



# MassCOSH

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health

Mass**ORGANIZE**

Mass**ADVOCACY**

Mass**MOBILIZATION**

Mass**MOVEMENT**

Mass**RIGHTS**

**2008 – 2010**

## Mass**ACTION AGENDA**

Standing Together for Safe and Healthy Work

Mass**IMPACT**

Mass**JUSTICE**

AS MASSCOSH CHARTS ITS COURSE FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS, we find ourselves in a unique moment. Since our last strategic plan, we have won real improvements in workers' lives through the mobilization of many different constituencies. New alliances have been forged, new leaders have emerged, and more people have found their voice. At the same time, the challenges are now greater than ever—with unrelenting attacks on workers, immigrants and the environment. As we look ahead, we believe

MassCOSH is poised to play an important role in successfully combating these threats. This strategic plan will guide our

education, organizing and advocacy work over the next three years, to help workers and their organizations become more unified, knowledgeable and powerful.

## INTRODUCTION

This plan is the culmination of a year-long process, reflecting the insights of a broad range of individuals and organizations that we are grateful to have as partners in the struggle for workers' health and safety. With the help of Erica Bronstein from Ibis Consulting Group, we benefited from an inclusive and energizing strategic planning process that involved:

- Personal interviews with over a dozen stakeholders
- More than 20 hours of retreats with board, staff and volunteers
- Six task forces working on different aspects of the plan
- Approval of the final plan by the Board and staff

WE THANK EACH PARTICIPANT for her or his invaluable contributions to this plan:

### Interview Participants:

Nancy Comeau, Mass. Division of Occupational Safety; Letitia Davis, Mass. Department of Public Health; Mike Grunko, SEIU 509; Monica Halas, Greater Boston Legal Services; Robert Haynes, Mass AFL-CIO; Nancy Lessin, United Steelworkers; Chuck Levenstein, Mass. Teachers Association/Mass. Public Health Association; Emily Novick, Esquire; Rocio Saenz, SEIU 615; Mike Serici, Massachusetts Teachers Association; Wally Sosa; Gladys Vega, Chelsea Human Services Collaborative; Mary Vogel, Construction Institute; Susan Winning, UMass-Lowell Labor Education Center

### Retreat and task force participants:

Flor Correa; José Lopreto; Lenore Azaroff, UMass Lowell; Philip Katz; Ted Comick, IUE/CWA 201; Susan Shepherd; Kim Wilson, UMass Dartmouth Labor Extension; Diego Pena; Richard Rabin; Cassandra Cato-Louis; Jean Carmel St. Juste; Tolle Graham; Bob Burns; Silvana Alvarez; Khadijah Britton; Isabel Lopez; Jeff Crosby, North Shore Labor Council; Tony Dunn, North Shore Labor Council; Susan Winning, UML Labor Extension; Tess Ewing, UMB Labor Extension Program; Melissa King; Tammy Miser, United Support Memorial for Workplace Fatalities; Letitia Davis, Mass. Department of Public Health; Elise Pechter, Mass. Department of Public Health; Janeth Orozco; Agustina Mattos; Manuel Matamoros; Carlos Arrivillea; Regino Cruceta; Eduardo Valdes; Marbin Moran; Jorge Escalante; Mario Barrios; Veronica Monteiro; Colen Brown; Laurie Paris; Janessa Moreno; Samara Walker; Tito Pimental; Nagela St. Juste

### Strategic Planning Committee:

Cassandra Cato-Louis, Philip Katz, Jean Carmel St.-Juste, Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, Khadijah Britton

## MISSION

MassCOSH brings together workers, unions, community groups, and health and safety activists to organize and advocate for safe, secure jobs and healthy communities throughout eastern and central Massachusetts. Through training, technical assistance and building community/labor alliances, MassCOSH mobilizes its members and develops leaders in the movement to end unsafe work conditions.

## VISION

Guided by a commitment to changing the workplace, not the worker, MassCOSH links workers and their allies across the spectrum of race, class, age, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity in the struggle for safe and healthy workplaces.

MassCOSH believes that only through collective power will workers be able to change workplace conditions and influence the policies that govern these conditions. MassCOSH has a special focus on immigrants and other lower-income adults and young people of color who often work in jobs that are the most unsafe and unhealthy.



