



CHICAGO COMMUNITY AND WORKERS RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT

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Table Of Contents

Intro	001	Accomplishments	008
Mission	002	Community Reach and Impact	010
Our Work	003	Testimonial	012
History	004	Staff	013
Community Defenders	005	Partnerships	014
Programs	006	Thank You	017



"AN ORGANIZATION FOR WORKERS BY WORKERS"

Welcome to our Annual Report, a showcase of our achievements, progress, and commitment to excellence throughout the year.



Mission

Chicago Community and Workers' Rights (CCWR) is an organization led by workers for workers, regardless of immigration status, dedicated to educating, building leadership, and gathering resources in order to develop organizing tools and collective strategies of resistance against labor rights abuses, towards just living conditions for our families.





Our Work

CCWR works primarily with low-wage Latinx immigrant workers in the Chicagoland area who can not find support in other places due to language barriers, immigration status, lack of formal education and other barriers. These workers often face injustices at work and have cases of discrimination, wage theft, sexual harassment, and lack of safety protections in the workplace (including during COVID-19), among others. At Chicago Community and Workers' Rights, workers are supported with the documentation of their cases, and are provided with information about their rights. When necessary, our organization also helps workers file complaints or claims against a company or employer to the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL), OSHA, or the appropriate institution.

CCWR houses a worker-owned cooperative incubator that supports low-income, mostly undocumented workers in building the infrastructure and capacity needed for economic self-determination. This includes providing technical assistance and guidance in support of the creation of worker-owned cooperatives in Chicago, as well as supporting the formation of family owned businesses.



History

Chicago Community and Workers' Rights (CCWR) was founded in June 2009 by a group of Latinx immigrant workers who saw a need for an organization dedicated to empowering workers to defend their rights. Chicago Community is a worker-led organization that builds leadership and develops organizing tools and collective strategies against labor and immigrant rights abuses, towards just living conditions, shifting the balance of power to the workers.

The organization's work has led to changes at the city, county, and state level to address issues of exploitation and push for the collective self determination of workers. With the organization's support, workers have recovered stolen wages, organized for better working conditions and defended their jobs. In 2014, because of cases brought to the attention of the Illinois Department of Labor by the organization, the implementation of three amendments to labor laws went into effect to make sure landscaping companies, and similarly structured companies, do not violate workers rights.

CCWR has worked and collaborated on initiatives, projects, and campaigns with many organizations across the state to defend the rights of workers, fight racial inequity, and help to push for change in the laws to create a better society for people most impacted by poverty and immigration status. In 2015, after years of organizing and advocacy together with Chicago street vendors, the City of Chicago approved a City ordinance that allows pushcart street vendors to sell their prepared products on the street. And in 2021, after five long years of advocacy and organizing with the Chicago Immigration Task Force, the city council approved an amendment to the "Welcoming City" ordinance, eliminating the exceptions that allowed the police to cooperate with ICE. This was done with the hard work of the Chicago Immigration Group, of which CCWR played an important role.

CCWR supports low-income, mostly undocumented workers in building the infrastructure and capacity needed for economic self determination. This includes providing technical assistance and guidance in support of the creation of worker-owned cooperatives in Chicago, as well as supporting the formation of family owned businesses. The organization is a founding member of the Illinois Workers Cooperative Alliance (IWCA), working towards creating financial and other resources for worker cooperatives at the city/county/state levels. In 2018, the organization worked with the Illinois Cooperative Alliance and passed a County resolution that encourages different government agencies to support the development of worker cooperatives. Because of the work of the Alliance, in August 2019 the state of Illinois passed the Illinois Workers' Cooperative Act (LWCAA) so that workers can register their cooperatives and participate in a more equitable economic development model. On March 13th 2020, with the support of Chicago Community and Workers Rights, the "Cooperative Workers Shared Kitchen" formed by the Chicago Street Vendors Association was registered with the IL Secretary of State. CCWR continues to work with cooperative members, who are currently in the process of renovating the building they purchased with the support of CCWR, as well as supporting the creation of an additional four worker cooperatives in 2023.

