Thinking Outside the Box with Public Health Departments

Who are we:
Raise The Floor Alliance (RTF) is an Illinois-based non-profit and legal clinic. RTF's mission is to ensure that low-wage workers have access to quality jobs and are empowered to uphold and improve workplace standards.

Partnership Details:
In Illinois, state and local COVID-19-related mitigation orders extended the state health department's authority to issue isolation, quarantine, or closure orders to establishments and local health departments. This allowed local health departments to investigate COVID-19-related occupational hazards and assure protections for essential workers.

Community health organizations and public health departments have faced increasing challenges around capacity and building trust among workers in non-standard employment and immigrant communities. To address these challenges, the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) partnered with RTF to establish the Suburban Cook County Worker Protection Program (SCCWPP). The first-of-its-kind grassroots worker center and public health agency collaboration, SCCWPP disrupted the spread of COVID-19 and highlighted the workplace as a social determinant of health.

Program Goals:
Through SCCWRP, RTF aimed to expand existing relationships and establish new ones between CCDPH and worker centers, educate employers and workers on worker rights, employer responsibilities, and best practices for reducing COVID-19 transmission, ensure workers have a safe and confidential way to report workplace violations. This helped CCDPH to identify non-compliant employers and ensure visibility around actions to address complaints. Lastly, the program aimed to support employers and workers to comply with CDC guidance to reduce COVID-19 transmission at work and beyond.

Impact:

- Coordinated 1,186,308 outreach communications, with worker centers.
- Reached 33,636 workers through in-person interactions, community navigator programs, and inclusive materials.
- Distributed PPE at 2,562 worksites.
- Referred 725 workers and community members to services, including unemployment, food, housing, legal and healthcare support.

For more information on this program, contact Sophia Olazaba at solazaba@raisetheflooralliance.org or visit www.raisetheflooralliance.org to learn more about Raise The Floor Alliance.

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