interpretation of results in both sections of the study aims to increase capacity in both the labor and anti-violence movements and identify breakthrough interventions to support low-wage workers who are fighting gender-based violence in their communities. We sought to identify movement strategies that advance implementation, so that when lawsuits, campaigns and legislative advocacy efforts succeed, workers have the organizational and community support they need to come forward.

II. WORKER CENTER RESPONSES TO GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST LOW-WAGE WORKERS: CHALLENGES AND PATHWAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Worker centers are nonprofit organizations that organize and provide support for low-wage workers and workers whose industry is not traditionally organized by labor unions or other types of collective bargaining organizations. Worker centers engage in collective action, and provide resources and support for workers to fight against wage theft and other forms of labor exploitation while fighting for higher wages, pay equity, non-discrimination, workers compensation, and improved health and safety. Worker centers serve some of the most exploited communities, like immigrant workers, undocumented workers, women, and people of color that occupy temporary, precarious or contingent jobs in the restaurant, food processing, warehousing, distribution, manufacturing, day labor, domestic work, caregiving, and service industries.

In addition to organizing around wages and work conditions, worker centers also provide a wide array of training and services to educate workers and assist them in their legal cases, advocate for changes to existing laws to improve protections for workers, and identify unfair or illegal workplace practices. Importantly, worker centers provide workers with a community of people that share their experiences to collectively organize around issues that matter most to them.

As such, worker centers are uniquely positioned to connect low-wage workers to resources, support, and community building around issues pertaining to gender-based violence. The Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence sought to gain an in-depth understanding of worker centers' observations about the causes and responses to gender-based violence in the lives of their members and constituency groups. In 2016, executive directors and key organizers from seven of the worker centers based in the Chicagoland region were interviewed to better understand how worker centers integrate awareness of gender-based violence into their trainings and organizational practices, their overall capacity to respond to worker survivors, and the resources needed to strengthen this work going forward.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

All of the centers reported that workers will come to them with issues of gender-based violence, to varying degrees. One center shared a particularly powerful story that encapsulates the power of worker centers to achieve justice for survivors of workplace sexual violence:

“

We got really involved in the whole issue around sexual assault in the workplace and gender discrimination more broadly in 2012 ... a worker was sexually assaulted by her supervisor at the workplace. Her and her mother, who also worked in the warehouse, went to the police. The police did not investigate it. They gave them witness forms and said go get these filled out. So they had to investigate their own allegation. The police called the employer and let them know that the workers had reported this. The employer then fabricated this allegation that these workers were stealing powdered milk from the warehouse. The police arrested the victim, the victim's mother, and then three other workers in the warehouse, and held them in jail for two weeks. We were contacted by the mother who had gotten out... We led a campaign to win justice, both through the courts and also public pressure against the state's attorney. We were successful in getting the state's attorney to drop the charges. The workers won a settlement from a suit against the employer, but the rapist is still at the company. It's the boss's son.



Community forum about sexual violence on International Women's Day, March 2017.

While all the worker centers shared examples of gender-based violence issues their members confronted, the way the centers connected workers with resources survivors need to fight for justice and begin the healing process varied greatly.

REPORTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TO WORKER CENTERS

Workers bring complaints to the centers in several ways. Sometimes they come to the center specifically to file a complaint. Some worker centers identify cases of workplace sexual violence by directly asking workers during the intake process if they have experienced unwanted sexual contact in the workplace.



We ask them if they have ever been discriminated against in the workplace ... have your boss or supervisor ever hit on you, asked you for a date, made you feel uncomfortable? Who did you complain to?

Sometimes workers come in seeking services for one type of complaint, only to reveal later that they are also victims of gender-based violence. Since the intake process can be a crucial point for workers to raise their experiences, the intake staff need to be trained to respond to or identify cases of workplace harassment and violence.



A lady has been beaten in a workplace by a male co-worker, who was her partner four years ago but he still harasses this lady. I've advised her that if she experiences harassment she needs to call the police... she came in here because of stolen wages then these others issues came up... Inform us if [the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence] has another training so we can send more people. It is important for the person who does intake to learn how to deal with the issue.

Intake forms alone are inadequate to identify gender-based violence since they rely on individuals to self-report experiences of gender-based violence. Workers themselves may not know that what they are experiencing is illegal, inappropriate, or an issue that the center is prepared to fight.



I also wonder if we assess for it appropriately. I don't ask directly. In our intake form we ask about the basic facts and then I'll say, "And now here is your opportunity to tell me what is exactly what's going on." So I did have people, after starting a campaign, reveal after the fact that something has happened, and I am like "oh I had no idea."

Checking off a box on an impersonal form may not be the most conducive way to get workers to talk about or even acknowledge the gender-based violence they are experiencing when they feel ashamed or think they will not be believed.

“ A lot of people will back out of it because it is so traumatizing ... it’s tough to get people to speak out with this.

In other cases workers may fear reprisals for speaking out.

“ They are actually going through it but they don’t want to tell anybody in fear of losing their jobs... We’ve had two, maybe three people, that have come in and say they were sexually assaulted at their jobs and they didn’t want to tell nobody in fear of losing their jobs.

Still others may see gender-based violence as just part of the job. The structure of certain jobs, especially in the service industry, forces workers into compliance with sexual harassment and violence.

“ [The restaurant industry] is one of the few professions where you literally depend upon the customers to pay for your wages. It creates this dynamic of a very sexualized industry that has this expectation of women to be very sexual and serving [to] men... Employers have tons of power as far as what tables you get, what days you get, whether you’re going to get better shifts or not.

In the case of undocumented workers, survivors may feel powerless to speak up because of their immigration status, or they may not know the laws and norms that prohibit workplace sexual violence in the United States.

“ With immigrant workers, it’s really a question of feeling powerless to do anything about it. And in some cases, being really tied to a particular job or feeling like, if I do something about this, I won’t be able to work somewhere else.

