

PROTEIN PROCESSING WORKER PROJECT:

2020-2021 IMPACT REPORT

DECEMBER 2021



Eliana Lopez de la Cruz, member of UFCW Local 27 and expert consultant for the Protein Processing Worker Project Worker Advisory Committee, holds her daughter's hand while Delaware Division of Public Health personnel administer a first-dose COVID-19 vaccine at an immunization event hosted by UFCW Local 27, Selbyville, DE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (CDM) is coordinating the Protein Processing Worker Project through a 5-year Cooperative Agreement (CoAg) to control the spread of infectious diseases among protein processing worker communities through a comprehensive communications and outreach campaign. To implement the project's diverse activities, CDM is convening a coalition of community-based partners who are deeply connected with workers employed in industries like poultry, seafood, pork and beef processing, especially immigrant and migrant workers.

In its 2020-2021 demonstration year, the Protein Processing Worker Project concentrated its efforts in Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland, especially the Delmarva Peninsula, a geographic region known for its intensive processing activities and culturally diverse communities. Along with CDM, implementing partners included the Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA), Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC), Rebirth, Inc., and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union Local 27 (UFCW Local 27). In addition, the Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) served as the project's monitoring and evaluation partner, providing strategic analysis on guidance throughout the project's development.

The following report describes the Protein Processing Worker Project's core activities and strategies that CDM and its partners employed between October 2020 through September 2021 and analyzes the impact that these efforts had in addressing the spread of COVID-19 among protein processing workers and their families.

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INTRODUCTION

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, food supply chain disruptions alarmed the U.S. public and lawmakers. Footage of empty shelves flooded the media, supermarkets limited in-demand item purchases, and authorities scrambled to crack down on price gouging. Through executive order, U.S. President Donald Trump deployed the Defense Production Act to classify processing plants as “critical infrastructure”¹ and ensure their continued operation to meet production demands. As the brittleness of the food supply chain took the spotlight, so did the vulnerability of the frontline workers who kept it alive.

The Delmarva Peninsula, encompassing parts of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, is home to over 19,000 workers employed in protein processing industries, including poultry, seafood, and meat. Their working and living conditions foster environments that are particularly hospitable to health and safety dangers, including infectious diseases like COVID-19. As employees continued working shoulder-to-shoulder in closed environments with subpar health conditions, outbreaks began to threaten their lives and the lives of their families. Language barriers, limited legal protections, and a pervasive fear of retaliation at protein processing plants exacerbated workers’ vulnerability. As early as June 2020, there were over 11,000 reported coronavirus infections among the three largest meat processors in the United States.²

In response to these concerns, in September 2020, the CDC formalized a collaborative agreement with CDM to design and implement the Protein Processing Worker Project. The project’s overarching goals include:

- Control the spread of infectious diseases among frontline protein processing workers.
- Support workers in defending their rights to health and safety at work.
- Through feedback and data analysis, share learnings to inform CDC guidance, best practices, and project adaptation.

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With an initial budget of \$1.7 million, the CDC and CDM designed the Protein Processing Worker Project's activities around five key strategies:

- **Disseminate and Adopt:** Support the CDC in the dissemination, adoption and implementation of guidance and best practices for the prevention and control of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.
- **Inform and Adapt:** Inform and support CDC in the development and adaptation of guidance, tools and best practices, including collecting data that can inform updates to existing guidance, that consider the needs of migrant workers in food processing facilities.
- **Target and Train:** Engage frontline personnel and lead training in CDC best practices for the broader workforce supporting the prevention and control of infectious diseases. Target guidance and tools to better reach communities and populations at increased risk for infectious diseases and reduce disease spread in targeted workplaces or settings.
- **Integrate and Extend:** Develop integrated and cross-sub-specialty networks for information sharing, problem solving and sharing promising practices, including the development or rapid/living networks. Extend networks to reach migrant workers at increased risk for infectious diseases.
- **Evaluate and Improve:** Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of strategies for improved infection prevention and control practices. Implement continuous improvement by assessing and monitoring performance metrics related to prevention practices and program strategy.

Through this effort, the coalition reached over 20,000 workers and community members in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia during the project's demonstration phase, and hundreds of thousands more through digital and online multimedia campaigns. This report describes the major accomplishments and learnings achieved in the project's first year.



Rebirth and LAJC distribute information and materials to community members at a community resource fair. Accomac, VA.



