

PROMOTING CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION FOR WORKER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

This case study outlines the formation and growth of Legal Aid at Work's campaign to promote interagency collaboration to improve outreach and education about rights to paid leave and accommodations in California, especially for marginalized workers. Much of the substantive content of the outreach campaign was related to workers' rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we believe the principles of collaboration and the human-centered approach developed and elevated through these partnerships can be used effectively in many contexts, to the benefit of families.

KEY LESSONS

1 Use your organization's strengths. Let agencies and other community organizations know they can count on your organization and show them what your core strengths are, including what you can bring to the table, whether it is community perspective, expertise and advice, or useful materials.

2 Build agency engagement from the beginning. Schedule regular meetings, ask for feedback on materials, and offer support by creating/drafting materials or FAQs.

3 Keep projects community centered. The goal of collaboration is to streamline processes for families. Without meaningful input from families and the community organizations that work closely with them, the project may not reach those most in need.

4 Advocate for sustainable funding. State agencies have heavy workloads and need committed departments or programs to pursue cross-agency and community engagement.

5 Celebrate and document successes. Acknowledging hard work and contributions from state agencies and other partners builds trust and momentum to continue and grow partnerships.





LESSON ONE: Use Your Strengths

Most people do not need to know the code section or the acronym of a relevant legal protection or program – they want to know how it can help them and how they can access it. Unfortunately, navigating these protections usually involves multiple steps, complex eligibility requirements, and unaligned entitlements. At Legal Aid at Work, we assist thousands of workers facing these dilemmas each year through helplines and clinics. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic we felt the crush of people desperately trying to understand how they could take leave from work and protect their families without losing their income, whether it was because suddenly there was no one else to watch their child, they were ill, or going to work would pose too much danger to themselves or a family member. We needed a new way to address these concerns, so we developed new tools that could answer common

collective questions. We had made and distributed fact sheets related to leave in the past, and immediately set out to create written materials about COVID-19 related leave and pay.

We drafted the **COVID + My Job** factsheet. The factsheet provides an overview and is easy to hand out at medical offices, testing sites, vaccine clinics and other settings where people would likely need the information. It covers workplace rights based on the need, not the law – e.g., time off or pay, not the California Family Rights Act or State Disability Insurance. It also lists Legal Aid at Work’s toll free helpline number that people can

I have COVID-19 or have been exposed

in CALIFORNIA

COVID-19 + MY JOB

see other side for COVID-19 caregiver

PAID SICK TIME (Use this first)

Local laws may provide additional paid sick time

	THESE LAWS MAY HELP:	Because they provide for:	Here's what to do:
<p>JOB-PROTECTED LEAVE</p>	<p>CA COVID PSL</p> <p>CA COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL PAID SICK LEAVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more than 25 employees January 2022 through September 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 week job-protected paid sick leave if subject to quarantine or isolation order, advised by healthcare provider to quarantine, experiencing symptoms and seeking a diagnosis, or attending or recovering from a vaccination/booster appointment 1 week job-protected paid sick leave if test positive for COVID-19. Employer may require positive test before payment 	<p>Request from your employer</p> <p>Go to dlse.ca.gov</p> <p><small>Tip: if you have a positive COVID-19 test, offer to show it to your employer and tell them you want to use your sick leave reserved for illness</small></p>
	<p>CA PSD</p> <p>CA PAID SICK DAYS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked at least 90 days For illness, medical appointments, or preventative care, including vaccination and recovery from side effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job-protected paid sick leave accrued at a rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours worked Employer may cap use at 3 days per year 	<p>Request from your employer</p> <p>Go to dlse.ca.gov</p>
<p>PAY</p> <p>If you might have been exposed to or contracted COVID-19 at work, you may be eligible for exclusion pay or pay through workers' compensation. Learn more at dir.ca.gov/dosh/ and dir.ca.gov/dwc/. Use exclusion pay before Paid Sick Time.</p>	<p>CFRA</p> <p>CALIFORNIA FAMILY RIGHTS ACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1+ year of service 1250+ hours of work in previous year 5+ employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 weeks job-protected leave if seriously ill (can be taken intermittently) Continuation of health benefits 	<p>Request from your employer</p> <p>Go to dfeh.ca.gov</p>
	<p>FEHA/ADA</p> <p>CA FAIR EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING ACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5+ employees <p>AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15+ employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable accommodations or changes to the way you do your job. Can include transfer, remote work, or job-protected leave 	<p>Request from your employer (See sample letters at legalaidatwork.org)</p>
<p>HOW THIS MIGHT WORK</p> <p>Ed is exposed to COVID-19 and his doctor tells him to get tested and quarantine. Ed tests positive and has lasting symptoms.</p>	<p>SDI</p> <p>STATE DISABILITY INSURANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to work, or working less, due to disability Paid into SDI during base period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 60% or 70% of weekly wages, depending on income, for a max. of 52 weeks (after a 1 week waiting period) 	<p>Apply at www.EDD.ca.gov</p>
	<p>UB</p> <p>UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to work but unemployed or working less through no fault of your own (laid off/fired, leave not granted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$40 to \$450 per week for up to 26 weeks 	<p>Apply at www.EDD.ca.gov</p>

