



The First National Conference on Eliminating Health and Safety Disparities at work was held September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in Chicago, Illinois. This event was sponsored by NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) the [CDC](#) (Center for Disease Control, and the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. Co-Sponsors of the conference included [OSHA](#), the US [Department](#) of Health and Human Services, [EPA](#), and multiple schools of public health, occupational, and environmental medicine.

Two hundred attendees comprised of researchers on Public Health, doctors, psychologists, social workers, employees of [NIOSH](#), [NIEHS](#), OSHA, and other offices, and safety and health professionals focused their attentions on five white papers written by collaborative effort by researchers all over the country. The topics included the following;

- Work Organization, Job Insecurity, and Occupational Health Disparities
- Discrimination, harassment, abuse, and bullying in the workplace: Contribution of workplace injustice to occupational health disparities
- The Health of the Low-income Workforce: Integrating Public Health and Occupational Health Approaches
- Education and Training for Underserved Populations
- Effects of Social, Economic, and Labor Policies on Occupational Health Disparities.

Attendees were assigned to two of the five white papers, and met in groups to discuss the findings and what additional research was necessary to address each topic.

Each day 12 workers are killed on the job. The general public is unaware of this as these deaths go largely unreported, and only major events like the Deepwater Horizon accident receive national attention. Were 12 soldiers a day killed overseas the American public would be up in arms demanding that something be done, yet this is not the case when 12 people just like you and me lose their lives on the job each day. Conference attendees faced a panel of Federal agencies consisting of NIOSH, OSHA, EPA, the US Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of [Energy](#) to discuss what needs to be done. Two areas of discussion were posed to this panel; 1. What programs or aid should be created? and 2. What already exists that we can utilize more effectively now? Examples were provided including COSE's recent formation of an Alliance with Cleveland OSHA, the New Jersey model of construction workers trained in worksite audits and safety in partnership with OSHA, and the Philadelphia model of targeting Latino construction workers in Train the Trainer and Safety Promotion programs to create successful peer-to-peer education.

A safe and healthy workforce is good for business, and the training that employees receive from their employers trickles down into their personal lives. A focused approach on this training with full support from company Management creates a profitable environment that allows employees and their employers to flourish. The bottom line cost of an accident or occupational disease is as simple as this. What is the ultimate value of human life?