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

As 2021 comes to a close and we head into yet another pandemic winter, we mourn those we have lost to COVID-19. Last month, the virus claimed its five millionth life. Globally, cases have climbed above 250 million. And while SARS-CoV-2 has proven itself to be an indiscriminate hunter, we have witnessed it wreak disproportionate havoc on frontline workers and communities of color. At once deemed “essential” but overwhelmingly underprotected, compelled to work but with few safety guarantees, food chain workers are among those who have borne the brunt of the pandemic.

While we struggle to face a new year with the virus in our midst and the weight of injustice heavy in our hearts, we are encouraged that the strength of our communities and the promise of vaccines will lead us to a healthier and more resilient future. Right now, we are celebrating the one-year anniversary of ICU nurse Sandra Lindsey receiving the first COVID-19 vaccine in New York. In just twelve short months, 3.3 billion people have been fully vaccinated worldwide. Like the virus itself, vaccine distribution has often been inequitable, privileging those with the greatest access and resources and leaving migrants, the economically disadvantaged, and communities of color behind. There is much work to be done. But if we have learned one lesson from the pandemic, it is that none of us is safe until we all are. It is in all of our interests that the most vulnerable among us be our priority—at home, in the community, at work, and in our policies and practices. Building intersectional approaches into our public health interventions, including racial justice, gender equity, and migrants’ rights, fortifies our community bonds and makes us resilient.

At CDM, we are so grateful to have launched the Protein Processing Worker Project this year with incredible partners who understand these principles and work tirelessly to meet the diverse, intersectional needs of frontline worker communities. We have had the opportunity to work with brilliant collaborators in Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, and across the U.S. who know that occupational health is public health, and that organizing is fundamental. We would like to thank all who have contributed to our efforts in 2020-2021, with special thanks to the CDC, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Occupational Health Equity Program, CATA, LAJC, MCN, Rebirth, UFCW Local 27, the Comité de Defensa del Migrante, Research Action Design (RAD), Intergovernmental Personnel Agreement collaborators, members of the Protein Processing Worker Project Worker Advisory Committee, state and local health partners, and CDM staff and volunteers. We look forward to pulling together, stronger than ever, in the new year.

In solidarity,



Rachel Micah-Jones



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Protein Processing Worker Project Implementing partners 2020-2021



Centro de los Derechos del Migrante (CDM) supports Mexico-based migrant workers to defend and protect their rights as they move between their home communities in Mexico and their workplaces in the United States.



Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA): Founded in 1979, CATA is a non-profit organization focused on organizing and empowering the immigrant community as they fight for justice for themselves, their families and their communities.



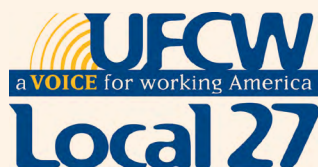
The Legal Aid Justice Center partners with communities and clients to achieve justice by dismantling systems that create and perpetuate poverty. Justice means racial justice, social justice, and economic justice.



Rebirth, Inc. is a local 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Salisbury, MD., created to empower immigrants, low-income workers and enrich local communities in the U.S. They also support a community school in Lagonave, Haiti.



Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides support, technical assistance, and professional development to clinicians in community health centers, health departments, and other health care delivery sites.



United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 27: Representing over 22,000 members in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, UFCW Local 27's mission is to secure a living wage, good benefits and a positive work environment for our members and to represent them so that all workers have the opportunity to reach the American Dream. We provide a voice for working men and women.



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COMMUNITY-FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