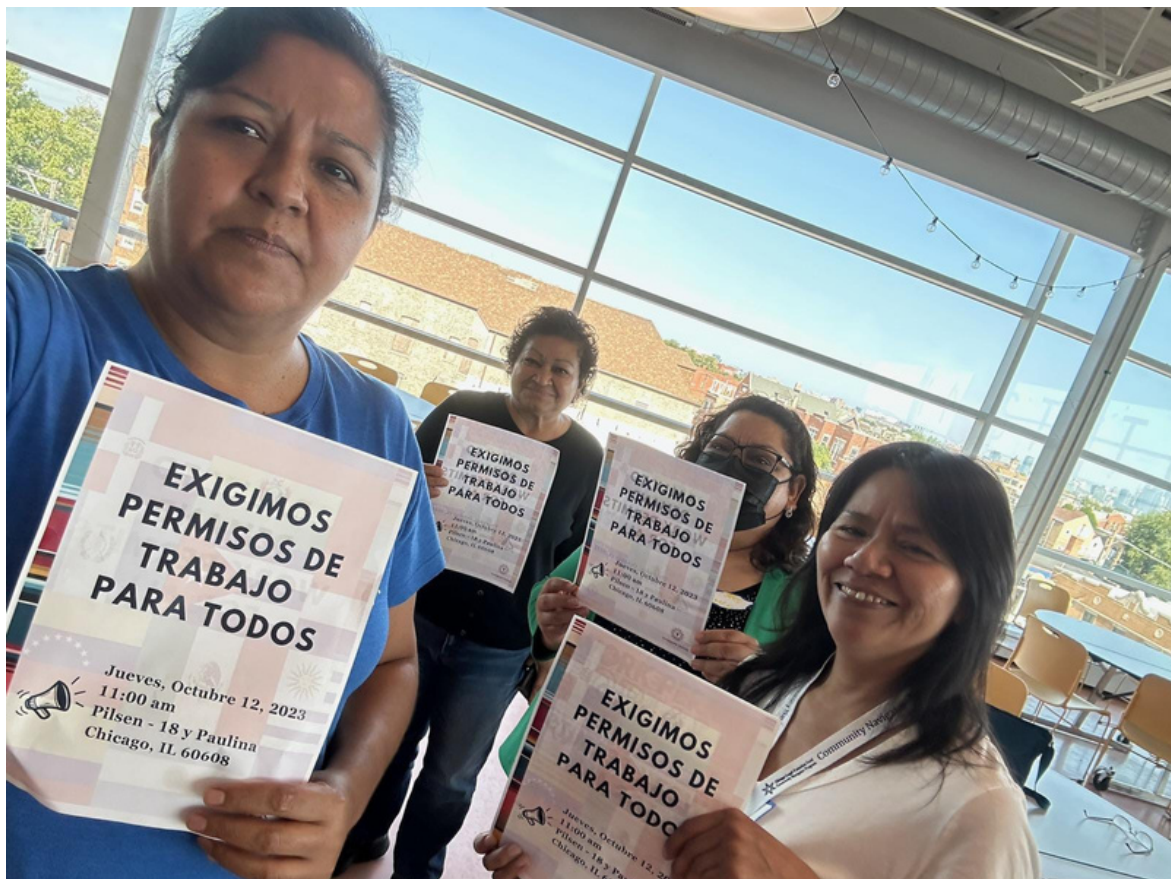


Community Defenders

Community Defenders are the eyes and ears of our organization and community. They are volunteer members from the community who support Chicago Community and Workers' rights in multiple capacities. Community Defenders include workers who have previously been supported by our organization, and who continue to participate, support, and stand in solidarity with the struggles of other workers. They attend the organization's yearly workshops and activities to share their experiences with other workers.

They are currently involved with the programs that our organization runs:

Illinois Access to Justice, Cook County Health Equity Initiative, and CCLAHD. They provide essential information to the community regarding worker and immigration rights, resources for free legal help, rental assistance, education about the campaigns our organization is a part of.





Programs

Illinois Access to Justice

- The Illinois Access to Justice program is an Illinois state program that seeks to mitigate the devastating consequences of all forms of detention and incarceration and the resulting devastating effects on historically underserved communities. CCWR is part of the Access to Justice (A2J) program, to provide information to workers about their rights and provide information on non-profit organizations that have immigration lawyers who give free legal advice.

Cook County Health Equity Initiative

- The Cook County Health Equity Initiative is a collaboration between the Cook County Department of Public Health and Raise the Floor Alliance to promote and protect the health and safety of workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. CCWR is part of this program and will be providing information to workers that can help them access vaccine and safety information to prevent or avoid contagion during the pandemic.

Workers' Empowerment Program

- Chicago Community and Workers' Rights provides support to workers who come to our organization seeking help and collaboration when they are facing unjust labor practices. Our organization helps both groups and individuals know what rights they are entitled to as workers and/or immigrants, document their cases, and file complaints with the appropriate institutions that work to protect the rights of workers. Helping workers recover stolen wages and file claims against labor injustices.