# MassCOSH CORE GOALS

## PROGRAM GOALS

1. Educate and mobilize workers to become involved in efforts to improve their working conditions and to influence public policies that govern these conditions.
2. Develop leaders and peer educators in the movement for safe and healthy jobs.
3. Build community-labor-environmental alliances to effect change at the public policy level and in the workplace.
4. Build a stronger and more inclusive union movement by mobilizing members around health and safety and by organizing the unorganized.
5. Maximize MassCOSH's visibility to the general public, union, community groups, clinicians, and public officials.

## STRUCTURAL GOALS

6. Expand number and level of engagement of MassCOSH members and activists, particularly unions, younger people and immigrants.
7. Build on synergies between MassCOSH programs, maximize resources and build capacity.
8. Develop a strong, diverse board and staff that have the skills and capacity to fulfill MassCOSH's mission and implement the strategic plan.



## PROGRAMS AND OBJECTIVES

MassCOSH will use the above goals to guide the development and expansion of our initiatives over the next three years. These initiatives include:

- Immigrant Worker Center
- Union Education/Organizing Support
- Labor Environmental Health Initiative
- Teens Lead @ Work

# OBJECTIVES 2008 — 2010

## IMMIGRANT WORKER CENTER

The MassCOSH Worker Center is widely recognized as a safe place for immigrants to speak up about abuses and become part of a powerful network of workers demanding safe, decent working conditions. The Worker Center is also a place where workers can be introduced to unions and encouraged to organize for a permanent voice in the workplace through unionization.

“MassCOSH taught me my rights. Now I want to learn how to fight for the rights of workers like me.”

*Flor Correa,  
MassCOSH  
vice-chair of the worker  
center steering  
committee*



Immigrant workers lead the worker center, playing a central role in governing the center, recruiting members, educating each other about rights and offering support to strengthen campaigns that result in tangible improvements: unionization, improved health and safety conditions, restoration of wages, and an end to discrimination and abuse.

These efforts are bolstered by a host of allies who contribute their time and skills: unions, community groups, health and safety professionals, attorneys, and students. MassCOSH contributes to a vibrant network of Worker Centers, supporting the efforts of existing Worker Centers and fostering the development of new ones in underserved communities.

## Objectives

### Educate and mobilize

- Build a powerful network of immigrant workers who lead successful organizing efforts that result in tangible improvements to working conditions and unionization wherever possible.
- Train 900 immigrant workers through English for Speakers of Other Languages classes to advocate for their health and safety.
- Provide workers with informative and easily accessible health and safety assistance and legal resources through the MassCOSH hotline and drawing on a skilled network of health and safety professionals and legal volunteers.

- Help workers navigate government agencies so they can be an active participant of an OSHA investigation, access workers compensation, and benefit from data and resources available through the state’s public health and occupational safety departments.

### **Develop leaders and peer educators**

- Develop workers’ capacity to lead campaigns and support other workers through inspirational and informative leadership training programs in East Boston, Lynn and Chelsea (in partnership with the Chelsea Collaborative).
- Develop a strong and active steering committee to lead the worker center with effective sub-committees.
- Contribute to the capacity-building of other worker centers and benefit from the experiences of other worker centers through the “Worker Center Collaborative”, participating in collective learning, resource sharing and joint campaigns.
- Foster the development of new worker centers in underserved communities in partnership with community and labor groups, with initial support being devoted to New Bedford and expanding as interest and capacity allows.

### **Build alliances to affect change in public policy and in the workplace**

- Through a powerful coalition of labor, community groups and day laborers, win passage of a Temporary Worker Right to Know Bill in Massachusetts.

- Successfully collaborate with the Division of Industrial Accidents to ensure that injured immigrant workers gain urgently needed access to treatment and replacement wages.
- Build links between unions/Central Labor Councils and unorganized immigrant workers, leading to successful unionization of immigrant workers.

### **Maximize visibility**

- Through peer to peer outreach, Worker Center members reach and recruit 200 other immigrant workers to become engaged in the Center.
- Achieve regular and compelling coverage in all forms of media —newspapers, radio and television.

## **UNION ORGANIZING/ EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

Unions win recognition of health and safety as a basic worker right. Through the efforts of active health and safety committees supported by MassCOSH, unions achieve tangible improvements in working conditions for their members. Unions see MassCOSH as the place to go for health and safety organizing and technical assistance.