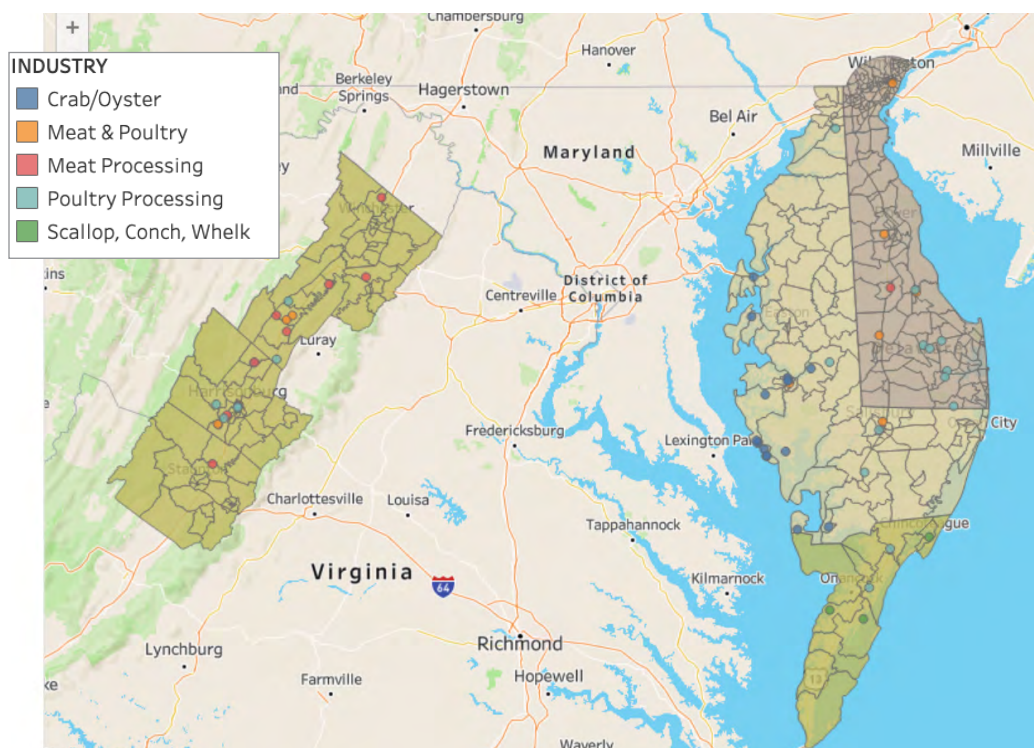
Workers employed in protein processing industries in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia are a multilingual and culturally diverse group. The region's poultry, meatpacking, and seafood industries rely heavily on immigrant and migrant workers—including temporary workers contracted with H-2B visas—as well as U.S.-born workers of color. In the U.S., people—and particularly women—of color and immigrants are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with hospitalization and death rates far higher than those of white Americans.³ A rapid assessment survey conducted by Protein Processing Worker Project partners in the spring of 2021 suggests that as many as 68% of workers employed in processing plants in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia prefer a language other than English.⁴ Factors like immigration status and language preference deeply affect workers' working conditions. And language barriers and fear of immigration consequences can limit workers' ability to access critical information about workers' rights, benefits, and legal support.

DATA-INFORMED APPROACH

Between March and May of 2021, project partners conducted 288 anonymous surveys with workers in the meat, poultry, and seafood industries. The assessment collected data on living and working conditions in these industries, the prevalence of COVID-19 among workers, attitudes towards the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, and employer-provided PPE and training on preventing the spread of disease in the workplace. According to the data, even when workers had access to information about health and safety in the workplace, they did not always receive it in a language or format they could understand. Furthermore, nearly 10% of workers indicated having difficulty reading or writing in any language, highlighting a need to rethink not only what we communicate but how we communicate it. Meanwhile, survey findings also revealed important insights about the source of information: only one quarter of workers who received employer-provided COVID-19 safety training reported their employers as a trusted source of information about COVID-19. Survey findings like these underscored the demand for multi-faceted and tailored communications campaigns that respond to processing worker communities' diverse needs and communications preferences.



Protein Processing Plants in DelMarVa & Shenandoah Valley

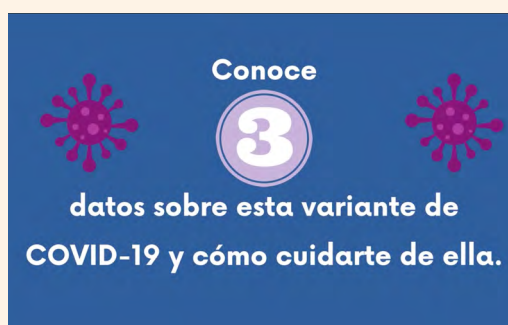


Data collection, analysis, and mapping are key tools informing the Protein Processing Worker Project's communications and outreach efforts. A selection of maps and visualizations can be found at <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/pppdelmarva>

Data-informed, adapted digital outreach

By experimenting with social media, evaluating social media analytics, and inviting community feedback, CDM adapted our digital communication to engage more viewers in COVID-19 vaccine messaging throughout the year, even as social media channels faced downward pressures from public pandemic fatigue. Successful strategies included limiting video content to two minutes or less, featuring community voices, geographic targeting, well-timed posting, and tailoring content to community inquiries and emerging trends.