STEP 1. ASK FOR CA COVID PSL THEN CA PSD

Ed tells his employer that he has been exposed to COVID-19 and that his doctor told him to quarantine. Ed asks to use his paid sick time and tells his employer his expected return date.

STEP 2. REQUEST CFRA FROM EMPLOYER AND APPLY FOR SDI FROM EDD

After using up his paid sick leave, Ed asks his employer for more time off under the CFRA to protect his job and files for State Disability Insurance (SDI) through the **Employment Development Department (EDD)** for income.

Legal Aid at Work cannot ensure this information is current or be responsible for any use to which it is put. Legal rights vary based on individual circumstances. This is up to date as of February 2022. Created with support from Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Blue Shield of California Foundation, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and The California Wellness Foundation. COVID-19 + My Job was created in collaboration with and informed by community health providers.

QUESTIONS

Call 800-880-8047 or visit [legalaidatwork.org](https://www.legalaidatwork.org)

LEGAL AID AT WORK

call with questions, including technical assistance questions from organizations that hand out the fact sheet.

In addition to the written materials, Legal Aid at Work worked with engineering partners at Generation Spark to create a chatbot, an interactive online tool, that was able to guide people through questions based on their individual circumstances and give tailored information about which rights applied. It was designed to use easy-to-understand language to take workers through the necessary qualifications for different rights based on their self-identified needs. Workers could begin using the chatbot by noting that they needed time off to care for their child or because they were sick, rather than being required to look up specific protections or laws.

Legal Aid at Work offered deep subject matter expertise in how the laws from these siloed agencies interact with each other (something individual agencies do not focus on), and also brought the experience of working families trying to access these programs to the table. Both were necessary to put the pieces in place to promote cross-agency collaboration and to enhance access to paid leave for working families during the COVID-19 crisis.

LESSON TWO: **Build Agency Engagement**

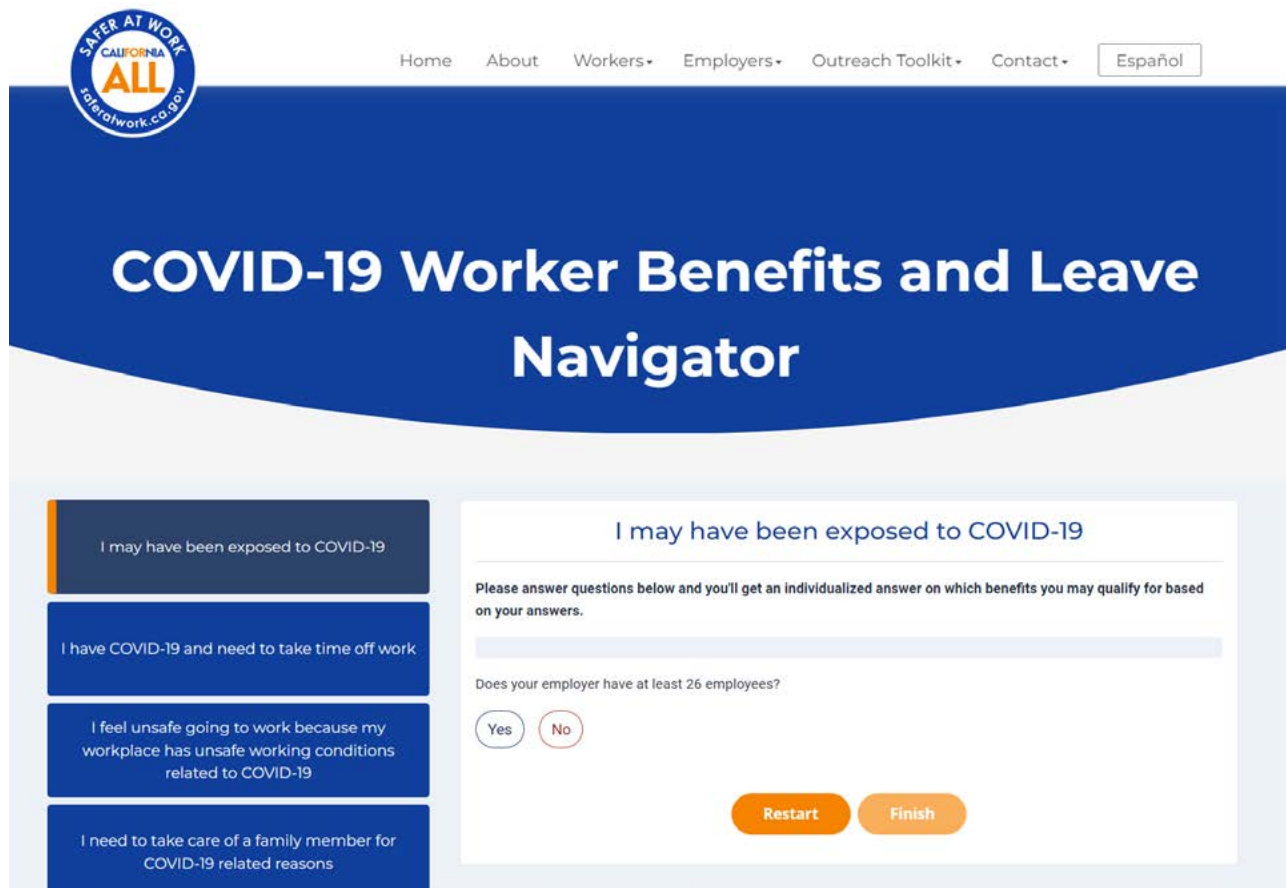
Cross-agency collaboration does not happen overnight. Nor does it happen without substantial time, commitment and leadership from multiple partners, some of whom are navigating daunting bureaucracies. We took time to build engagement through feedback and collaboration on materials.