Unions join forces with community and environmental activists to remove toxic chemicals from workplaces. MassCOSH fosters a growing network of union leaders and shop floor safety activists that consistently stand against “divide and conquer strategies” that pit union workers against the unorganized, or jobs against the environment. MassCOSH is a bridge, bringing unions together with immigrants to demand safe, healthy workplaces and government regulations that benefit all workers.

### **Objectives**

#### **Educate and mobilize**

- Identify priority concerns and offer timely updates on health and safety efforts to union leaders and activists at steward meetings, union meetings, AFL-CIO and Central Labor Council events.



“MassCOSH helped us strategize how to identify unsafe conditions, they help us with organizing in very concrete ways. Health and safety became a place where people could fight back, they felt so empowered. MassCOSH asks how can we help—they are always reaching out.”

*Rocio Saenz, President,  
SEIU Local 615*

- Expand union involvement in annual Workers Memorial Commemorations, increasing the number of participating unions and their activism in addressing injuries and fatalities.
- Serve as a rapid response partner with unions, drawing attention to serious accidents and fatalities and mobilizing to prevent future injuries and fatalities.

#### **Develop leaders and peer educators**

- Partner with Central Labor Councils to foster a network of health and safety activists.

- Strengthen support for union efforts to win health and safety improvements through active and trained health and safety committees and new organizing efforts.

### **Alliances to affect change in public policies**

- Pass Public Sector OSHA through executive order and legislation, for the first time extending health and safety protections to public employees.
- Partner with unions and community groups to strengthen the state's safety grant program and increase its accessibility to unions/organizations that serve at-risk populations.

### **Maximize visibility**

- Disseminate key health and safety information on legislation and events through articles on union websites and in newsletters.
- Issue an annual Workers Memorial report to draw public attention to the high rates of fatalities, injuries and illnesses and to provide an analysis that may help unions develop effective prevention strategies.

## **LABOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE**

Workers' exposure to toxics is significantly reduced through MassCOSH's support of unions' health and safety organizing and public policy victories. MassCOSH successfully forges winning coalitions between labor and environmental movements to combat environmental health threats and replace toxic chemicals with safer ones. MassCOSH's grassroots organizing for healthy schools unites parents, unions and communities to improve school environmental conditions in Boston, throughout Massachusetts and across the country. As a result of MassCOSH's work, a Blue/Green alliance between unions and environmental health groups flourishes in Massachusetts and becomes a national model for coalition-building.

### **Objectives**

#### **Educate and mobilize**

- Engage unions in efforts that substitute safer alternatives for toxic chemicals on the shop floor and expand union involvement in the policy efforts of the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT).
- Provide training and technical assistance to parents, school unions, and school environmental committees to address school environmental health and safety.



“Given that we use [cleaning] products every day, it just makes sense that we be given the chance to suggest changes that could have a big impact on custodians—and on kids and teachers too.”

*Michael Lafferty,  
Business Representative,  
Boston School  
Custodians Union Local  
1952*



- Integrate MassCOSH and Toxic Use Reduction (TUR) efforts into The New England Consortium (TNEC), ensuring that TNEC’s curriculum empowers workers and supports collective action to improve safety.
- Deliver TNEC emergency responder/hazardous waste worker training to unions, strengthening their capacity to promote safe conditions for workers engaged in some of the most dangerous jobs.

#### **Develop leaders and peer educators**

- Recruit safety professionals trained by TNEC into MassCOSH and utilize their expertise to support the health and safety efforts of unions, immigrants, and teens.

#### **Alliances to effect change in public policies**

- Pass legislation that replaces the state’s most hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives, requires safer cleaning products for public buildings and eliminates the most flammable

chemicals used by floor finishing workers, in partnership with the AHT and other community/labor coalitions.

- Building on the highly effective floor finishing safety task force, establish community-labor-environmental collaboration as opportunities arise and link to AHT’s environmental campaigns.
- Improve Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) in all Boston Schools by fostering a powerful and effective union engagement in policies and procedures.
- Share the Boston model for school EHS—including green cleaning, integrated pest management and healthy school construction with three Massachusetts communities, in partnership with the Massachusetts Asthma Advocacy Coalition and Mass Healthy Schools Network.
- Strengthen efforts of Mass Healthy Schools Network to achieve a wide range of school improvements in reducing toxic in schools through the green cleaning initiative and healthy school design and maintenance, and strengthen links to healthy schools efforts throughout New England and nationally.
- Win adoption of policies that promote healthy indoor air quality in schools and other public buildings.