In September, for instance, CDM produced and disseminated a video on the Delta variant of SARS-Cov-2, which was rapidly emerging as the dominant strain in the U.S. To date, the video has reached over 37,000 viewers and counting.



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CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY-ADAPTED MESSAGING

Besides translating existing guidance, crafting messages that resonate with worker communities requires creating linguistically and culturally tailored materials and delivering them through the right mediums. It also requires understanding communities' broader cultural contexts.

Collectively, Protein Processing Worker Project partners have decades of experience working closely with communities in the project area. We leverage not only our language skills in Spanish, Mixtec, and Haitian Creole, but also our expertise in labor rights and health, multicultural understanding, long-standing relationships with worker communities, and established communication channels to disseminate information and receive feedback.

Radio Programming for, and by, Delmarva's Haitian Community

Radio Oasis is a multilingual community-based radio station and subsidiary of Rebirth, Inc. based in Salisbury, MD. It aims to bridge the information gap by tailoring their content to groups such as Haitian Creole- and Spanish-speaking workers. In 2020-2021, Radio Oasis produced and aired regular programming on COVID-19 control and vaccine confidence alongside community news, music, and debate. The station, which broadcasts on



local airwaves and also through live streamed video on Facebook, reaches an estimated audience of over 3,000 listeners online and thousands more in the community.

LEVERAGING DIGITAL MEDIA TOOLS



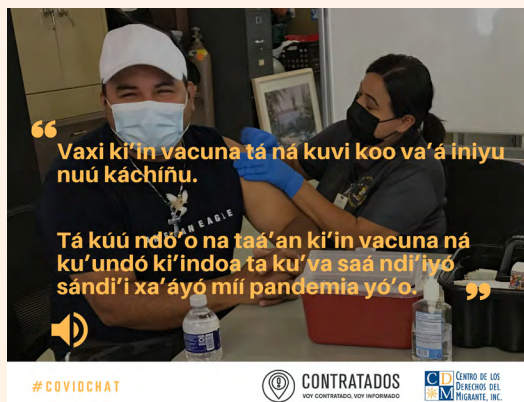
The pandemic highlighted the need for multifaceted approaches to worker outreach. By leveraging our worker-facing Contratados.org portal, social media channels, and targeted outreach strategies, CDM led a broad-based digital communications campaign to reach worker communities securely and effectively, especially while in-person outreach was unsafe. In summer 2021, the Protein Processing Worker Project coalition partners launched the Health Within our Reach campaign, bringing a new, multilingual, multicultural face to our communications efforts. Together, project partners produced 169 digital communications ranging from infographics, videos, Facebook Lives, and blogs.



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Vaccine Confidence in Mixtec

Early in 2021, CDM produced and distributed a vaccine confidence video series, *What do we know about COVID-19 vaccines?* to social media audiences. Addressing frequently asked questions about vaccine efficacy, side effects, physical distancing, vaccination and migration status, and vaccine misconceptions, the series interpreted CDC-backed information for Mixtec-speaking indigenous migrant worker communities incorporating audio and visual imagery to reinforce messaging



and cater to people with different literacy levels and regional dialects. To date, Mixtec-language vaccine confidence videos have reached over 19,000 viewers.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Protein Processing Worker Project coalition's strength lies in our collective understanding of the communities and dynamics that shape Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia's protein processing centers. Over the last year, project partners coordinated outreach events to bring COVID-19 information, resources, and vaccines closer to worker communities while also addressing communities' needs for food aid, immigration assistance, legal services, and others. At other times, partners brought information and resources directly to workers at their homes, at places of worship, and in other trusted spaces to ensure workers could secure convenient and safe access to COVID-19 information. Meeting worker communities where they are at—physically, linguistically, and with attention to other priority needs—was fundamental to our approach.



CDM meets with H-2B crab processing workers to deliver information and PPE. Hoopers Island, MD.



