

Somerville Community Meeting on Immigrant Worker Health

Wednesday, October 13, 6:00–8:30pm
Elizabeth Peabody House, 277 Broadway, Somerville

COMMUNITY & UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARTNERS

Immigrant Service Providers Group/Health (ISPG/H)

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)

Brazilian Women's Group (BWG)

Haitian Coalition of Somerville

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)

Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA)

Tufts University

- Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Department of Public Health and Community Medicine

Program

6pm

Welcome!

Meet the Project Partners and review the information posters

Enjoy something to eat

7:00–7:30

Short discussions at each poster

Pose your own question about a useful next step

7:45–8:15

Report back from discussion groups

8:15–8:30

Q&A and Adjourn

Project Overview

The Somerville Immigrant Worker Health Project involved a community based organization, Immigrant Service Providers Group/Health (ISPG/H), a provider of health care, Cambridge Health Alliance, and an academic partner, Tufts University. These grant partners worked together with other community partners that included Haitian Coalition, Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), the Brazilian Women's Group and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH). These organizations worked collaboratively to enhance the capacity of the community partners to address occupational health issues for the populations that they serve at the community level as well as to gather data regarding immigrant occupational health.

One reality which impacts the consideration of immigrant occupational health is the underreporting of the number of immigrant residents working and living in Somerville. Another reality that shapes the work reported here is that the risks borne by immigrant workers can be seen through the lens of Environmental Justice. This concept holds that environmental and occupational risks are disproportionately distributed in society.

The grant partners were drawn almost entirely from Somerville's immigrant communities. Some members are employed as direct service providers at local not-for-profits, others either serve as head of or represent immigrant coalitions, and all are individuals with deep community ties. The on-going nature of the member agencies is an attribute we hope will contribute to the sustainability of the work we have begun together.

Project Partner Organizations

The Immigrant Services Providers Group/Health (ISPG/H)

The ISPG/H was formed in December 2003 under a grant from the Harvard Pilgrim Foundation and has been self-sustaining since 2004. The group meets monthly — more frequently as needed — and conducts regular flu clinics and health fairs. The ISPG/H serves as the Community-Based Organization for the project. Most of its member organizations have worked together in other capacities in immigrant ad hoc coalitions and initiatives since 2000.

ISPG/H was originally funded to bring together Somerville's immigrant communities and health care providers around disparities and general health concerns. The disparities included:

- Inadequacies of the city's translator/interpreter services
- Disparity in flu vaccine delivery
- Poor communication about available health services and programs
- Inadequacies in public health survey reporting

ISPG/H is committed to identifying new and emerging immigrant communities in our city. We regularly hold intra-community health fairs offering free services and access to funded health insurance programs available in Massachusetts to provide services to existing communities and as a way of attracting attention and reaching out to newly arrived groups. We also consult with emerging groups in neighboring cities and are represented by our coordinator on the steering committees of community engagement components of the Tufts and Harvard Clinical Translational Science Institutes and the Tufts Community Research Center as well as the Community Advisory Council of the Cambridge Health Alliance, and, saving the best for last, the steering committee of the Greater Boston Bed Bug Taskforce.

Cambridge Health Alliance

Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA), through its Occupational Health Program and Department of Community Affairs, provided health services, ongoing guidance to the project, and support for health fairs. CHA is not a member of the ISPG but serves as a primary healthcare provider for the residents of Somerville, and offers expert occupational health services to workers and employers through the CHA Occupational Health Program.

CHA is an integrated health system serving Cambridge, Somerville, and Boston's metro-north communities. It has three hospital campuses and an extensive primary care network which allows it to provide high-quality, culturally competent care to a large, diverse patient population. In addition, its health plan, Network

Health, provides comprehensive health coverage to more than 160,000 Massachusetts residents. These components work together to allow the system to help individuals and families in greatest need by improving access to care - financially, geographically, and clinically.

