

**Looking Back and Moving Forward: 20 years of Worker Education and Training  
NIEHS National Trainers' Exchange – March 2007**

**POST-CONFERENCE REPORT  
WORKSHOP SESSION SUMMARY  
NIEHS NATIONAL TRAINERS' EXCHANGE  
MARCH 2007**

**1. Session Title and Presenter's Contact Information:**

“Effective Approaches for Addressing Challenges in Training Spanish-speaking Workers”

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**2. Workshop Summary**

The purpose of this workshop is to explore some of the issues and challenges instructors can face when training Spanish-speaking workers who, in most cases, are part of vulnerable employment situations or may have different attitudes or beliefs with regards to health and safety. This may happen due to their experiences in their own culture or country of origin.

An icebreaker is used to explore attitudes/feelings trainers may experience when facing challenges that arise when training Spanish-speaking workers. This activity is followed by a discussion to brainstorm different challenges trainers have encountered through their training experience. Then, participants in small groups discuss different strategies and approaches that can be used in training to address challenges in the classroom. Five stories were prepared in advance to initiate the discussion.

At the end of the workshop, participants receive some resources available in Spanish, including some publications from magazines about training Spanish-speaking workers. Also, participants are invited to participate in an on-going support network for Spanish speaking trainers.

**3. Methods**

This workshop is developed under the premises of Popular Education, where participants work in facilitated group discussions. This process draws upon the expertise of the participants, allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and experience conducting trainings with Spanish-speaking workers.

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The workshop begins with individual reflection about one situation faced during training that was very challenging, followed by an icebreaker to explore and share the challenges instructors face when training Spanish-speaking workers.

Participants are told that not everyone will have a chance to share their ideas because time is very limited. Moreover, the purpose of this workshop, in addition to exploring approaches, is to share tools and resources, so they will just get a flavor of the activity.

A list will be generated and similar challenges prepared in advance will be addressed in small groups in order to start a discussion with regards to effective approaches to address challenges. Each group is assigned a participatory method which includes: case studies, role plays, and fotonovela. The challenges to be discussed are:

- a. Workers feel powerless to take any action (case study)
- b. Training after finishing nightshift (role play)
- c. Participants don't see the need of relevance of the training since they are in this country for a short period of time. (fotonovela)
- d. Lack of resources to develop, translate and/or produce high quality Spanish-language material (case study)
- e. Some participants have strong feelings about their union not doing anything to support them (case study)
- f. Tension between management and workers taking same training (role play)

Each participant is assigned to a small group, which has a facilitator. Participants receive copies of a story and discuss several questions.

Each group reports back to the large group. Since the workshop is 90 min, not all groups have the opportunity to share their comments.

Despite the fact that there was not enough time to share everyone's ideas, participants were very engaged and would have liked more time to discuss their assigned situation in a deeper context.

### **4. Main Points**

#### **Key lessons from the case study**

The different cases discussed in groups were based on true stories that some trainers have faced over the years while conducting training with Spanish-speaking workers. Each facilitator was previously briefed to ask the following questions:

- Which issue in the story did you decide to address? (every case included several issues)
- Have you faced a similar situation? What did you do?
- What might be other approaches to this issue?

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Overall the participants felt that when working with Spanish speaking workers, trainers need to:

- Make training relevant to their activities and their lives (i.e. equate job hazards with home hazards, use personal experiences, demonstrations on how to do, replacing safer chemicals for most hazardous ones, connect personal issues to training)
- Promote critical thinking on health and safety
- Explore the possibilities of having more frequent training and shorter sessions
- Use interactive activities, including lots of hands-on activities, pictures, cartoons, etc.
- Provide food or snacks
- Provide childcare (when appropriate) to facilitate worker participation
- Speak in their own language (use the terms they understand)
- Conduct on-the-spot need assessments; and if possible, meet with students before class
- Design the classes to have an opportunity to exchange information
- Set up training for days when things are not so busy and don't interfere with production
- Use student success stories
- Recognize, validate and acknowledge workers' conditions and concerns
- Write concerns anonymously
- Keep reminding them that small changes can make a difference
- What students can do doesn't always depend on employers, but on themselves
- Convince students there is something for them
- Empower workers to feel that "they have a right"
- Teach students to recognize that when something is wrong they need to stop and reflect
- Create a feeling that the classroom is a safe place to discuss their concerns
- Develop and support internal resources
- Contract outside resources if the company does not have bilingual capacity
- Look for funding opportunities
- Remind workers that their lives are on the line
- Try to raise the issue of worker dignity      Ask workers to write down their concerns
- Remind them that the Union is very concerned about their health and safety
- Keep this dialogue going throughout NIEHS, not just HWTP or Brown fields

### **Responses from the participants**

- Most participants in the session thought more time was needed. They did not have time to look at the issues deeply and to look for approaches that were "outside the box."

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- Most felt that the discussion needs to continue. We only addressed the surface issues. The issues discussed are impacting everyone, regardless of geographical and cultural differences.
- There was excitement and a consensus that we need to continue working together and utilize the great resources that many grantees programs have developed, so we don't have to continuously re-invent the wheel.
- There was agreement and consensus to keep moving forward with a network for Spanish-speaking trainers that will actively support each other.

### 5. References

Wallerstein, N., (1993), "Empowerment and Health: The theory and practice of community change," *Community Development Journal*, 28(3), pp.218-227

### 6. Workshop Handouts/ Resources

Handouts: (all available upon request)

- Tips for Creating a Culturally Inclusive Training (Compiled by LOHP)
- Cultural Awareness – Glossary of key terms (Compiled by LOHP)
- Tips for Good Written Translations (Adapted from Occupational Lead Prevention Program CDHS, September 2001)
- List of resources
- Cases studies, role plays and fotonovela.

Articles:

- Job Safety Training for Latino Workers Needs Special Focus (Julie A. Pace)  
[www.nbnnews.com/NBN/issues/2004-06-28/Construction+Safety/index.html](http://www.nbnnews.com/NBN/issues/2004-06-28/Construction+Safety/index.html)
- Language Barriers Increase Job Hazards(Janet Jackewich)  
[www.fhba.com/index.cfm?referer=content.contentItem&ID=1283](http://www.fhba.com/index.cfm?referer=content.contentItem&ID=1283)
- Communicating with Spanish-Speaking Workers (Katherine Torres)  
[www.occupationalhazards.com/classess/article/articledraw\\_P.aspx](http://www.occupationalhazards.com/classess/article/articledraw_P.aspx)
- Making the workplace safe for Spanish-speaking employees (Kelly Langdon)  
[www.thefabricator.com/safety/safety\\_article.cfm?ID=635](http://www.thefabricator.com/safety/safety_article.cfm?ID=635)