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One-Stop Shops increase trust and vaccination rates

To meet the challenges that low-income and rural communities face in accessing resources in Maryland's Lower Shore, the Lower Shore Vulnerable Populations Task Force brought together a network of local organizations, faith leaders, and health department representatives. The Task Force delivered COVID-19 vaccines, information, and services to community members at resource fairs held throughout their region. Dubbed One-Stop Shops, these weekly events have provided critical support to communities since May 2020 and were supported by dozens of organizations, including Protein Processing Worker Project members

CATA, Rebirth, Inc., MCN, CDM, and UFCW Local 27. During the pandemic's early stages, the Task Force's One-Stop Shops equipped communities with free COVID-19 testing, multilingual information, and PPE alongside food aid, immigration clinics, and other high-demand, free resources. When COVID-19 vaccines became available, the Task Force incorporated vaccination opportunities into their events and encouraged attendance through trusted, long-standing relationships. By October 2021, the One-Stop Shops had facilitated vaccinations for over 4,600 individuals from low-income, rural and underserved communities.

In 2021, coalition partners collaborated on 61 community events to increase COVID-19 health and safety best practices, encourage testing, and promote vaccine information and access to workers and community members. Partners supported vaccine events and community resource fairs aimed at Spanish- and Haitian Creole-speaking communities. Participating in these events allowed partners to have one-on-one conversations with workers, learn about their concerns and perceptions of COVID-19 safety guidance and vaccines, and distribute 16,423 print materials with culturally and linguistically relevant health and workers' rights information across Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Over nine months, partners reached over 20,000 workers and community members with critical COVID-19 information and resources, including thousands of masks and hand sanitizers to individuals and families with limited access to PPE supplies.



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50 vaccinated at Onley, VA's first-ever *Free Latino Resource Fair*

In the rural town of Onley on Virginia's Eastern Shore in June 2021, the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) mobilized community leaders and worked with their local health department to vaccinate 50 workers and their family members against COVID-19 during their community's first-ever *Free Latino Resource Fair*. By leveraging their longstanding community relationships, LAJC and their partners targeted hard-to-reach,

Spanish-speaking workers employed in the region's poultry and agricultural industries and their family members. Collaborating with community-based partners, faith leaders, and the Virginia Department of Health, the fair offered vaccination information and opportunities alongside other high-demand, free resources like workers' rights training, domestic violence support, library services, and more.

BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER

Our goal is to support workers in understanding and defending their rights and protecting their health. Our campaign takes a bottom-up approach—we center and amplify workers' voices. Based on the coalition's collective experience demonstrating the power and effectiveness of peer-to-peer organizing, this campaign relies on a close collaboration between community members and community-based organizations.



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Worker-centered vaccination: a safer alternative for immigrant and migrant communities

Even as federal, state, and local health authorities began to prioritize processing workers for early vaccination efforts, Delmarva poultry processing workers raised concerns. Some, especially immigrant and migrant workers, were wary of interfacing with government authorities at mass vaccination events, while others expressed skepticism that employer-driven vaccination campaigns reflected their best interests, and many worried that serious side effects could cost them their paychecks or even their jobs. Workers with limited English proficiency and literacy levels struggled to engage with early vaccination messaging and materials, which were often provided in English and in print or online. For many, navigating complex government websites and sign-up forms was out of the question.

In response, UFCW Local 27, which represents thousands of workers in the mid-Atlantic region, piloted one of Sussex County's first community vaccination programs out of their offices in Selbyville, Delaware. UFCW Local 27 reached out to state officials beginning in February of 2021 to bring vaccination opportunities closer to their frontline membership who had expressed hesitancy toward government- and employer-provided vaccination programs. Collaborating with community-based organizations and local businesses, UFCW Local 27 has since hosted and co-hosted a dozen vaccination events in Delaware and Maryland targeting hard-to-reach workers and their families, including youth. Even as vaccines became more widely available, workers continued to prefer UFCW's events, citing security concerns, access, and convenient times.



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Members of
the Protein
Processing
Worker Project's
Worker Advisory
Committee.
Cambridge, MD.

WORKER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

To inform the Protein Processing Worker Project's strategies, CDM engaged a dozen protein processing workers to serve on a Worker Advisory Committee as expert consultants. These workers represent all three states on the Delmarva Peninsula and have accumulated decades' worth of experience working in the seafood, poultry, and meat processing industries.

The Advisory Committee's input has been invaluable in informing our communications campaign's messaging and priorities, evaluating our outreach strategies, providing feedback, and offering suggestions for new materials, events and informational modules. We have also shared their input with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local and state health departments to inform their guidance. In 2021, the Advisory Committee convened six virtual meetings and evaluated materials and messaging produced by community-based partners, state and local health departments, and the CDC. With the assistance of professional interpreters, the group discussed and debated topics, including workplace health and safety, vaccine confidence and access, and paid sick leave, among others.