Today, CHA provides care at more than 30 clinical locations, including 15 primary care practices and 20 specialty centers, both in the community and at its hospital campuses. Highlights include innovative planned care programs for chronic disease, nationally-renowned behavioral health services, and more than 100,000 annual emergency visits. CHA is also a leader in community health, managing numerous health programs and leading community coalitions that address issues such as obesity, substance abuse, and childhood asthma. Some of these programs are part of its Cambridge Public Health Department, which is operated via municipal contract with the City of Cambridge, its Department of Community Affairs, and the Institute for Community Health.

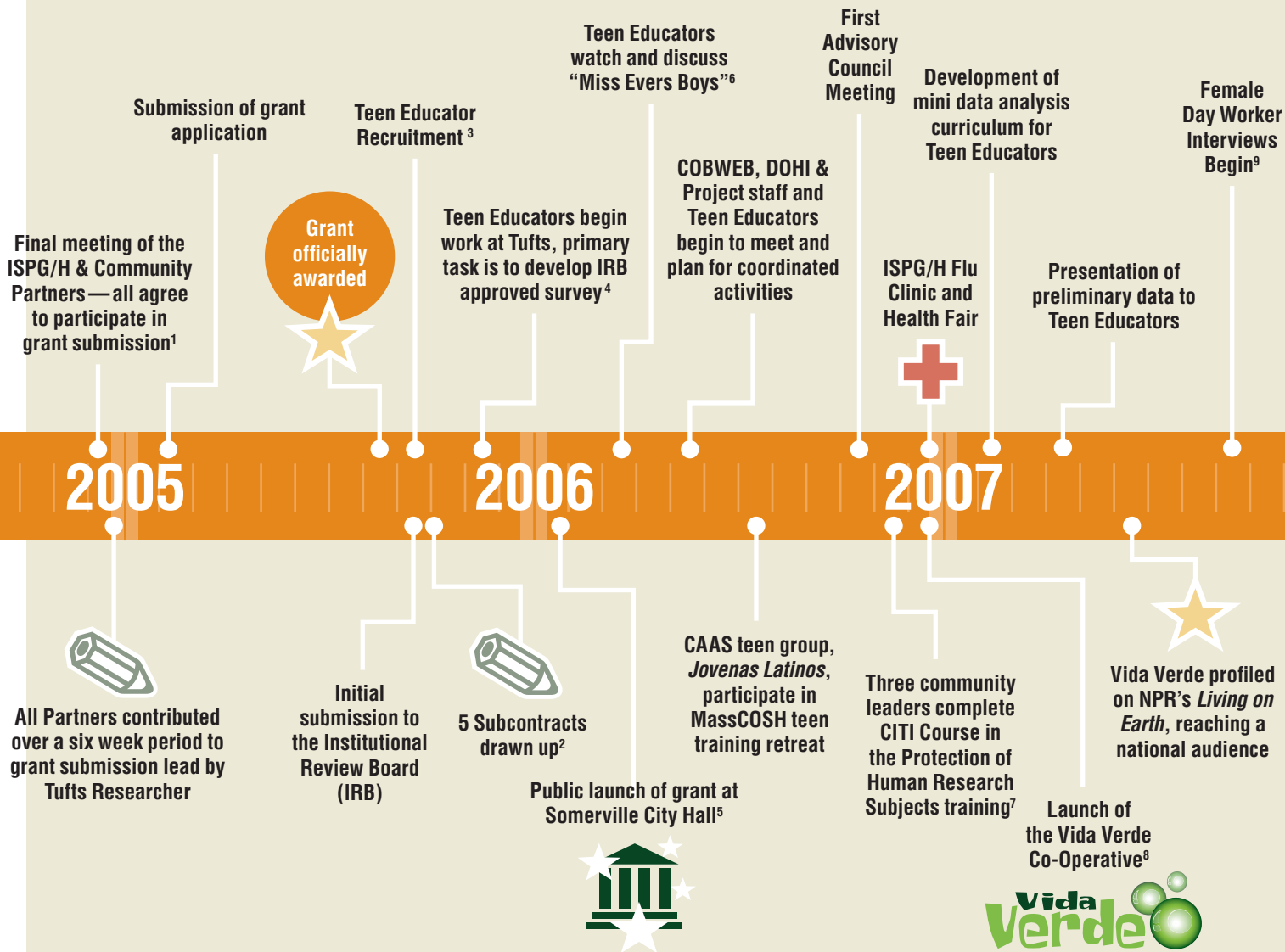
Tufts University

The Tufts University campus occupies approximately 150 acres and straddles the Medford/Somerville line. Approximately half of the campus lies in each city; the campus houses the College of Liberal Arts and Jackson College, and the School of Engineering. In addition, the School of Medicine, the School of Dental Medicine, the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences, and the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition, occupy a campus in Boston's Chinatown district. There are extensive linkages between Somerville