EJE: Equidad y justicia económica para el desarrollo colectivo / Economic Justice and Equity for Collective Development

- Chicago Community and Workers' Rights is working to create opportunities for growth in Latinx communities by focusing on alternative models of employment like cooperatives, collectives, or family businesses that create wealth for workers and their communities. CCWR houses a worker-owned cooperative business incubator. We provide outreach in low-income Latinx communities in Chicago and gather community members who are interested in learning about the cooperative model and values. Through our cooperative work, the organization works towards expanding equity, social justice, and workers rights. Our worker cooperative incubator addresses the needs of the community we serve by educating workers on the benefits of worker-owned cooperatives; including generating good jobs, allowing workers to acquire entrepreneurial business development knowledge and skills, building community wealth, and advancing equity and justice.



Programs

Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt (CCLAHD)

- Chicago Community and Workers' Rights receives funding from Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt (CCLAHD) to inform and provide outreach to low-income Latinx communities that helps mitigate evictions in these areas. CCLAHD offers free legal help to those facing unfair evictions or debt problems.





Accomplishments



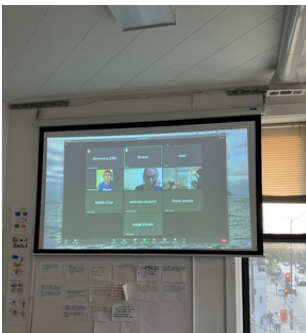
Education of our Rights

- CCWR conducted outreach at the Mexican consulate and in the community, passing out information about worker rights and resources available, reaching 110,000 low-income Latinx community members.



Cocina Compartida de Trabajadores Cooperativistas

- CCWR supported The Shared Kitchen Cooperative (CCTC) with the plan for renovation of their building, which will begin operating again in early 2024.



Defend Your Rights Virtual workshops

- In 2023, CCWR held 60 virtual and in-person workshops for the community regarding Worker and Immigrant rights, safety conditions at work, COVID-19 and vaccine access, how to form cooperatives, and Deferred Action for Workers.



Accomplishments



Cooperative Work

- Through our cooperative work EJE: Economic Justice and Equity for Collective Development, our organization helped support the creation of four worker cooperatives.



Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement (DALE)

- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a streamlined process to grant workers facing labor disputes deferred action, which helps employment and labor agencies enforce wage protection, workplace safety, labor rights, and other civil rights laws. CCWR has worked with hundreds of workers in an effort to help them with the process. By the end of 2023, CCWR has helped over 250 workers apply to receive work permits through DALE. Many workers have already received their permits to work.



14th Anniversary Gala

- Our organization held our first in-person Gala since the beginning of COVID-19 in 2023, and Representative Lillian Jimenez was our Keynote Speaker.



Community Reach and Impact

↑ **30,000**

Individuals reached through one-on-ones, group organizing efforts, and community navigator and program outreach (includes phone calls, workshop attendees, and workers with cases)

↑ **80,000**

Individuals reached through radio, tv, and social media

↑ **60**

Number of Virtual and in-person Workshops

↑ **\$500,000**

Money we've helped the community regain from wage theft cases



Community Reach and Impact

↑ **1,000**

Individuals who attended virtual and in-person workshops

↑ **110,000**

Total people reached throughout the entire year



Testimonial

Here is the testimony of Juanita Arroyo, President of IDEAL Cooperative

Diciembre 18, 2023

“Mi nombre es Juanita Arroyo, Presidenta de la cooperativa IDEAL. Estoy muy contenta y muy agradecida con la Organización Chicago Community and Workers Rights por todo el apoyo que nos han brindado en este proceso. Ya que para mí es algo nuevo lo de las cooperativas. No había escuchado antes sobre ello. Y con el conocimiento y la guía que nos han dado me es más claro el objetivo de nuestra cooperativa y con el apoyo del señor Martín Unzueta y el señor Abraham Uriel Ramírez, que con sus conocimientos nos han ido guiando y siempre están dispuestos a colaborar con el equipo y a impulsarnos en este crecimiento. Muchas gracias por su compromiso en la formación de la cooperativa IDEAL.