Closing the feedback loop on CDC guidance for migrant workers

In spring 2021, as hundreds of thousands of migrant workers began arriving in the U.S. for seasonal employment with H-2 visas, a group of crab workers on Maryland's Eastern Shore raised an important question: how should migrants like themselves, who had been partially vaccinated in their home countries, fully protect themselves against COVID-19? CDM was able to relay these concerns to CDC staff. The next day, CDC updated guidance⁵ for people vaccinated outside of the United States. Although the guidance was available only in English, CDM was able to quickly

adapt messaging in Spanish and in Mixtec for worker audiences in infographic and multimedia formats. This messaging was distributed to workers and Eastern Shore health workers engaged in vaccination efforts for recently arrived migrant workers.



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TRAINING

During the first year of the Protein Processing Worker Project, we created and offered virtual “Know Your Rights” training materials and curricula. From Workers’ Rights 101 to Health and Safety in the Workplace, these modules were shaped by the Worker Advisory Committee and legal, medical, and labor rights experts. We also produced materials in three languages to inform workers of their legal rights in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, which we distributed both digitally and at in-person outreach events

Workers’ rights 101 for public health workers


In consultation with project partners, CDM’s legal team developed the Workers’ Rights in the context of COVID-19 training series. The short-form, virtual training was aimed at public health workers interfacing with migrant workers during the pandemic response. To date, dozens

of public health professionals have participated in the 101-style adaptable training, which has included topics like workplace safety protections, sick leave, state and federal unemployment benefits, and whistleblower protections, among others.

Licencia remunerada o no remunerada según las leyes de Maryland

- ¿Trabajas en Maryland y necesitas tomarte un tiempo libre porque tú o algún miembro de tu familia está enfermo debido al COVID-19?
- En Maryland, puedes tomar hasta 40 horas de licencia cada año según la Ley de Familias Trabajadoras Saludables de Maryland.
- Los empleadores con 15 o más empleados están obligados a otorgar la licencia remunerada, mientras que los con 14 o menos empleados están obligados a otorgar la licencia sin remuneración. Desafortunadamente, ciertos empleados, como las y los trabajadores agrícolas y jardines, están fuera de la cobertura de la Ley de Familias Trabajadoras Saludables de Maryland y no tienen derecho a licencias remuneradas o no remuneradas bajo la ley estatal.
- La licencia por enfermedad puede usarse por las siguientes razones:
 - Para atender o tratar la enfermedad, lesión o condición mental o física de las y los empleados, incluyendo el COVID-19.
 - Para conseguir atención médica preventiva para la o el empleado o un miembro de su familia.
 - Para el cuidado de un miembro de la familia con una enfermedad, lesión o condición mental o física, incluyendo COVID-19.

Si se han violado tus derechos de licencia por enfermedad según la ley de Maryland, puedes presentar una queja ante el Departamento de Trabajo de Maryland. Llama a CDM para obtener más información sobre tus derechos.

 **Salud a Nuestro Alcance**

Salud y seguridad en el lugar de trabajo

- Todas y todos los trabajadores, independientemente de su estatus migratorio, tienen derecho a un lugar de trabajo seguro y saludable.
- ¿Cuáles son ejemplos de prácticas de salud y seguridad COVID-19 que su empleador debería implementar en el trabajo?
 - Distancia de, por lo menos, 6 pies entre cada persona trabajadora. Que el empleador se asegure de que ninguna persona trabaje directamente frente a otra
 - Proporcionar a todas las y los trabajadores cubiertas faciales o mascarillas quirúrgicas gratuitas
 - Capacitar a las y los trabajadores sobre las políticas COVID-19 en un idioma que comprendan
 - Asegurarse de que las y los trabajadores puedan expresar sus preocupaciones sobre COVID-19 sin sufrir represalias
- Tu empleador debe cumplir con los requisitos estatales y federales de inmunización o pruebas contra COVID-19.


Si crees que tu lugar de trabajo es inseguro o que tu empleador no está tomando las precauciones necesarias para protegerte del COVID-19, puedes presentar una queja confidencial a la División de Salud y Seguridad Ocupacional de Maryland (MOSH) para solicitar una investigación in situ.