and Tufts University. These include a wide array of activities and extensive partnerships which span environmental, social and community involvement activities. Of particular relevance to our project partners is the Shape Up Somerville project. Shape Up Somerville brings Tufts School of Nutrition's Professor Christina Economos and the Somerville elementary schools together to increase health and exercise in children at an early enough age to establish good habits.

The Tufts School of Engineering and the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering have been long involved in research and teaching with regards to the impact of both ambient environmental factors and those encountered in the work environment on human health. This is based on the belief that through education and outreach much can be accomplished in the prevention of work related illness and disability. In a similar manner the Tufts School of Medicine's Department of Public Health and Community Medicine has strong ties to numerous community organizations. The work reported provides both Tufts faculty and students the opportunity to work closely with the community partners in participatory learning and other community involvement activities.

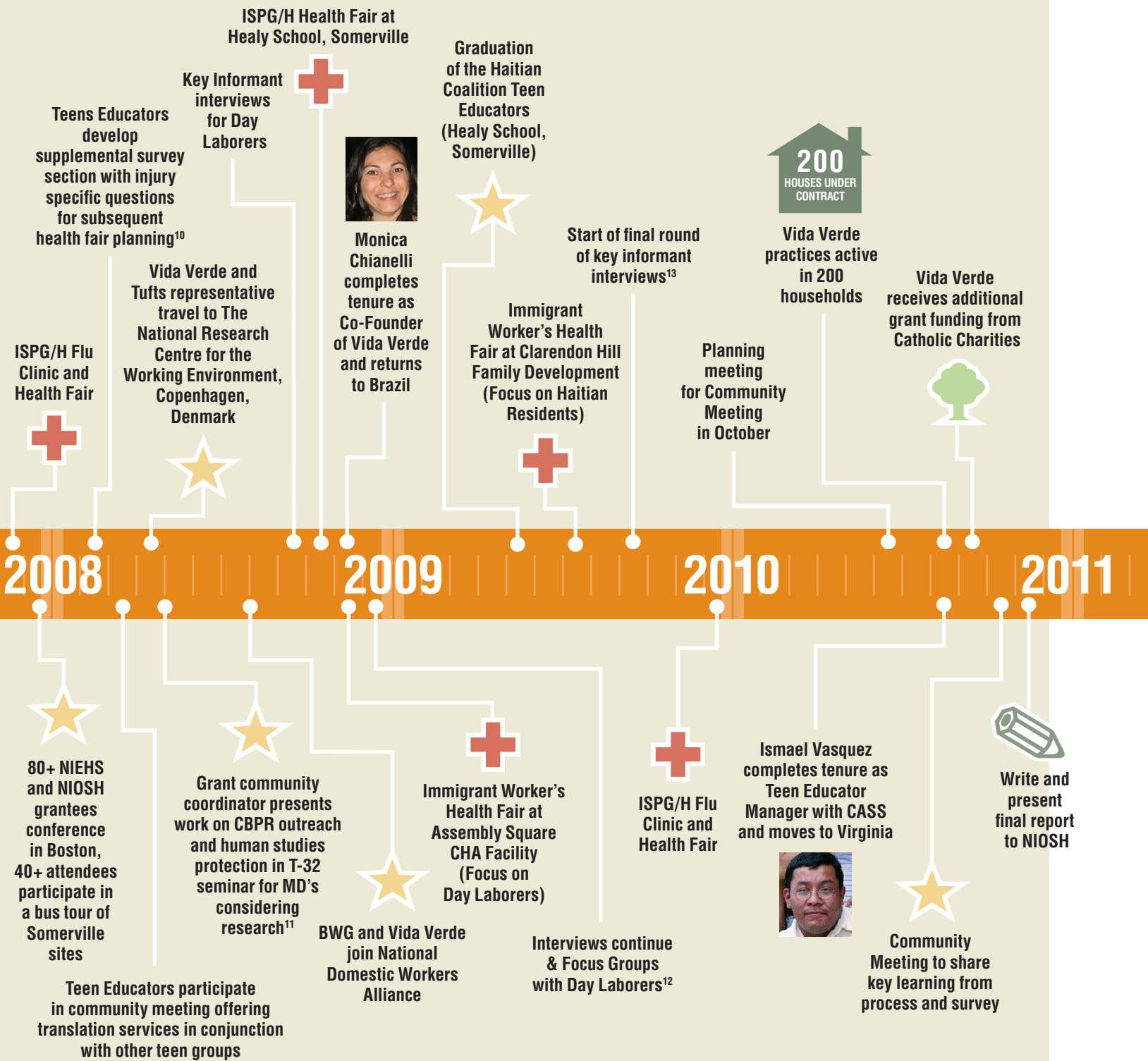
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Grant Timeline