The key takeaway here is that there are many societal obstacles that discourage workers from reporting workplace violence issues unless there is a safe space and a supportive, knowledgeable community.

WORKER CENTER RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Once workers have brought their complaints to the worker centers, the centers take a variety of steps to address these complaints. In many cases, worker centers will be a strong advocate for a survivor of workplace sexual violence.

“ We do an assessment of if they are in crisis or not. We have accompanied people to file police reports in the past. We’ve done direct negotiations for disciplinary action to be taken against certain personnel, and ask they undergo training on what is sexual harassment. We’ve assisted with people filing at both IDHR and EEOC ... We have a number of attorneys that specialize in different subsections of employment law who are willing to take referrals from us.

Worker centers will advise their members to take the formal steps that will strengthen their case in legal and human resources procedures. First they advise workers to write everything down.



Pilot training for Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence community education curriculum, October 2013

Worker centers will also encourage their members to take this evidence to managers and supervisors in human resources departments. But many centers lack faith that HR departments will serve the interest of workers.

“ We know that the HR sucks. We still help them file it, but we know it’s not going to go anywhere. At the end of the day, people are losing hope. Are you really helping people or are you just helping people give up?

Worker centers also connect workers to attorneys to help them navigate the process and when necessary, file complaints against the employer.

“ We have an intake system so the staff are trained on what basic questions to ask to identify issues. Then we have an intake form that goes to a lead organizer, and assuming there is a potential legal issue there, it gets referred out to an attorney through our attorney referral network. But we also try to do more than just, you know, take legal action on these cases.

Solely relying on legal means to remedy the harm done can itself pose barriers for workers who do eventually come forward because the laws do not respect the obstacles that survivors have to overcome in order to report incidents.

“ I think people are very hesitant to come forward and when they do come forward, they’re often super constrained by the law. And so it might take more than 300 days²⁵ for someone to figure out what happened to them, define it in a way, overcome it enough to find a resource, take the time to come here. I mean we work with the most vulnerable populations with the least amount of time and resources and we’re asking them to make time and find resources, it’s very absurd and unjust.

In domestic violence cases, worker centers may be reluctant to involve the legal system, especially if the case involves undocumented immigrants who may be sent directly to detention facilities, or charged with felonies that lead to deportation. In these cases, survivors of gender-based violence often need alternative means to gain justice.

Once workers feel safe enough to come forward, worker centers adopt various approaches to seek justice for survivors. Some centers build public campaigns and actions to put pressure on specific companies to address the complaints in a fair and just way for the worker and, more generally, to draw public attention to workplace sexual violence issues.

Other centers have held trainings to help people deepen their understanding of sexual harassment and violence, to give workers tools to prevent and fight it, as well as a chance to share their stories.



We do the sexual harassment training as a part of our ongoing work. And during that training we address sexual violence. But what we do more around sexual violence is encourage people to talk about that story, and talk about the fact that when we come together, even in the worst cases, we can actually do something about these things. Most people know that sexual assault is wrong and so it's really a question of blowing the whistle on it and the organization being a place where people can talk about it and get help. But sexual harassment is also something where people need to feel empowered to raise it with the boss, need to know what their rights are around retaliation, and be able to enforce and exercise those rights.

Another way Chicago worker centers are able to create spaces for workers to talk to others in a healing and communal way about the harm done to them is through women's committees. The support that women receive in these groups may also increase the likelihood that others will report what happens to them or that women will have the support they need to fight for justice.



The most successful campaigns occur when there's groups because women feel supported by each other and they feel supported by witnesses. There is more potential that the company will respond, and more quickly, because they look worse. People working in a group have more power to enact real and lasting change in the workplace.

Workers may be prevented from participating in these committees due to the violence or control they experience from their partner at home. Abusive or controlling partners use their authority in the home to curtail the leadership and organizing of their partner outside of the home, underscoring the ways violence inside the home reinforces the larger system of gender-based violence outside the home.



When we first started, we were founded predominantly by women. Our President, she was an incredible woman. Her husband didn't allow her to continue with the organization... the challenge that we have in the Latino community is dealing with this machismo and these household problems that affect the participation of the leaders.

Although the above quote specifically references machismo in one culture, hyper-masculinity is a problem found across all communities of workers. Some issues raised by the centers connect the ways in which workers are oppressed inside the home to the gendered problems they have at the workplace.

Organizers are seeking ways to bring men into the fight against gender-based violence. Indeed, since men are the primary agents of workplace sexual violence, and benefit from the overarching gendered power dynamics that enable them to sexually exploit women in the workplace, at home and on the streets, some of the worker centers see male allies as key to dismantling male privilege.



If I could create my dream it would be creating an organized group of men who are in solidarity, who take it upon themselves to educate themselves and have the tools necessary to have these conversations with other men. Men are the ones who can stop sexual violence, but we have to have the tools and the conversations to do that ... creating a movement of men who are talking about it and holding each other accountable and systems of accountability, that's my dream world.

However, challenging male privilege can be difficult if staff are unprepared to have these kinds of conversations.



Before the staff engages our members, especially the males, in the conversation of sexual violence, is the staff even prepared? When we first opened the center, we had that conversation and we got our butts kicked. Here you have three or four organizers and it's a whole group of men, twenty plus males, who for the first time are having this kind of conversation... the staff wasn't even remotely prepared to have it.

Even as organizers recognize the need for training for their staff to address gender-based violence, many centers reported not making sexual harassment and gender-based violence prominent within their trainings. While all centers acknowledged taking a firm stance against gender oppression is important, some centers expressed that trainings on gender-based violence are secondary or supplemental to wage issues.

“

I think that part of it is that we ourselves have to be more intentional, making sure we bring in all. Like when we do trainings, a lot of the times it's quick, they are short trainings, and so we talk mainly about the basics which are just labor rights, wage theft and discrimination.

“

We developed a community training. It is not the most important because wage theft is more important. But we do put together a training.

