

## Tips on Reaching Out to Service Workers

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*Thanks to Saru Jayaraman, Executive Director of Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York for her input on this tip sheet.*

### Background

The tobacco industry has worked hard to develop a strong relationship with the hospitality industry:

- The only organized opposition to clean indoor air ordinances is restaurant and tavern associations.
- According to the National Restaurant Association, restaurants are the second largest employer next to government.
- Previously secret tobacco industry internal documents are now available that expose the relationship between the tobacco and restaurant industries.

Bringing service workers into clean indoor air policy campaigns creates an important wedge in the opposition. And there are good reasons for us to work together. Immigrants and people of color are over-represented in those industries with the highest rate of exposure to secondhand smoke -- food service, labor and factory work -- placing many of us at high risk for secondhand smoke related health problems

*For immigrants and people of color, clean indoor air is fundamentally a workers' rights issue.*

### Outreach Tips

**Build your base of support.** Develop your coalition, and conduct outreach to unions, union affiliated 501c3 organizations and immigrant worker centers. Make sure to identify relevant union locals representing restaurant and hotel workers in your area. For other ideas on base building, see the *Tips for Base Building* handout on our website at [www.thepraxisproject.org](http://www.thepraxisproject.org)

**HERE can be a great partner.** The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) is a labor union representing approximately 265,000 hospitality industry workers through 111 affiliated Local Unions across the United States and Canada.

- HERE members include room attendants, cooks, waiters, bartenders, and others who work in hotels, motels, casinos, restaurants, clubs, hospitals, bars, and other hospitality, food service, travel, and tourism establishments.
- The membership has high percentages of African-Americans, Latino and Asian immigrant workers in many cities.

- HERE Locals are easy to approach as long as it's done early and there is a long term strategy to bring the members into the campaign.

**Reach out to and educate union gatekeepers**, union organizers and shop stewards and offer to educate rank and file members on key issues including:

- health effects and impacts of secondhand smoke
- higher occupational risk for service workers
- economic impact of clean indoor air ordinances
- how the tobacco industry has targeted the hospitality industry

Remember that union affiliated groups often include 501c3 sister organizations and immigrant workers centers. These centers are mostly located in large urban centers.

**Other ideas:**

- Subcontract with labor affiliated 501c3 organizations to conduct specific educational activities on the issue of secondhand smoke and clean indoor air.
- Work with these groups to organize restaurant workers' children as a youth component of the policy coalition. Train them to be advocates and media spokespersons.