Gracias. Juanita Arroyo”

December 18, 2023

"My name is Juanita Arroyo, President of IDEAL Cooperative. I am very happy and very grateful to the Chicago Community and Workers Rights Organization for all the support they have given us in this process. This cooperative process was something new for me. I had not heard about it before. And with the knowledge and guidance CCWR has given us, the objective of our cooperative is clearer to me with the support of Mr. Martin Unzueta and Mr. Abraham Uriel Ramirez, who with their knowledge have been guiding us and are always willing to collaborate with the team and to encourage us in this growth. Thank you very much for your commitment in the formation of IDEAL Cooperative.

Thank you. Juanita Arroyo".



Staff



Martin Unzueta
Executive Director



Rosi Carrasco
Associated Director



Abraham Uriel Ramirez
Cooperative Organizer



Monica Alvarez
*Development and
communication coordinator*



Amanda Villanueva
Paralegal



Joel Cortes
*Labor & Community
Organizer*



Gualberto Maldonado
*Labor & Community
Organizer*



Partnerships

Raise The Floor Alliance, RTF

- A united voice, Raise the Floor Alliance was founded by eight Chicago-area worker centers. Raise the Floor Alliance (RTF) is a Chicago-based non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure that low-wage workers have access to quality jobs and are trained to maintain and improve workplace standards.
- Hundreds of workers living in the suburban area of COOK County are receiving information about their right to a safe workplace and how to protect themselves during COVID-19 to avoid contagion in the companies they work for.
- CCWR also partners with RTF on many campaigns including: Work Without Fear, Stopping Sexual Harassment in The Workplace, and Work Permits for All.

Street Vendors Association of Chicago, SVAC

- CCWR worked with Street Vendors Association of Chicago (SVAC) to raise funds for vendors to distribute free food to poor communities and continues to support them with meetings with the city of Chicago to make the licensing process easier and expand the range of products that can obtain licenses.

Cocina compartida de Trabajadores Cooperativistas, CCTC

- Cooperative Workers Shared Kitchen offers a fully equipped commercially licensed shared use kitchen.
- CCWR supported and helped the cooperative receive a grant from the city to renovate the building

Illinois Worker Cooperative Alliance, IWCA

- The Illinois Worker Cooperative Alliance (IWCA) was formed on July 2015 to help forge an environment that supports worker cooperatives for low-wage workers and the working poor whose typical employment opportunities are driven by companies with little interest in the financial and physical well-being of the working poor
- In 2021 IWCA was registered as a non-profit organization in the state of Illinois and funding was obtained to hire a loan officer to provide financing to worker cooperatives in communities of color.
- CCWR participates in the steering committee.



Partnerships

Seed Commons

- Seed Commons is a national network of locally rooted, non-extractive loan funds that brings the power of big finance under community control. By taking guidance from the grassroots and sharing capital and resources to support local cooperative businesses, building the infrastructure necessary for a truly just, democratic and sustainable new economy.
 - CCWR participates in the steering the committee to support the work of cooperatives and support the process of lending to cooperatives in Illinois
-

Chicago Food Worker Justice Alliance

- CCWR participates in the Advisory Council.
-

Chicago Food policy Action Council Roger/ Chicago's Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI)

- CCWR participates in the Advisory Council.
-

The Resurrection Project, TRP

- The mission of the Resurrection Project is to build relationships and challenge people to act on their faith, values and ideals to create healthier communities.
 - Chicago Community and Workers' Rights participates in the Illinois Access to Justice (A2J) program administered by The Resurrection Project.
-

National Legal Defense Network, NLAN

- The National Legal Defense Network is a non-profit legal organization. NLAN is dedicated to leveraging legal resources to enhance the capacity and sustainability of the low-wage worker movement through community-focused attorneys, support at worker centers, and strategic litigation.
- CCWR works directly with attorneys from the National Legal Defense Network (NLAN)



Partnerships

The Greater Lawndale Healthy Work (GLHW) Project

- The Greater Lawndale Healthy Work (GLHW) Project, part of the University of Illinois Chicago Center for Healthy Work, is a community-based participatory research project that partners with the Greater Lawndale area (North Lawndale and Little Village) and the University of Illinois' Chicago School of Public Health to better understand how work impacts community health and to identify community solutions to promote worker health.
- CCWR has been an active member of the Greater Lawndale Healthy Work Project during the past year, collaborating in the efforts to build a culture for healthy work at a neighborhood level, to shift the ecology of largely precarious works, and to identify interventions that support healing, resiliency, and healthy work among informal workers and low wage workers.

Community Wealth Building

- CCWR participates in the Advisory Council.





THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST

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Thank You

Chicago Community and Workers' Rights would like to thank all of our donors and foundations for their continued support.



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