Indemnización laboral

- ¿Contrajiste COVID-19 mientras trabajabas? Puedes tener derecho a una indemnización laboral.
- Las leyes de compensación laboral otorgan a las personas el derecho a beneficios médicos y salarios cuando se lastiman o enferman en el trabajo.
- Para presentar una queja, debes notificar a tu empleador en un plazo de 10 días. El CDM no representa individuos en casos de indemnización laboral, pero puede ayudarte a encontrar una abogada o un abogado especializado en indemnización laboral.

Llama a CDM para obtener más información sobre tus derechos.

Comisión de Compensación de Trabajadores de Maryland:
(410) 864-5100 (teléfono)
(800) 492-0479 (llamada gratuita)



In partnership with collaborators like the Migrant Clinicians Network, the Maryland Department of Health, Sur Legal, and Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, we conducted five Facebook Live sessions to widen access to verified, up-to-date information on topics selected by workers including COVID-19 variants, vaccination, and legal issues affecting workers’ rights. All Facebook Live events also included sessions where workers and service providers asked questions in real time. The live events, which have reached over 11,000 viewers to date, have also provided opportunities to receive audience feedback to shape future materials, communication, and outreach strategies and priorities.

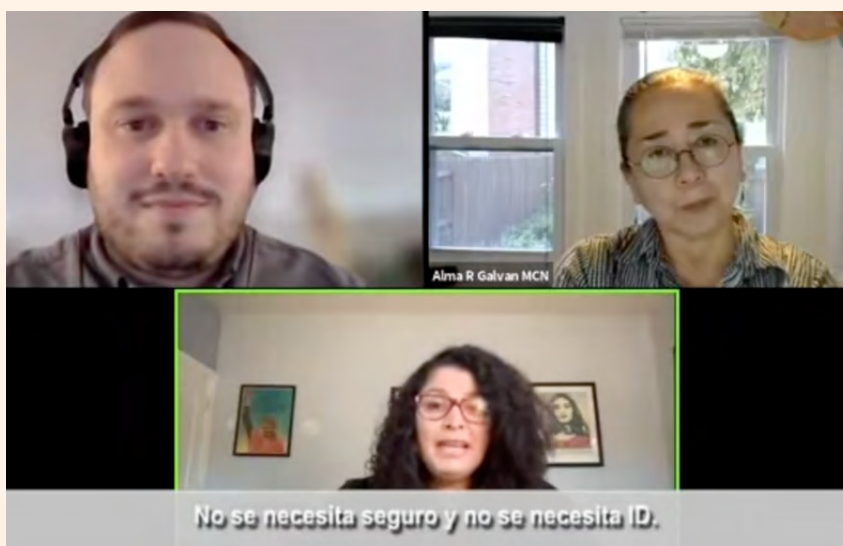


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Going Live with the Maryland Department of Health and Migrant Clinicians Network

In September 2021, CDM partnered with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Migrant Clinicians Network (MCN) to co-host a Spanish-language Facebook Live event to share COVID-19 vaccine information and resources for

Maryland-based workers. To date, the event video has reached over 2,800 viewers. CDM has also sampled content from Facebook Lives like these to produce short-form, targeted videos and further our engagement opportunities.



(clockwise from left) CDM's Francisco Díaz moderates a conversation between MCN's Alma Galvan and MDH's Katina R. Nazario-Joy about vaccines during a Spanish-language Facebook Live broadcast via facebook.com/contratados.org.

Thanks to these interactive training opportunities, our coalition ensured that workers continued to receive updated, timely, and reliable information about rapidly-changing guidance in a language they understood. This virtual engagement was especially important when teams were unable to travel to worker communities during the pandemic.



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INTAKE BOT

In collaboration with Research Action Design, CDM's legal experts developed and launched an Intake Bot in September 2021. The bot incorporated feedback and user testing from Comité de Defensa del Migrante and Worker Advisory Committee leaders. Designed to answer users' questions with reliable information and resources in multiple languages, the bot also collects and channels intakes—workers' and community members' questions, concerns, and inquiries. Bot interactions also produce data which can be used to assess workers' concerns, understanding, communications preferences, and more.

INFORMING PUBLIC GUIDANCE

Frontline workers' stories and priorities should shape public health guidance. The Protein Processing Worker Project seeks to amplify workers' voices by consistently sharing insights and data with the CDC, local and state health departments, and other stakeholders.

CDM collects information from workers through outreach and community events, Worker Advisory Committee sessions, and legal intake. We share that data with relevant stakeholders to ensure that their guidance reflects workers' priorities and concerns, leading to improved working conditions.