While many expressed that they are interested in fighting gender-based violence, worker centers already operate with limited capacity, and, as such, may not have the ability to fully address gender-based violence.

“

I think people feel like it's too hard to deal with on top of everything else that we're faced with.

Some centers mentioned that they are not just connecting workers to services, but also seeking training and support to shape their internal procedures.

“

What I would like to see is if we could have something in writing for us internally as a staff, but also something that we could provide to our leaders as they start becoming more committed that they can sign a disclosure saying that there is not going to be any harassment against them, and it's not just to women, it's also something done to men. That would help me as a director to try to implement their policy.

While the centers may have formal procedures in their employee manuals, few receive training on how to handle workplace sexual violence and harassment in their own workplaces.

“

Stuff like that is actually in our employee manual, in things that we sign, but I can't think of a time that there has actually been an in-house-training.

THE COALITION AGAINST WORKPLACE SEXUAL VIOLENCE TRAINING

In 2012, founding members of the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence - particularly workers and worker organizers - voiced the need for training that could facilitate dialogue within low-wage worker communities about gender-based violence. After a year of deep collaboration between worker center organizers, anti-rape advocates, attorneys and government partners, the Coalition launched a pilot curriculum entitled "Ending Sexual Violence in the Workplace: A Curriculum and Guide for Community Educators." The Coalition piloted the curriculum with over a dozen organizations from 2013-2015.

The curriculum uses four modules. The first module introduces the topic of gender-based violence to a community of workers for the first time. The second module is tailored to workers who have experienced gender-based violence so they can better understand their legal rights and how to assert them individually and collectively. The third module is tailored to workers who witness gender-based violence, to help them learn how to support and practice solidarity with survivors. Finally, the fourth module trains the trainers themselves, providing skills and advice about how to handle survivor disclosures, facilitate contentious conversations, and create safe spaces to hold trainings.

Each module fuses popular education exercises used by the labor movement with training practices used by rape crisis centers to elevate awareness about rape culture. Pushing beyond a "know your rights" training, the curriculum is designed to change workers' attitudes and beliefs about gender-based violence, and help them to connect gender-based violence to the larger context of racism, classism, ableism, and other forms of oppression. It is also designed to help communities understand the continuum of gender-based violence, from sexist and homophobic language to violent physical acts like rape and hate crimes.

Six of the worker centers taking part in the interviews received training from the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence. Some of the centers have successfully integrated some of the training techniques into their own trainings.

“

I know that when [the previous trainer] was doing presentations, he was incorporating [the CAWSV curriculum] with some of the labor presentations that he was doing.

For other centers, the training has made them more adept at identifying cases of workplace sexual violence.

“ We are more focused on what is happening in the workplace to women, we know how to identify more so than in the past. We know what questions to ask.

Still other centers see the training as making them more proficient in providing key services to their workers and helping fulfill their mission as an organization or develop professionally.

“ It’s helped the organization fulfill its commitment and actually put it into practice. It’s like the saying, if you can talk the talk, you can walk [the walk].

“ How are you going to have a worker center and not be trained on how to deal with this issue that you know is prevalent? There’s just this professional standardization that we need.



Community organizers at CAWSV curriculum pilot training, October 2013.

RESOURCE NEEDS

Given newly passed sexual harassment protections for marginalized groups like domestic workers, and growing attention that workers' political campaigns have brought to the issues of workplace sexual violence, some worker centers foresee an increase in reporting that will require additional resources and training to keep up.

***“ Under the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights that just recently passed and will be enacted in January, domestic workers for the first time are protected against sexual harassment. And we know it happens all the time because you are the only person in someone’s private home. We’ve heard horrible things happening to many of our members. I expect to see an uptick in reporting. Because we are doing a concerted outreach to domestic workers about these rights, including discussing sexual harassment.*”**

Some of the centers suggested that training and capacity-building around workplace sexual violence should be implemented within their national organization.

***“ I think it is something that I would like to make a sort of standardized thing, not just here, but throughout [the national organization] in general. Our entire organization, there are fourteen affiliates across the country, should actually be well trained on some of these issues ... we just haven’t set up the space to do it.*”**

In addition to training, worker centers need committed lawyers to represent survivors, who often have lengthy and complicated cases.

***“ Attorneys, attorneys, attorneys. We need an attorney. We need legal representation on this issue. And I guarantee you we will get more people if we can promote it with free attorneys ... if we don’t have the support system, what do we do with these cases?*”**

“

Legal support for women who face sexual assault is something that we really need... A lot of times, the commitment doesn't really match the promise. Having a small group of folks who will actually follow through is more important to us than a wide network of people.

Finally, worker centers need credible organizations that focus on gender-based violence to publicly support their work.

“

Having an organization stand with us publicly is really important in those types of cases. Having folks who can say at a press conference, this is wrong, this needs to stop, and we're standing with the workers is key. And having those relationships on the front end so we don't have to build them over time would be really good.



Workshop on gender-based violence with Healing to Action and Latino Union of Chicago, December 2016.

BEST PRACTICES AND PATHWAYS FOR PROGRESS

Given the power of collective action that worker centers bring to low-wage workers struggling for social justice, worker centers are vital partners in the struggle to end workplace sexual violence. While all the worker centers we talked to said they provide some sort of service to workers who experience workplace sexual violence, the approach they take varies. On one end of the spectrum, centers see the work as one more supplemental service to provide to their members. On the other end of the spectrum, centers are approaching workplace sexual violence as part of a broader movement challenging gender inequality. Most centers we talked to fall closer to the service end of the spectrum. While recognizing that workplace sexual violence is something that women experience more than men, and is therefore one dimension of gender inequality that workers have to fight, the respondents acknowledged the issue needs to be made more central to their mission.