#### **Maximize visibility**

- Produce and release reports on key environmental health issues that draw attention to the need for the replacement of toxic chemicals and the improvement of school environmental conditions.

## **TEENS LEAD AT WORK (TL@W)**

TL@W is known throughout the state as a forceful advocate for young worker safety and workplace rights. TL@W provides an empowering environment where teens develop their leadership and organizing skills, reach out to other teen workers, and monitor the enforcement of the Child Labor Laws.

MassCOSH forges alliances between unions and TL@W to improve safety for youth workers and educate youth about the critical role that unions play in ensuring worker rights. A cadre of teen leaders provides a wide range of educational programs—in unions, schools, and communities—to expand protections for young workers. TL@W builds bridges among native-born, documented and undocumented teens in the fight for young worker rights.

### **Objectives (developed and to be led by TL@W peer leaders)**

#### **Educate and mobilize**

- Educate young workers to advocate for safety in the workplace and encourage teen activism with MassCOSH, using a curriculum developed specifically for teens, including workshops, web training, and a health and safety video.
- Reach out to 10 to 15 teens who have suffered workplace injuries to encourage their involvement in TL@W and document their experiences.
- Pilot a parent education program with union families on Health and Safety and Child Labor Laws, building bridges between TL@W and unions.

#### **Develop leaders and peer educators**

- Build a strong network of teen labor activists through an annual leadership academy which brings together teams of teens from throughout Eastern Massachusetts with a shared commitment to promoting young worker safety in their communities.
- Create one new activist group of teen workers in Massachusetts under the banner of TL@W.



### **Build alliances to effect change in public policy**

- Spearhead the Child Labor Law Task Force to serve as a watchdog for Child Labor Reforms passed in January, 2007.
- Win policy victories from the state or city (Boston or another urban community) that strengthen protections for teen workers.

### **Maximize visibility**

- Expand visibility in all forms of media—newspapers, radio, television and internet—so that TL@W is recognized as the voice of young workers in Massachusetts.
- Utilize new promotional strategies including flyers, postcards, and web pages such as MySpace to reach and engage teens across the state.

“Before [Teens Lead @ Work], I never really thought of safety in the workplace. I feel I greatly impacted the community because with my trainings, rallies and other activities, I am actually out there making a difference.”

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*Colen Brown, Teens Lead @ Work Peer Leader*

## **ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

MassCOSH is led by an active and engaged membership and a diverse, committed and highly effective Board and staff. MassCOSH members know each other by name and see themselves as belonging to a vibrant activist community. Communication is timely, informative, engaging and inspirational.

Workers and the media see MassCOSH as the first place to go for information on health and safety in the workplace. Through innovative strategies in membership, communication and fundraising, MassCOSH becomes a national leader in developing and leveraging successful workplace health and safety alliances.

### **Objectives**

#### **Communication**

- Send a monthly e-newsletter or e-action alert to educate members and engage them in MassCOSH campaigns.
- Create and distribute three newsletters per year, providing members with information, resources and ways to become involved.
- Gain national attention to MassCOSH’s work through publication of an article in a recognized journal.

### **Membership**

- Recruit 100 new members per year and maintain 80% of current members, building MassCOSH's strength as an advocate for workplace health and safety and decreasing MassCOSH's dependency on grants. Expand enrollment of immigrant workers, unions, Central Labor Councils, and health and safety professionals as members.
- Actively involve 2/3 of MassCOSH members in worker safety campaigns and bring members together through member events, building a community of health and safety activists.
- Reach out to families of fallen workers to offer support, avenues for involvement and an opportunity to participate in Workers Memorial Day.
- Expand MassCOSH's Health Technical and Lawyers Committees, providing workers with state of the art information and guidance in multiple languages.

### **Board and Staff capacity**

- Provide training and support to develop a strong, diverse Board and staff armed with the necessary skills and resources to achieve the organization's objectives.
- Promote continuous improvement of our efforts through ongoing stakeholder input, program evaluation and organizational planning efforts.

### **Fundraising**

- Diversify MassCOSH's funding sources to reduce dependence on any one source.
- Derive 15% of MassCOSH's funds from memberships and training/ services income, expanding its resources and increasing its flexibility in addressing the most pressing health and safety issues.