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Prioritizing frontline food chain workers in COVID-19 vaccination rollout

In December 2020, as U.S. federal agencies were laying out vaccine allocation strategies, we noticed that critical food supply chain workers were absent from the two key federal government documents guiding states and localities in developing their plans for vaccine allocation: the CDC vaccination guidance and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration Hazard Recognition tool, which classifies the risk of worker exposure to SARS-Cov-2. That month, CDM testified⁶ before the CDC's Emergency Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), urging ACIP to explicitly reference and designate farmworkers, poultry workers, and seafood processing workers as priorities for vaccination access and to encourage

the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to list these workers in their risk assessment tool. Ultimately, ACIP recommended including food manufacturing workers in priority vaccination phase 1b.⁷



Poultry processing worker receives her first COVID-19 vaccine in March 2021. Selbyville, DE.

EVALUATING, ADAPTING & IMPROVING



UFCW Local 27 and CDM at a vaccination event. Selbyville, DE.

Building on the collaborative approach of its interventions, the Protein Processing Worker Project uses a participatory evaluation approach to assess its impact. Partners'



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COVID-19-related needs and problems are immense. Facing these problems requires a rapid and coordinated effort from multiple leaders and community organizations with different backgrounds, capacities, and resources as well as continuous feedback and input from the target population to achieve an effective impact in real time and find durable solutions. The evaluation provided the insights for constantly adapting and improving the project to ensure that the project meets its goals and reaches all target populations.

Following the Protein Processing Worker Project's first year, MCN interviewed individuals and groups of project stakeholders. Feedback can be summarized as follows:

POSITIVE IMPACT

Processing workers reported that the project met or exceeded their expectations regarding the project's impact on workers by offering evidence based information about COVID-19 in languages and literacy levels that workers understand and increasing knowledge and improving health behavior on COVID-19 control and prevention. Project partners leveraged efforts around the COVID-19 pandemic to raise workers' awareness of their health and safety, labor, and immigration rights.

The project's **community-based organizational partners** created a strong regional network where community groups strengthened relationships with each other to better serve protein workers' needs.

“This project has allowed us to not only give information but has also expanded the relationship with workers as they now seek our help when facing doubts and misinformation.”

—Organizational project partner

State and local public health departments reported that the project strengthened relationships among health departments, other government agencies, and community groups serving essential workers. The project also improved public health authorities' understanding and response to protein workers' health and safety needs and concerns.



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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Following its first year demonstration phase in Delaware, Virginia and Maryland, the CDC has funded CDM to carry out the Protein Processing Worker Project for a second year between October 2021 - September 2022. In addition, increased funding in the amount of \$4,921,954 will allow the coalition to expand the project to cover three additional states—Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina—and increase capacity on Delmarva. During the project's second year, we expect to reach at least 47,500 workers and their communities through direct outreach in Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and hundreds of thousands more online.

To achieve this goal, CDM will expand our implementing partners network to more than double the current number of community-based organizations with deep ties to their local communities. We are reaching out to more state and local health departments and continue to collaborate with the CDC to strategize and implement our work plan in the expanded project area.

Additional funding will allow us to significantly increase language access in the project's second year. Partnering with local organizations and interpreters, we will increase language diversity, including Mexican and Central American indigenous languages such as Náhuatl, Zapotec and Mayan languages, throughout the project's target geographies.



A community member poses for a photograph after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine at a community resource fair. Seaford, DE.



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ENDNOTES

- 1 United States Department of Agriculture. (2020, May 8). America's Meatpacking Facilities Practicing Safe Reopening to Ensure a Stable Food Supply [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/05/08/americas-meatpacking-facilities-practicing-safe-reopening-ensure>
- 2 Telford, T. (2020, June 8). The meat industry is trying to get back to normal, but workers are still getting sick—and shortages may get worse. *The Washington Post*.
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/index.html>
- 4 Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc. (2021). *Unpacking the Facts: A rapid assessment of protein processing workers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia*. Retrieved from <https://cdmigrante.org/publications/>
- 5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *Vaccines & Immunizations: Interim Clinical Considerations*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fvaccines%2Fcovid-19%2Finfo-by-product%2Fclinical-considerations.html#people-vaccinated-outside-us
- 6 CDM's comments submitted on December 21, 2020 can be accessed here: <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/CDC-2020-0124-0445>
- 7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Vaccines and Immunizations: ACIP Categories of Essential Workers* (Phase). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/categories-essential-workers.html>



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