

# Addressing COVID-19–Related Challenges Facing Individuals Engaged in Precarious Employment

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges—economic, social, and physical and mental health—that face individuals engaged in precarious employment. Through the first three years of the pandemic, many of these workers reported increased exposure to COVID-19, limited access to sick leave, job loss, and reduced hours. State and local decision makers have opportunities as employers, policy makers, and regulators to support decent and healthy work and address the needs of this population.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING WORKERS ENGAGED IN PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

### EXPAND ACCESS TO BENEFITS AND LABOR PROTECTIONS

Some individuals engaged in precarious employment are often not eligible for unemployment insurance or paid sick leave, or face challenges such as wage theft. Such policies to address these needs could include reworking eligibility requirements for unemployment funds, improving paid sick leave protections, and expanding worker protections against wage theft.

### UPDATE AND ENFORCE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

Individuals engaged in precarious employment experience exposure to COVID-19 and other health risks. State and local decision makers have opportunities to improve safety regulations by issuing employment guidelines, conducting inspections, assessing fines for defaulters, and supporting and enforcing requirements that workplaces have safety committees.

### ENGAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND WORKER-CENTERED ORGANIZATIONS

The reach of state and local agencies can be increased by partnering with trusted community and worker-centered organizations to provide education and training on labor laws, increase public awareness, and provide support to those involved in referral processes for workplace violations.

### SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Workers' well-being can be improved by expanding access to health care and mental health services. This can be accomplished by, for example, increasing the role of managed care organizations, improving community health services, continuing access to telehealth, and broadening Medicaid eligibility.

### IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND DATA SHARING

Having accurate and timely disaggregated data can help inform state and local decision makers about the needs of and challenges facing this population. In addition, decision-makers can promote rigorous data collection efforts by investing in data systems, encouraging data sharing by the private sector, and fostering the sharing of public and private labor market data.

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