

Theory of Change



Current Conditions

- Changing nature of work due to expanding gig economy and worker misclassification
- Greater health and social inequities in low-income, Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities
- Decreasing safety net and worker protections
- Public and private disinvestment in the workforce
- Poor identification, implementation, and enforcement of worker protection standards
- Workplace-based health and safety interventions rarely address the social determinants of health
- COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on low-income communities

Strategies & Action

The reciprocal relationships between these strategies and actions inform strategic systems change to improve worker and community health:



Research

Produce evidence gathered through transdisciplinary and participatory, applied, and racial justice–centered research to explore work as a social and structural determinant of health and identify actions to promote healthy work



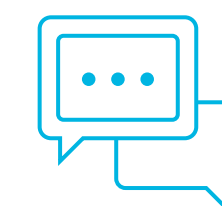
Capacity-Building

Develop and expand the reach of policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives to operationalize Total Worker Health across eco-social levels



Multidirectional Engagement

Build and strengthen multidirectional collaboration and engagement across eco-social levels to create networks that support healthy work



Communication and Consciousness-Raising

Translate and disseminate evidence to promote policies and practices that demonstrate the value and approaches to support healthy work and worker well-being for ALL workers, within and outside workplaces

Definitions

Community: Community is defined broadly as all partners in a work ecosystem, either direct or indirect (employers, workers, community members, worker advocacy organizations, local health departments, policymakers, etc.).

Healthy Work: Healthy work is defined as jobs that are free from workplace hazards, pay a thriving living wage, offer job security, provide benefits such as health insurance, vacation, sick leave, retirement, are free from discrimination and exploitation, offer opportunities for advancement, and provide freedom to express concerns, organize, and participate in workplace decisions. Healthy work is frequently promoted through worksite-based health promotion programming and the control of workplace hazards. Racial justice–centered policy, systems, and environmental change approaches should be implemented to support worker and community health outcomes.

Precarious Work and Who is Impacted: Precarious work is defined as jobs that by nature are unhealthy and/or unsafe/unstable, with irregular hours or hourly pay, low wages, without sufficient health insurance, or access to consistent healthcare, and/or the inability to speak freely to an employer or lack of clarity around who the employer of record is, increased vulnerability to exploitation and discrimination, and limited or no work/life balance. Women, people of color, and immigrants are disproportionately employed in precarious jobs.

Short- and Medium-Term Impact



Research

- Participatory methods are developed and tested to characterize precarious work across eco-social levels and to describe its social, structural, and economic impacts
- The science of Total Worker Health addresses the social and structural determinants of worker health and well-being in communities, local government, and businesses
- Standards for healthy work and well-being beyond the workplace exist



Capacity-Building

- Policy, systems, environmental, and norms-change initiatives support healthy work
- More employers and communities value and implement Total Worker Health
- Academic and citizen scientists are prepared to promote healthy work through participatory engagement with partners across eco-social levels
- Increase in training, skills-building, and wealth-generation strategies to build power in workers, institutions, and communities disproportionately impacted by precarious work



Multidirectional Engagement

- Multidirectional collaboratives work together to shift norms around healthy work
- Build worker power through increased multisectoral action and investment in workers and communities disproportionately impacted by precarious work



Communication and Consciousness-Raising

- Knowledge translation to adopt a standardized, evidence-based definition of healthy work
- Role of healthy work in addressing health and social inequities is illuminated
- The impact of precarious work on mental, physical, organizational, community, racial, and geographic health disparities is prioritized in the development of interventions that address the future of work and human rights
- Structural barriers to healthy work (e.g., racism, documentation status, criminal justice system) are illuminated

Long-Term Impact

- A nationally recognized definition of “healthy work” is established
- Model for local and national policies and programs that provide safety nets
- Shift in political/economic systems around labor market policies, business models, tax policy, social safety nets, employment classification, and job quality
- Substantial investment in policy, systems, environmental, and norms changes that ensure equitable access to healthy work
- Enhanced models of enforcement and accountability that protect the health of US workers
- Community residents, local government, health departments, healthcare systems, and employers that are more prepared for strategic implementation of healthy work policies
- Worker health and well-being initiatives adopted as a sustainable business strategy



Vision

The future of work promotes inclusive and equitable opportunities for healthy work that are valued in civil society, government, and the private sector. Healthy work is:

- A social and structural determinant of health, and a human right
- A pathway to advancing systemic change and racial justice
- A significant contributor to workforce well-being



Underlying Assumptions

Worker health disparities are evident across demographic and geographic divides. Historical and systemic racism and injustices have led to inequitable job opportunities and job quality for women, BIPOC, and immigrants who are disproportionately employed in precarious jobs. Healthy work is frequently promoted through worksite-based health promotion programming and the control of workplace hazards. The Center for Healthy Work aims to address these inequities by working across organizational, urban, suburban, and rural communities to systemically improve worker health. CHW is a research center focused on racial justice-centered strategic policy, systems, and environmental-change initiatives to support communities and institutions in building and sustaining healthy work.