After developing the initial [COVID-19 + My Job](#) fact sheet, Legal Aid at Work worked with partners in the Department of Public Health and local health departments, including through the California Conference of Local Health Officers, to review and incorporate feedback. It was important to understand health perspectives, and we also wanted to create a lasting sense of ownership over the final product. Some health departments invited Legal Aid at Work to provide trainings and information about paid leave and began routinely handing out the fact sheet at COVID testing sites with other public health materials and/or providing the information for contact tracers to use. When vaccines became available, COVID-19 + My Job was distributed to ensure workers knew they could miss work to get vaccinated and recover from a vaccine without losing their income.

The other agencies that were critical to an effort to provide comprehensive and accessible information were the **Employment Development Department**, the **Civil Rights Department** (formerly the Department of Fair Employment and Housing), and the **Labor and Workforce Development Agency**. We met with agency leadership, and with the

help of public health leaders, were able to lay out a plan to improve interagency information, using the materials we had created as examples.

One hurdle that we initially encountered in our outreach was that state health agencies felt that they should use materials created by other worker-focused state agencies. We offered to share our materials with the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and they decided to use our fact sheet and chatbot to create their own versions for the state website, with state agency branding. By allowing a community organization like Legal Aid at Work to help create state materials the agency demonstrated its commitment to centering families. This created a new opportunity to get critical information into the hands of additional state agencies and to many more workers across the state. The materials contained comprehensive needs-based information about laws that are enforced by the Civil Rights Department and the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement and administered by the Employment Development Department, and were imperative to health education efforts. The Labor and Workforce Development Agency committed to creating a navigator, modeled on our chatbot, to house on its website. This was truly remarkable because, as noted, **the chatbot contains information about rights enforced by at least three different state agencies.**



After the navigator launched on the labor agency website, it saw **over 1,000 users a day.**



LESSON THREE:

Keep Projects Community Centered

Throughout the process it is vital to create and use opportunities for community feedback and leadership. For example, when we created the written materials and chatbot, we did user testing with working families, provided them with stipends, and incorporated their feedback. While working on education and outreach with state agencies, we joined the Labor and Workforce Development Agency's COVID-19 Worker Outreach Project (CWOP), an innovative state-led initiative to educate workers across the state, in partnership with community-based organizations, about their rights related to COVID-19. Various CBOs that were a part of CWOP provided us with feedback on draft materials, and also let us know about additional gaps in information their communities needed. That partnership led to the creation of some of our most accessed materials (e.g. [Undocumented Workers' Guide to Applying for California Disability Insurance & Paid Family Leave](#)).

We sought other opportunities to connect working families and state agencies. For example, we co-hosted a cross-agency know-your-rights [webinar](#) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Employment Development Department, the California Labor Commissioner's Office, and the California Civil Rights Department in honor of Mother's Day. We shared the story of a [new mom](#) trying to access breastfeeding accommodations.

Finally, we hosted a separate webinar about our [collaborative outreach](#) (discussed below) that was anchored by the [story](#) of a new mom whose baby was born 15 weeks early. She lost her job while he was fighting for his life in the NICU. She discussed how hard it was to figure out what her rights were and how to access paid leave, and the importance of education and resources for healthcare providers on their patients' workplace rights. The video also tied the webinar to our long-term goal: expanding the cross-agency collaboration beyond COVID-19 to address the many different ongoing needs of working families.



