



LAES has developed a series of immigrant issue instructional modules entitled "Tierra de Oportunidad" for orientation to our complex society.

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## Women's Work Issues

1. **Women's jobs are more likely to involve illegal treatment of workers than men's jobs, and women should prepare themselves ahead of time to protect their rights as workers.** Women should be aware of minimum wage provisions (\$4.25 per hour), overtime provisions (more than 8 hrs./day or 40 hours per week, except for farm workers). Keeping records of hours worked, keeping back pay stubs, and computing the hourly earnings from work paid by the piece are essential ingredients for pursuing legal remedies.
2. **There are usually more job opportunities than workers realize.** Women who need the earnings from a job may not feel they can change jobs easily but should be aware that they can look for other, better, work opportunities even as they continue to work with an employer who has inferior working conditions. Women workers may lack the self-esteem to recognize that the work they do is demanding and that other employers may provide them with better working conditions than their current employer.
3. **Live-In Domestic Workers have the same rights as other workers and some special rights regarding their situation.** These rights include the right to overtime for more than nine hours of work a day or more than five consecutive days of work a week. Women can get help even if they are undocumented. Immigrant rights advocates can give people details about their rights.
4. **Women have rights protecting them from sexual harassment** The law about exactly what kind of behavior is legally considered harassment or not is complicated but generally responsive to women. Harassment, for example, doesn't mean only physical touching, but verbal behavior also, hinting that sex will be traded for access to a job, joking, and teasing. Women who experience sexual harassment should probably seek to find out if others of their co-workers have experienced the same problem and should, also, seek assistance from a legal services organization in seeking redress.
5. **Women have rights protecting them from sex-based discrimination.** Discrimination is not always easy to recognize, but involves one type of worker being treated differently than another. The law about sex-based discrimination, for example, protects the jobs of women who leave their employment briefly to give birth. Even women who are not employment-authorized have some legal protections.
6. **Women, who are legally authorized and who are not legally authorized to work, have begun organizing cooperatives to help themselves.** Women's cooperatives have been formed to assist domestic workers in finding employment; some groups are seeking to make street vending easier; new groups provide support for rape victims, for women who experience discrimination, and in general to address women's problems.

7. **Women, as well as men, can benefit economically from seeking ways to improve their employment options.** Women can no longer be relegated to a status as secondary wage earner. In most families, both husbands and wives need to maximize their earnings potential. Men and women immigrants may both underestimate their potential for career mobility, saying "I have no skills". The skills needed for career mobility and advancement now rest on communication ability (including English-language skills), a willingness to learn new skills, facilitating in learning new skills, the ability to work as a member of a team, and engage in problem-solving with co-workers more than on vocational skills. Night school, community college, ESL classes, or programs of self-directed learning can be worthwhile investments.
  
8. **There are special opportunities for women in a variety of human service occupations.** There will be a tremendous demand for bilingual human service workers in the near future. As California comes to be an increasingly multi-cultural society, demand for bilingual service and human service employees in jobs which are often filled by women will increase tremendously. Budget constraints will mean that many of these jobs will need to be filled by workers with minimal educational qualifications but substantial personal experience and ability. There will be expanding job opportunities in both the public sector e.g., instructional aides, health education outreach workers, intake workers; and in the private sector e.g., receptionists, secretaries, store clerks, medical office clerks. Women should take this into account in weighing their options and deciding about taking the time to continue their education.

## Q & A Exercise

Please work with a partner in asking questions to match the following answers.

1. These have been formed to support various workers.
2. Women can look for better work opportunities.
3. \$4.25 per hour
4. Communication ability, willingness to learn new skills, ability to work as a team, using problem-solving techniques with co-workers.
5. Keep records of hours worked, keep back pay stubs, compare hours worked from work paid by the piece.
6. Great demand for bilingual service and human service workers.
7. More than nine hours per day or more than five consecutive days of work.
8. One type of worker being treated differently than another.
9. Both in the public and private sectors.
10. Protects women who leave their employment to give birth.
11. Also verbal behavior, joking, teasing hinting that sex will be traded.
12. The secondary wage earner.

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*A project of the California Department of Education, Youth, Adult and Alternative Educational Services Division, funded by contract #4213 of the Federal P.L. 100-297, Section 353 with California State University Institute and Hacienda LaPuente USD. However, the content does not necessarily reflect the position of that unit or of the U.S. Office of Education. 1997*