All centers have some type of process in place to link survivors of workplace sexual violence to supports and legal remedies to seek justice. Almost all have a “know your rights” component to their training materials where they instruct workers on the process of documenting their claims and to find witness or others who have been subject to abuse. Many centers will support workers step-by-step through the process of reporting harms to managers, human resources, and government agencies like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. And if they have the networks, centers will connect survivors with lawyers who may take their cases. In a few cases, worker centers will also use their collective muscle to pressure employers to reprimand or dismiss abusers, and the government to charge abusers with crimes. While lawsuits, complaints filed with human resources, and police reports may be crucial mechanisms for survivors to hold their abusers accountable, most centers acknowledged that these formal mechanisms are not the only components or pathways to justice.

Each of the worker centers had some sort of response after workers reported abuse. But to end workplace sexual violence, the problem also needs to be addressed before abuse happens. While centers indicated they were interested in doing more to end workplace sexual violence, they also acknowledged their lack of resources, lack of staff equipped with the tools and knowledge to do the work, and the general lack of time in the face of what some regarded as more urgent matters, like wage theft or employee compensation issues. In part because of strained resources in the current worker center landscape, most of the centers reported that their materials and organizing around gender-based violence are more supplemental than central to their core mission.

Almost every center expressed some degree of desire to make gender equality a greater focus in the work that they do as a center. This is something to be

applauded and built upon. Since many low-wage sectors do not benefit from union protections and resources, fighting workplace sexual violence in low-wage industries will be more successful if low-wage workers are organized to build power in worker centers. Based on ideas and solutions shared in the interviews, worker centers can undertake three types of actions that can help to build on their existing work to address gender-based violence against low-wage workers.

First, worker centers identified the need to build a proactive movement around gender-based violence that challenges gender-based violence and hypermasculinity in all spheres of social life: at home, at work and on the streets. An offensive stance towards ending workplace sexual violence would require a movement centering gender-based violence against low-wage workers as a key labor issue, while also addressing the specific ways that low-wage workers and immigrant workers are vulnerable to gender-based violence. Given the resource strain worker centers confront, some centers expressed that an organization that exclusively focuses on gender-based violence against low-wage workers can help support and expand the work that they would like to do around gender inequality.

Second, survivors need access to the formal channels of reporting gender-based violence, where they will be believed and supported, and where their abusers will be held accountable. This type of response requires attorneys and other supportive services to help survivors navigate an often complicated and adversarial legal process if they decide to pursue action against an abuser. It also requires a broad definition of accountability, so that survivors who do not want to pursue formal channels have other community-based processes they can use to seek justice.

Third, survivors of workplace sexual violence need spaces to heal. While formal human resources or legal mechanisms can hold abusers accountable, they do not address the emotional wounds that survivors carry with them. Survivors need resources to heal as much as they need accountability. Healing comes with movement work to address the root causes of gender-based violence, and requires the entire community of workers to be involved.

While a number of worker centers facilitate these healing spaces through women's committees, some centers expressed the need for men to be equally engaged in addressing this issue. Addressing the cultural norms which encourage men to control and sexualize women to prove their masculinity would engage men as allies in the struggle to end violence against women. It would also destigmatize sexual violence experienced by male survivors, making men feel less ashamed in coming forward when they are a survivor. Finally, the Coalition has encountered many stories of homophobia and heterosexism which silence and marginalize lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, bisexual and gender

nonconforming workers in their workplaces and communities. To fully address the root causes of gender-based violence, it is necessary to address the ways in which cultural norms around masculinity are used to force people to conform to traditional gender roles, and how this harms lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, bisexual and gender nonconforming people.

An organizing approach that equally engages members of all genders will avoid gender-based violence being categorized as a “woman’s issue,” create room for survivors from all genders to find support, and ensure when a survivor comes forward, his or her or their story will be met with support from all members of the community.

These three movement components address gender-based violence against low-wage workers holistically by fighting the root causes of violence, holding violators accountable, and promoting the wellbeing of survivors.

Domestic workers and advocates at press conference discussing new sexual harassment protections under Illinois law, January 2017



III. THE MOVEMENT TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: INTERSECTIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY FOR LOW-WAGE SURVIVORS

The second part of the study used survey research to develop recommendations aimed at increasing the overall capacity of organizations that work on gender-based violence issues to respond to the needs of low-wage workers. As a coalition, we saw many workers who had survived gender-based violence experience difficulty obtaining critical services. We observed workers reach out for help that they did not ultimately receive due to eligibility requirements, waiting lists and capacity issues at partner organizations, as well as workers' geographic distance from centralized services. We also sought to better understand how anti-violence organizations viewed their core mission in relation to advancing the conditions of low-wage workers. Many anti-violence organizations in Chicago primarily serve survivors living in poverty, but it was unclear if poverty eradication or economic justice were seen as key components of the agencies' organizational missions.

