

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Center for Work, Health, & Well-being
A NIOSH Total Worker Health® Center of Excellence
Current Research Projects and Research-to-Practice Activities



The evidence-based research findings from the Center's studies support the promotion and protection of worker health, safety, and well-being through policies, programs, and practices.

The Center's four studies are in high-priority industries employing people who tend to be exposed to working conditions that impact their health and well-being – hospital workers, warehouse workers, construction workers, and older workers. Our evidence-based research findings inform work environment policies and practices, the implications of which are especially relevant in light of increased attention on health inequities as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Boston Hospital Workers Health Study (September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2026)

Project Lead: Erika Sabbath

The goal of this study is to improve the health of the hospital workforce and reduce within-workforce disparities by identifying the roots of those disparities in the conditions of work.

- The Center has a long-standing collaboration with the two flagship hospitals of Mass General Brigham (MGB), the largest private employer in Massachusetts.
- Using MGB's longitudinal database of employee records, the research seeks to identify the ways that workplace exposures and policies impact worker health, especially for low-wage workers.
- The study includes almost all 40,000 workers at two hospitals, and tests the extent to which specific policies, working conditions, and exposures act as social determinants of health.
- The research explores how policies aimed at improving working conditions have the potential to narrow or widen occupational, racial, and wage gaps in the health of the hospital workforce.
- This study expands the scope of occupational health research and practice in hospitals by analyzing contributions of working conditions and policies to disparities in health and well-being.

Fulfillment Center Intervention Study (September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2025)

Project Lead: Erin Kelly; Project Co-Lead: Lisa Berkman

This study evaluates a participatory, prevention-oriented intervention in warehouse fulfillment centers that aims to change conditions of work to reduce the risks of poor mental health, improve workers' well-being, and reduce levels of unreported injuries.

- This study focuses on workers in fulfillment centers in the e-commerce segment of the warehousing and storage industry – a major growth industry with a low-wage and racially diverse workforce.
- Workers have physically taxing and high-strain jobs (with high demand and limited control over work conditions) that negatively impact mental and physical health, including injury-related disability.
- The study is evaluating the implementation of a workplace intervention that introduces "Health and Well-being Committees" to solicit and prioritize workers' concerns regarding working conditions, and implement action plans to address them.
- The research tests the hypothesis that the intervention will modify working conditions to improve mental health and psychological well-being, reduce injuries, and encourage injury reporting.
- The research also includes a process analysis of key contextual factors that support effective and integrated intervention implementation and sustained engagement.

Thriving Workers, Thriving Workplaces Study (September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2026)
Project Co-Leads: Gregory Wagner and Susan Peters

This study aims to understand the ways in which work – including workplace conditions and policies – shapes the extent to which workers thrive from their work; and the characteristics of workers and working conditions that impact worker well-being.

- *Thriving from work* is the state of positive mental, physical, and social functioning in which workers' experiences of their work and working conditions enable them to thrive in their overall lives.
- This study seeks to understand the ways in which work shapes the degree to which workers thrive from their work across these three sectors -- construction, healthcare, and fulfillment centers.
- The study seeks to identify how working conditions (supervisor support, safety climate, scheduling) and worker characteristics (race and ethnicity, age, gender, occupation) are associated with workers' thriving.
- The study uses the *Thriving from Work Questionnaire*, which has an assessment tool, a long-form 30 item version with 6 dimensions of worker well-being, and a short-form 8 item version.

Older Workers' Health and Well-being Study (September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2026)
Project Lead: Cal Halvorsen; Project Co-Lead: Erika Sabbath

This study focuses on workers aged 50 and older, explored through analysis of six waves of data from the *Health and Retirement Study*, a longitudinal panel study that every two years surveys a nationally representative sample of people 50 years and older in the U.S.

- This study examines the health and well-being of older workers and the role of conditions of work in shaping these outcomes.
- Research activities include identification of associations between workplace benefits and policies, and older workers' health, mental health, and enjoyment in work over time, in addition to exploring how age and gender modify these relationships.
- The research explores working conditions as critical determinants of health and well-being, providing opportunities to study disparities in these relationships, focused on age and gender.
- This study was developed to address concerns about the health, safety, and well-being of the older workforce and calls from NIOSH and NORA for increased research on the aging workforce.

Outreach and Dissemination: Turning Research into Practice & Policy (September 1, 2021-August 31, 2026)
Outreach Core Lead: Jack Dennerlein

The Center and its Outreach Core utilize a stakeholder-centered knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) framework to develop resources and trainings that integrate evidence-based interventions with the needs and context of our partner organizations, to increase adoption and implementation of integrated *Total Worker Health* policies, programs, and practices. The objectives of the Outreach Core are to:

- increase the availability of and access to the Center's evidence-based implementation resources, including its Capacity Building Suite and research findings, with the goal of facilitating adoption;
- promote implementation of evidence-based policies, programs, and practices using dissemination strategies strengthened by the expanded reach of the Center's partnerships;
- determine the potential workplace and public policy implications of our research using a KTE model with our Policy Working Group, comprised of researchers and external policy experts; and
- educate, train, and build the capacity of students, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, to advance *Total Worker Health* research, adoption, & implementation.

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