LESSON FOUR:

Advocate for Sustainable Funding

Much of the reason Legal Aid at Work was able to engage in the deep relationship building with government agencies and communities necessary to achieve this kind of cross-agency cooperation relates to funding. Some of the state agencies received dedicated funds for COVID-19-related outreach that freed them to use staff time and resources to focus on building partnerships and working with community groups.

The Deputy Secretary for Agriculture and Immigrant Workforce for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency commented that additional state funding had been critical for them to engage in the work. ***"We need to have dedicated streams of funding***

for this kind of work...Our agencies have a lot of work on their hands... State agencies are hesitant to jump in to doing this type of collaborative work because it is just adding a new stream of work and it takes up a lot of time... it is incumbent upon us in government to make sure we are developing our agencies and our departments to have teams that are devoted to doing community engagement and community outreach and really focusing on creating this kind of content and partnerships.”

It is up to advocates and agencies to make sure that collaborations centered on people and families are prioritized. It is up to governments to fund agencies to do the work of breaking down barriers. That takes dedicated funding and staff and is a part of a long-term strategy to align systems and improve access for working families.



LESSON FIVE: **Celebrate and Document Success**

To share all that we had collectively learned and solidify commitment for future cross-agency collaboration, we held a [webinar](#) featuring key players from each agency: Deputy Director of Executive Programs, **Civil Rights Department** (formerly, the Department of Fair Employment and Housing); The Deputy Secretary for Agriculture and Immigrant Workforce, **California Labor and Workforce Development Agency**; Health Communications Specialist III/ Media Campaign Manager, **California Department of Public Health**; Staff Attorney, **Legal Aid at Work**, and moderated by the co-chair of the Maternal and Child Health Committee, **California Conference of Local Health Officers**. These high-ranking agency officials highlighted the ways in which their education and outreach campaigns drew on and benefited from cross-agency and community collaboration.

Each agency had an opportunity to take stock of what it had done, why and how, and consider what worked well and what did not. The webinar also offered the agencies an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments, creativity, partnerships with each other and partnership with the communities. The webinar helped build internal momentum to continue the work.

The webinar had folks from nonprofits, foundations, and federal, state and local agencies. One of the participants was the Outreach and Education Coordinator for the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** – San Francisco District. She commented that it was “very inspiring to hear you all describe this collaboration.” More importantly, she shared her interest to join the efforts on cross-agency collaboration and implement the insights she gained from the webinar into her own work.

The co-chair from the California Conference of Local Health Officers shared that “from a local government perspective [it was] really inspiring to see agencies at the ... state level access community perspectives... we are learning from you.” And he noted that, “Such collaborations need to be built upon...to reach those who need it most.”

The Deputy Director of Executive Programs from the **California Civil Rights Department** closed by saying that we ***“need to institutionalize this work within our departments and across the government...It can’t be dependent on individual staff members or leaders, but rather it has to be infused within the work of our departments and through norms, if not policies, about the importance of cross-agency work and working with community-based organizations and hearing from the public about how we can do better and how we can help connect the dots and help people access our services.”***



Acknowledgments

Meaningful collaboration certainly cannot be undertaken alone. Legal Aid at Work is grateful to have partnered with, in many different ways: the Employment Development Department (Ferdinand Guzman, Kathryn Morales Davis, Melissa Stone, Ronald Washington, and everyone involved in Paid Family Leave Advocate meetings); the California Civil Rights Department (Kara Brodfuehrer, Brandon Butler, Rashida Harmon, Rachael Langston, Adam Romero); the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (Colleen Ryan, Sebastián Sánchez, Daniel Yu); the California Department of Public Health (Dr. Kenneth Cutler, Chantal Griffin, Barbara Materna, Sara Nelson, Dr. Rohan Radhakrishna); the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Terry Healy, Linda Li); the California Conference of Local Health Officers (Dr. Curtis Chan (San Mateo), Dr. Chris Farnitano (Contra Costa), Dr. Gail Newel (Santa Cruz), Dr. Karen Relucio (Napa) and many others); University of California – San Francisco Pandemic Initiative for Equity and Action (Thea Sigerman); Generation Spark (Ashutosh Chhibbar, Nira Datta); UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program; UC Berkeley Labor and Occupational Health Program; UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety; and the countless workers, families, community organizations and partners who have shared their expertise with us. We are grateful for their vision, leadership and commitment to community focused, human-centered strategies.

We would also like to thank the Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community for their generous support of our work and dedication to supporting families.

**LEGAL
AID AT
WORK**
legalaidatwork.org