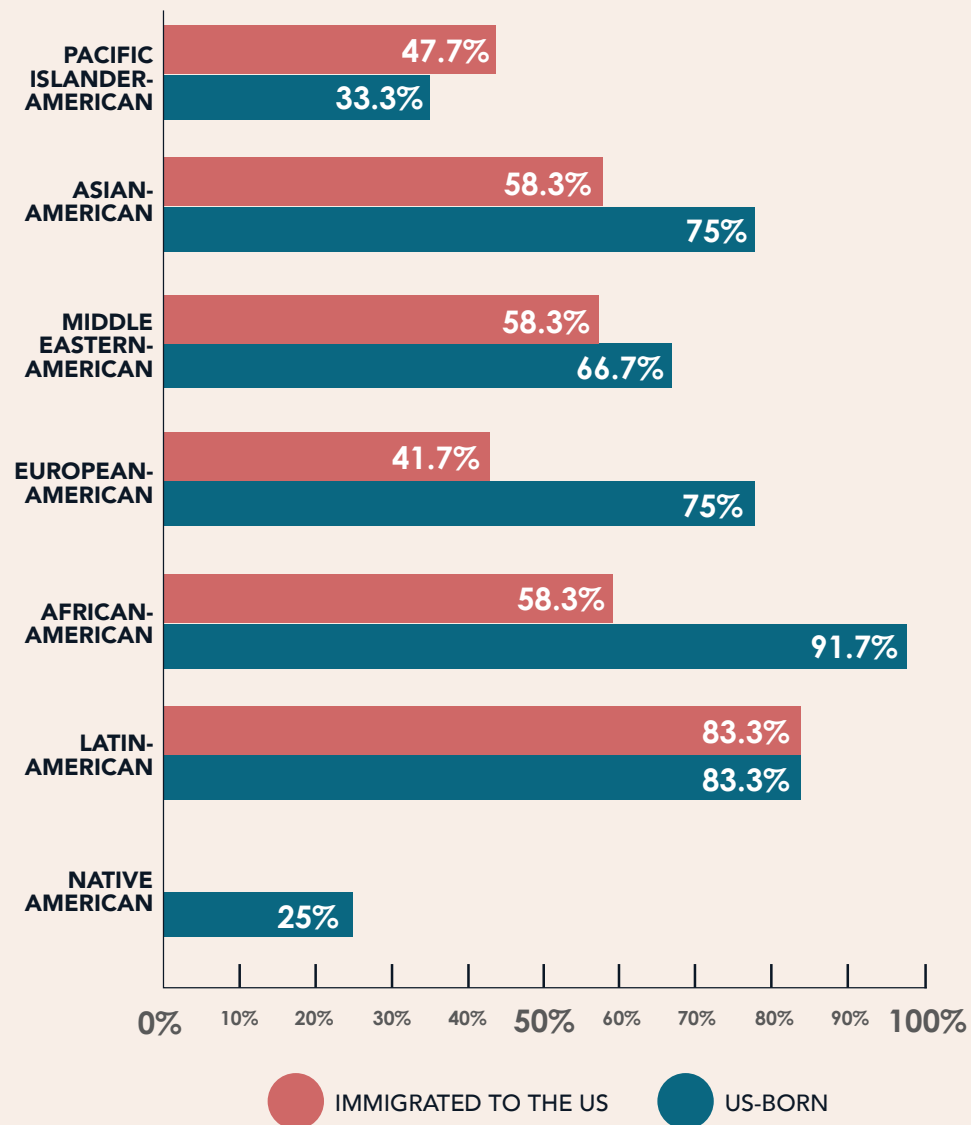
The survey was designed to measure:

1. Respondents' accessibility to low-wage workers across different measures;
2. How respondents viewed their core mission and programming in relation to low-wage worker rights issues;
3. How capacity affected respondents' ability to do both anti-violence and worker rights' work; and
4. Respondents' interest within these organizations in broadening their training or services to better meet the needs of low-wage workers

OUR SAMPLE

We selected 29 organizations in Chicagoland for the sample. Each organization contacted offered a program or service that responded to specific needs of survivors of gender-based violence. The target group of organizations included domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, legal aid providers, policy advocacy organizations, community-based organizations and arts advocacy organizations. The sample group did not include membership-based labor organizations (trade unions, worker centers, and labor alliances). We sent the survey via regular mail to the executive director of each organization, and 13 surveys were returned, producing response rate of 45%. Overall, the organizations surveyed reported serving a broad range of racial and ethnic groups and immigrant populations.

ORIGINS OF ORGANIZATIONS' CLIENTELE



ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

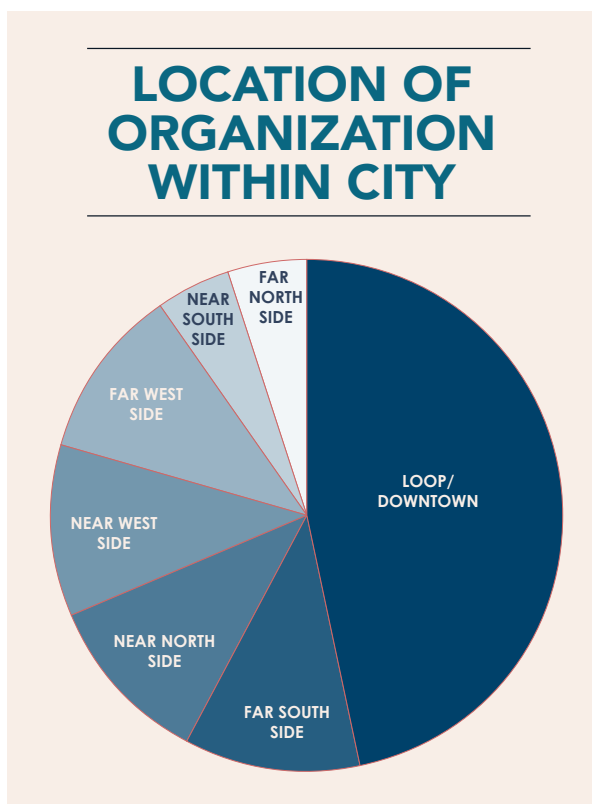
We evaluated accessibility of services to low-wage workers through four main measures: geographic location, accessibility to public transit, language access and outreach methods.

A majority of respondents reported that their organization is located in the Chicago Loop/downtown (69%). Only a few organizations were located outside of the Loop in other neighborhoods. Nearly all respondents reported that their organization is accessible by public transit (92%).