NOTES

- Grant Partners: Brazilian Women’s Group, Cambridge Health Alliance, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Haitian Coalition, Immigrant Service Providers Service Group/Health, Massachusetts Coalition Occupational Safety and Health, Tufts University
- Assistance from Tufts Research Administration critical to this step.
- Additional teens are recruited each September through 2009
- Teens work with Tufts Researchers; the Director of the Social, Behavioral & Educational Research Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Tufts, community leaders, a Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health Office of Surveillance Specialist to develop an IRB approved survey of occupational safety and health risks and experiences.
- Congressman Capuano, Mayor Curtatone, and Tufts President Bacow attend
- Film provided an opportunity for the teens to discuss and develop an understanding of the ramifications of unethical research. This component was later integrated into the Clinical Translational Sciences Institute’s “Building Your Capacity” community partner research course.
- Community Leaders are certified to oversee the administration of the surveys in Haitian Creole, Spanish. A certified Tufts graduate student provided support for and collected surveys in Portuguese.
- Grant funded through the Brazilian Women’s Group
- Continues throughout 2007 and 2008
- The additional information gathered supports the service allocation at the CHA Workers Health Clinic planned to open in the Fall of 2009.
- At Boston University and Tufts Medical Schools
- Male Day Laborers Interviewed in 2008
- Key informants = Representatives of Respected Community organizations



ORGANIZATIONS

- BWG** — Brazilian Women's Group
- CAAS** — Community Action Agency of Somerville
- CHA** — Cambridge Health Alliance
- COBWEB** — Collaboration for Better Work Environment for Brazilians in Massachusetts
- DOHI** — Dorchester Occupational Health Initiative
- HC** — Haitian Coalition

- ISPG/H** — Immigrant Service Provider Group/Health
- MassCosh** — Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health
- NIEHS** — National Institute of Environmental Health and Safety
- NIOSH** — National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
- MassDPH** — Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Project Partner Organizations (CONTINUED)

Brazilian Women's Group

The Brazilian Women's Group, a volunteer-run organization, was started in 1995 by a group of Brazilian immigrant women of various backgrounds and occupations. The women hoped to "make a difference" in the wider Brazilian community, encouraging its members, particularly women, to stand up for their rights in the United States. The BWG promotes its goals through community organizing, empowering the community members to speak for themselves regardless of immigration status. The BWG has a specific focus on women, and from its beginning, it has sought to develop women leaders for the Brazilian community.

Our overall goal is to empower Brazilian women and strengthen the Brazilian Community. We believe that social change will not occur without political struggle, participation and awareness. We believe that immigrants advocating for themselves, over time, will help meet this long term vision of social change. This is one reason why the BWG has made the decision to not become a social services provider agency. We want the Brazilian community to organize and be able to speak for itself and we see ourselves as the tool that helps facilitate this process.

