

# Enhancing Competency for Underserved Adolescents and Young Adults in Work Safety



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## Introduction

**Raising Awareness to Increase Safety in Employment (RAISE)** is a project under the **UNH Institute on Disability (IOD)** which aims to teach underserved working populations about health and safety on the job. These underserved populations include workers with low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, workers with disabilities including intellectual and developmental disabilities, and young workers.

Teaching about overall safety within the workplace is done through the **Staying Safe at Work (SSAW)** curriculum, which is accessible for free online at <https://iod.unh.edu/RAISE>. Professionals working with adolescents and young adults can gain access to the SSAW curriculum and implement it into their personal programming, or attend a 5.5-hour training course, along with underserved workers themselves, which is provided by the RAISE program team which guides participants through the curriculum using group discussion, games, and other hands-on activities.

## Outreach

Education around the RAISE program and SSAW curriculum is necessary to promote the provided trainings and resources which RAISE has to offer.

Participating in transition fairs allows attendees to **explore the training materials, learn more about the program, and understand the importance of education around work safety for underserved populations**. Outreach includes:

- Developing and collecting the appropriate materials to promote the program
- Connecting with members of transitional work programs
- Attending transition fairs
- Discussing the purpose and benefits of the program



Educating an attendee the Merrimack Valley High School Transition Fair on the RAISE program and SSAW training and materials.

## Supplemental Curriculum Development

### Advocating for Your Safety at Work (AFYSAW): Development

AFYSAW is a supplemental 2-hour training and curriculum that will be added to the SSAW program. Research subjects explored to initiate the development of this supplemental training included the following topics:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights of individuals with disabilities in the workplace
- Disclosing one's disability in the context of their workplace
- Requesting reasonable accommodations within the workplace
- Physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social problems that one may experience at work
- Speaking up for oneself when there is a problem at work

Content development was initiated based on research findings. The use of **plain language, interactive curriculum presentation, and connections to the SSAW training** was essential for content design.

### Curriculum Example: Amy's Dilemma

Training participants are provided with a case study to collaborate on in teams which includes several skills and topics learned throughout the SSAW curriculum, including safety hazards, job training, speaking up and advocacy, and deciding what to do in challenging situations at work.



Photo illustration of Amy's Dilemma included in the curriculum.

- Amy has an intellectual disability; she works as a runner in a hospital
- There is tank of gas in the supply room, but gas tanks do not belong there
- She does not have training on moving gas tanks
- She has received safety hazard training for her job and remembers that gas can be a chemical hazard
- Amy is not comfortable moving something without training
- The nurse tells Amy to carry it up to the gas storage room anyway

### Staying Safe at Work (SSAW) Lesson Six: Revisions

Lesson Six of the SSAW curriculum was re-established to introduce **Speaking Up for Health and Safety Rights**. The inclusion of this curriculum in the SSAW training allows for a connection between SSAW for physical health and safety and **Advocating for Your Safety at Work** regarding disability and a variety of psychosocial factors of safety.

#### LESSON 6: OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, you will be able to:

1. Discuss workplace health and safety problems.
2. Identify a variety of people to talk to when a problem arises.
3. Demonstrate a willingness to speak up when there is a health or safety problem at work.

The curriculum information and material within lesson six is written for participants to meet the above objectives following training completion.

## Moving Forward

The RASIE team will continue to provide outreach and develop curriculum to support underserved populations within the workforce. The future goals for this program are to:

- Develop a supplemental training titled *Accommodations and Assistive Technology for a Safe Workplace (AATFSW)*
- Create two additional Pocket Guides for AFYSAW and AATFSW which individuals can use as a resource on the job
- Translate provided trainings and materials into Spanish for increased access
- Continue to provide outreach to increase the number of participants who utilize or implement the SSAW Program

## Grant Funding

The projects developed by the RASIE team are funded through the Susan Harwood Grant (SH-37207-SH1) awarded by OSHA. This grant is used to provide training and education for employers and workers regarding health and safety hazards within the workplace. These trainings are developed to inform employees of their rights and employers of their responsibilities under the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act (United States Department of Labor, n.d.).

## References

Institute on Disability (Ed.) (2022). *Staying safe at work: a curriculum for teaching workers with intellectual and developmental disabilities about health and safety on the job*. OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2016-159. DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2016-159

United States Department of Labor. Occupational Safety and Health Administration Program Overview. (n.d.). <https://www.osha.gov/harwoodgrants/overview>

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