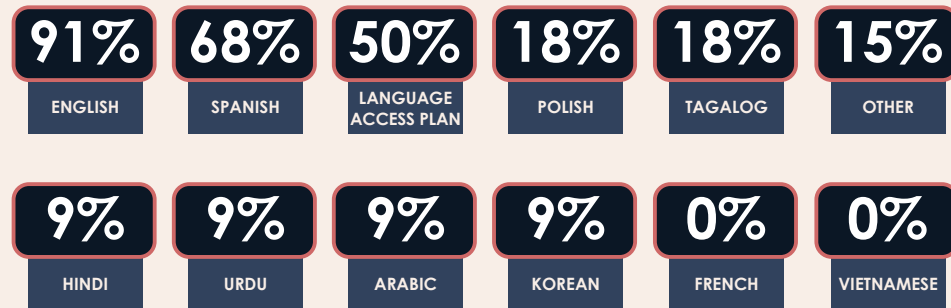
Low-wage workers are likely to work long hours with highly unpredictable and inflexible schedules.²⁶ In a recent study, nearly half of adults living in Chicago reported they spend more than 30% of their income on their mortgage, and 24% reported taking a second job to meet their mortgage payments.²⁷ Chicago is also the ninth most expensive rental market in the country, with the average rent for a one-bedroom in neighborhoods bordering the downtown Loop costing around \$2,000.²⁸

Average rents on the far south and west sides of Chicago are about a third of that, anywhere from \$600-\$800.²⁹ As a result, low-wage workers are likely to live further away from the Loop than higher-earning city residents. The time and expense associated with traveling to the Loop suggest that low-wage workers face significant accessibility challenges reaching organizations that work on gender-based violence issues, given the large concentration of organizations located downtown.

All but one respondent reported that their organization accommodates English speakers in their services (91%). Slightly fewer, but still a majority, said they accommodated Spanish speakers (68%). Half of respondents reported that their organization has a language access plan that accommodates the language needs of any client (50%). Just a few organizations offered other languages, such as Polish, Tagalog, Hindu, Urdu and Korean. The data clearly indicate a gap in services for workers who do not speak either English or Spanish.



LANGUAGES ACCOMMODATED BY ORGANIZATION



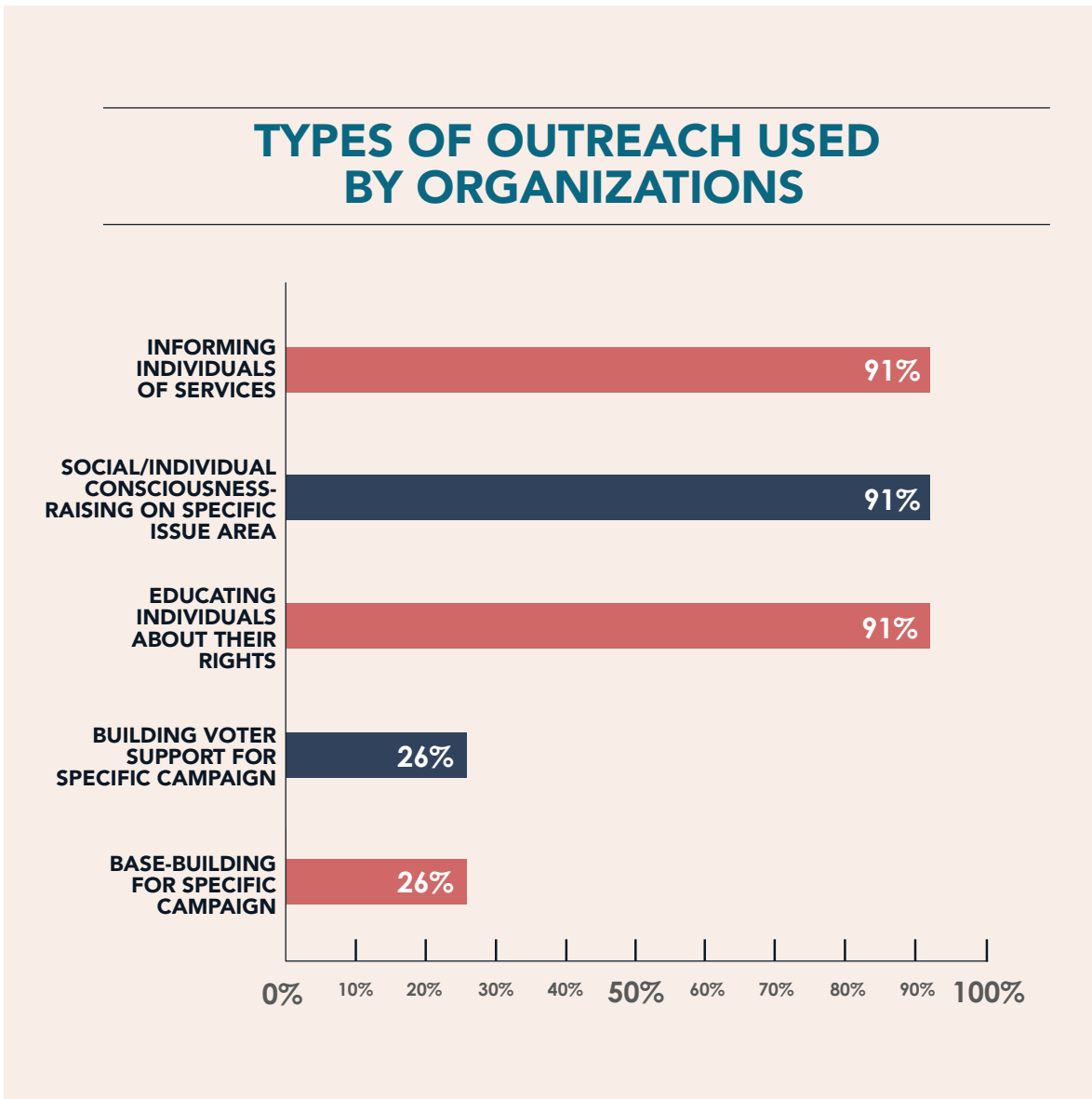
Geographic and language barriers heighten the importance of outreach and culturally relevant community engagement efforts to reach workers, such as clinics and activities in neighborhoods where workers live and/or work and in their native languages. Partnering with community and neighborhood-based organizations to reach workers would in their native language increase accessibility of services, while also strengthening on-the-ground collaboration between organizations. However, it is important that these partnerships are funded or otherwise resourced to avoid further straining existing capacity.

Workers signing up for community actions around sexual violence at Restoring Dignity symposium, June 2016.