Vida Verde Women's Cooperative

The Co-op Vida Verde's mission is to support Brazilian housecleaners in their professional development while creating community and promoting healthy and environmentally-friendly cleaning methods. We participate in workshops, ESL and Computer classes to improve our skills.

Vida Verde Women's Cooperative was founded in 2006 to help Brazilian housecleaners to work in a healthy environment and to help end the exploitation of "helpers" by the "owners of the cleaning schedules". In its short life, Vida Verde has trained over 200 women and some men on the use of natural cleaning products, informed cleaners about the dangers of chemical cleaning products for people and for the environment, and has provided a supportive environment encouraging women housecleaners to become small-business women and become more active in their communities.

Community Action Agency of Somerville

The Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) is Somerville's federal anti-poverty agency and as such is the local home of Head Start and has a long history of making a difference in the lives of Somerville's residents. The mission of CAAS is to reduce poverty among local families and individuals while working to counteract, and whenever possible eliminate, the societal conditions that cause and perpetuate poverty. CAAS's key strategies for accomplishing this mission are:

1. To enlarge opportunities for all Somerville residents in the fields of education, youth development, income enhancement, employment, housing, health, and improved neighborhood life.
2. To serve as a structure for empowering low-income constituencies and all others whose full involvement in the community has been obstructed or discouraged by oppression and discrimination.

These strategies are implemented in the belief that by working together, as opposed to working alone, people achieve more.

The three main outcomes that result from succeeding in this mission are:

1. Vulnerable families and individuals realize additional potential through strengthening their families and support networks.
2. Low-income people become more self-sufficient.
3. Local residents understand that they own a stake in the City of Somerville, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the United States of America, and therefore they participate more fully in civic life.

Haitian Coalition of Somerville

The Haitian Coalition was formed in 1992. In its early years, The Coalition fought racism, promoted Haitian culture, and helped Haitian residents gain access to services and programs from legal aid to social services, from voter registration to small business training.

Originally, supported by CAAS, by 1997, the Coalition had gathered enough support from the community to become an independent nonprofit organization. In 2000, The Coalition opened a second site, the Clarendon Hill Activities Center, at Clarendon Hill Public Housing Development in Somerville, serving the majority-Haitian low-income community.

Throughout its eighteen-year history, The Haitian Coalition has pursued a single mission: to organize Haitians to improve the economic, political, physical, and social environments in Somerville, Massachusetts and provide services to Haitians living in surrounding communities, primarily Medford, Malden, and Everett.

The specific goals of the Haitian Coalition are:

- Welcoming newly arrived immigrants from Haiti and orienting them to their new home.
- Helping Haitian elders get access to housing, health care, and all the benefits they deserve.

- Supporting Haitian youth as they struggle to integrate into American society without losing their own unique and cherished culture.
- Assisting Haitian women to get training and capital to make their family child care businesses thrive.
- Referring hundreds of people each year to the legal, medical, and social services they need.

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)

MassCOSH is a non profit organization that promotes safe, secure jobs and healthy communities through education, advocacy and coalition building. Based in Dorchester, Massachusetts, MassCOSH focuses its efforts on residents who are often forced to work in the most hazardous jobs and can least afford to lose their livelihood: immigrants and other low income residents. MassCOSH offers low income, adults and youth, immigrant and US-born residents the tools they need to identify hazards affecting their health and engages them in promoting safe working conditions in their workplaces and in policy arenas.

Teens Lead @Work, a youth-led program, engages teens as youth leaders who train peers on young worker safety and who promote strong enforcement of the Child Labor Laws.

The MassCOSH Immigrant Worker Center builds a powerful network of workers who lead successful efforts to change unsafe conditions and achieve tangible improvements to working conditions.

MassCOSH achieves its mission by:

- Educating residents about their rights and opportunities for involvement in changing their workplace conditions and influencing the policies that govern these conditions.
- Fostering local leadership through peer outreach and education.
- Developing the capacity of community and labor groups to identify and respond to health and safety concerns affecting their constituents.
- Forging innovative and effective community-labor alliances to organize around key health and safety issues affecting the workplace and communities.

PROJECT PARTNERS

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The activities of the Project do not reflect the official policy of the organizations represented on the Advisory Committee.

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