Finally, we examined the outreach approaches and methods used by organizations. Respondents were much more likely to do outreach through educational activities like “know your rights” presentations than outreach involving direct action or participating in campaigns. We also looked at whether an organization’s outreach involved direct contact with community members

or indirect contact with community members through intermediaries. For the purposes of classification, direct outreach methods involved canvassing (either by phone or in person) and “know your rights” trainings in the community, while indirect outreach methods involved television or radio public service announcements, social media, pamphlets, and first responder training. Nearly all organizations reported using indirect methods, while slightly fewer were involved in direct contact with workers.



If anti-violence organizations participate in labor campaigns, community canvassing and other forms of one-on-one engagement in low-wage worker communities, they may be able to more effectively reach workers who currently cannot access them due to the income, geographic, and language barriers discussed above. Supporting the work of neighborhood organizations and worker centers can also build trust with constituents, aligning the anti-violence organization with a trusted community presence and initiating contact with survivors through a related focus area that does not carry the same stigma as gender-based violence (for example, wage theft or community safety campaigns).

ORGANIZATIONS' SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF ADVANCING WORKERS' RIGHTS

We were particularly interested in determining whether respondents within the sample—who were selected for the survey because they worked on gender-based violence issues—also worked to advance low-wage workers' rights issues. We used a variety of measures to examine whether work on both gender-based violence and worker rights was taking place. First, we examined whether service organizations were providing direct services on both issues. Of those organizations providing direct services for gender-based violence, two-thirds also provided services for low-wage workers' rights. Additionally, whether an organization provided direct services on either workers' rights or gender-based violence did not significantly vary according to the size of the organization's budget.

Despite a large proportion of organizations reporting they worked with low-wage workers, only a small percentage of respondents said advocating for workers' rights was mentioned in their organization's strategic plan (25%), their mission statement (18%), or their top three strategic priorities (27%). Similarly, small proportions said combating workplace sexual violence was mentioned in their strategic plan (23%), their mission statement (31%), or their top three strategic priorities (31%).

So while two thirds of respondents who provided direct services for survivors of gender-based violence also provided direct services for workers' rights, less than a quarter of respondents acknowledged advancing workers' rights in their strategic plan, priorities or mission statement. It is possible, then, that organizations see the work they do on workers' rights as ancillary to their core work. Or it is possible that the strategic priorities and mission of the organization do not accurately reflect the scope of work that anti-violence organizations are doing around workers' rights.

The Coalition recommends that anti-violence organizations perform an analysis of whether their mission and strategic priorities reflect the work they do on a daily basis for low-wage workers. If a large percentage of constituents are low-wage workers, or if the organization offers programs that improve the conditions of low-wage workers, organizations should consider a policy or values statement that reflects their commitment to workers' rights/poverty eradication. Simply creating such a statement creates a baseline to evaluate how advancing workers' rights is already embodied in the organization's work, and how existing work can be used to foster new collaborative relationships and resources. It also promotes conversations about how to deepen the

organization's commitment to promoting workers' rights. For example, anti-violence organizations can survey coalitions they can join that are committed to workers' rights, evaluate if the organization is effectively communicating its work to promote workers' rights to supporters, and strengthen organizational analyses about how workplace injustice enables gender-based violence against their constituents.

INTERSECTIONAL WORK AS A FUNCTION OF CAPACITY

We sought to determine whether an organization's likelihood of providing programming on workers' rights was a function of its overall capacity. Using the budget of an organization as a measure of capacity, we divided budget size into three categories: under \$1 million, \$1-2 million, and greater than \$2 million. The data show that larger organizations are slightly more likely to provide direct services and referrals on both gender-based violence and low-wage workers' rights.

A second measure of capacity was training that staff received within the organization about gender-based violence and/or workers' rights. Significantly fewer organizations provided training to staff in the last five years for low-wage workers' rights (39%) compared to sexual violence (92%). A handful of



Workers participating in healing workshop with Rape Victim Advocates, June 2016.

organizations provided training on gender-based violence as part of a new staff orientation. No organization provided training in low-wage workers' rights as part of a new staff orientation. A majority of the respondents thought their organizations would benefit from further training in both areas; however, more thought additional training on workers' rights would be beneficial (70%) than on sexual violence (50%).

Finally, we explored the relationship between two measures of capacity: organizational size (as a function of budget) and the provision of training. There is no indication that organizational budget has a significant impact on the provision of training for either sexual violence or workers' rights. The only exception was that no organization with a budget of less than \$1 million provided training on low-wage workers' rights.

The Coalition recommends that agencies develop training opportunities to improve their core competency around workers' rights issues. While the Coalition trained primarily grassroots worker rights organizations on the "Ending Sexual Violence in the Workplace," curriculum, the training might also strengthen the capacity of anti-violence organizations to develop novel approaches to connect workplace justice with their broader mission and strategy to address gender-based violence.

Legal aid attorneys from Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation and LAF-Chicago provide know your rights training to workers, June 2016.



CHALLENGES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE COALITION AGAINST WORKPLACE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Coalition has faced challenges in connecting workers to resources for survivors of sexual violence that are consistent with the survey data. First, after the Coalition launched its gender-based violence curriculum, worker centers increased contact with rape crisis centers and legal aid partners, seeking support for their members when they disclosed gender-based violence. However, geographic and time constraints often meant workers were not able to access available services.

Second, due to funding restrictions, anti-violence organizations had a variety of eligibility requirements that would sometimes prevent workers from accessing supportive services. For example, several workers experienced non-sexual physical assault or verbal sexual harassment. In the Coalition, worker center organizers would often learn about these situations and contact the Coalition's service partners for support. But because many agencies only served clients who had experienced sexual assault, workers in the above situations were sometimes ineligible for services. Similarly, domestic violence agencies which served survivors who had experienced emotional or physical abuse typically did not classify workplace relationships as part of their funding mandate to address abuse between intimate partners. Additionally, agencies funded by the Legal Services Corporation were barred from representing undocumented workers, except in very limited circumstances. Finally, many legal aid and social services organizations had strict income eligibility requirements, which did not always reflect the capacity of survivors to pay for professional services like counseling and legal fees without pro bono assistance. Many low-wage workers earn enough to put them above the federal poverty guidelines - making them ineligible for free services - but have no savings or safety net to pay for a traumatic event like sexual assault. On top of funding restrictions, slashed budgets due to the state's fiscal crisis meant many workers ended up on waitlists or experienced difficulty connecting with a service provider due to staffing shortages.

Not only did these limitations prevent survivors from connecting with service providers, but workers were sometimes referred between multiple agencies, only to realize that an eligibility requirement, their work schedule, their neighborhood, or their language was a barrier to accessing any services at all. If a worker was ultimately unable to access services, it could damage the credibility of the worker center who made the initial referral within the worker community. It could also cause worker centers to stop contacting Coalition partners for support. These realities challenged all partners in the Coalition to consider whether simply strengthening referral networks could meaningfully

address the deeper accessibility issues which were preventing workers from obtaining the services they needed.

The Coalition recognized the need to train sexual assault organizations on workplace protections so they could at least provide information to workers about the full scope of protections against harassment, even if they were unable to provide a fully array of services in all situations. But if gender-based violence organizations are able to more deeply integrate worker rights as a key priority, they might also be able to broaden their work - and the resources that support it - to address a wider spectrum of behaviors falling under the umbrella of workplace sexual violence. Such an expansion in service delivery would better position workers to access intervention services before a sexual assault occurs.

Community know your rights training about sexual harassment, led by Occupational Safety and Health Administration and LAF-Chicago, June 2016.



IV. CONCLUSION

Findings from both sections of the study show organizations striving to respond to gender-based violence against low-wage workers through a variety of actions - organizing, screening for legal issues, litigation, campaigns, community education, and training staff. But rates of gender-based violence against low-wage workers across industries remain high and there is no evidence to suggest they are declining.

Both worker centers and anti-violence organizations reported insufficient resources to address gender-based violence against low-wage workers. While services like counseling, advocacy and legal representation exist for survivors in low-wage worker communities, accessing those services is a challenge. And while worker centers strive to address gender-based violence happening to their members, the violence is happening alongside a host of other issues that worker centers are fighting. The result is often siloed responses to gender-based violence that do not fully address the intersecting inequalities that enable it to occur in the first place. The labor and anti-violence movements can work together to learn new methods of reaching worker-survivors that will foster trust and increase access to resources. Cross-movement collaboration is essential to leverage the scarce funding and staff available to reach the most isolated and vulnerable survivors of gender-based violence - those living and working in poverty.

But there is no doubt that more is needed to reduce the high rates of gender-based violence experienced by low-wage workers. In June 2016, the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence hosted a symposium called "Restoring Dignity: Fighting for a Woman's Health and Safety in the Workplace." Dozens of workers from around Chicago attended the symposium to share stories, learn their rights, and collectively heal from incidents of workplace sexual violence. At the end of the symposium, the Coalition asked workers who attended to share their strategies to address workplace sexual violence. A majority of workers who responded identified the need to develop their own leadership in responding to gender-based violence in their communities.³⁰

Worker-led solutions to gender-based violence are a promising pathway to reach survivors in low-income communities. Worker leaders share life experiences, language, cultural background, workplaces, and neighborhood blocks with the most isolated survivors. They can facilitate the safe, trusting relationships that many survivors need to come forward. Worker leaders can also mobilize grassroots and political responses to gender-

Top to bottom: Nataki Rhodes from ROC Chicago and Claudia Jimenez from UNITE HERE Local 1 discuss their leadership roles in sexual harassment campaigns, June 2016; Union leaders from across Chicago participate in Healing to Action sexual harassment training, February 2017; Keynote address by domestic worker leader Myrla Baldonado at Restoring Dignity symposium, June 2016.



IV. CONCLUSION

Remarks by UNITE HERE leader Kasey Nalls about leading research for 'Hands Off Pants On' campaign addressing sexual harassment against hospitality workers in Chicago.

based violence, and hold people in power accountable for addressing gender-based violence against those living and working in their communities. This strategy has the potential to increase the number of people who come forward to report gender-based violence, as well as build the power of community members around campaigns, legislation, and litigation that can reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence in low-wage worker communities.

Seeing the transformative potential of worker leadership in the fight to end gender-based violence, in 2016 the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence developed a strategy to build the Coalition into a space that not only promoted cross-movement collaboration but was also led by workers. To lead this transformation, two of the Coalition's co-founders formed Healing to Action, a new organization that would increase the Coalition's sustainability and impact by developing worker leadership to guide Coalition strategy and initiatives. Through a hybrid organizational model that incorporates both healing and organizing, Healing to Action builds worker leadership in the fight to end gender-based violence through partnering with worker centers and organizing survivors outside of the labor movement.³¹ Healing to Action is currently partnering with low-wage workers and public health researchers to design a trauma-informed leadership program where workers build relationships with each other and ignite new solutions to gender-based violence. Workers who graduate from Healing to Action's leadership program will lead the anti-violence and worker rights organizations who make up the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence in developing grassroots campaigns to stop gender-based violence in its tracks.

Healing to Action and the Coalition Against Workplace Sexual Violence are deeply grateful to all those who participated in this study. For the Coalition, the study revealed new and powerful possibilities for cross-movement collaboration, worker leadership, and organizational strategies to end gender-based violence. We hope it will do the same for the many worker centers, unions, rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, grassroots organizations, advocacy groups, civil rights attorneys, government partners, and other allies who work tirelessly to improve conditions for survivors of gender-based violence and low-wage workers.



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DIGGING DEEP INTO OUR MOVEMENTS:

STRATEGIES TO STOP GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
AGAINST CHICAGO'S LOW-WAGE WORKERS

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