

## **Alternative Staffing Organization Workplace Health & Safety Practices**

### **Summary of Survey Results September 2018**

#### **SURVEY BACKGROUND AND APPROACH**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016 a total of 5,190 people experienced fatal work-related injuries and another 2.9 million people experienced non-fatal work-related injuries and illnesses in the private sector alone. Research indicates workers who are in temporary or contract positions and people who are new to a job—populations often employed through alternative staffing organizations—are at an especially high risk of experiencing a work-related injury or illness.

The percent of people employed in alternative work arrangements, such as temporary or contract positions, has nearly doubled from 9.5% in 1995 to 17.3% in 2015. It is critical to take steps to protect and promote the workplace health and safety of this vulnerable and growing segment of the US workforce.

From December 2017 to February 2018, the Alternative Staffing Alliance conducted an online survey to learn more about current workplace health and safety practices of alternative staffing organizations in the U.S. The survey was developed through consultation with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which also analyzed the results. NIOSH will use the survey findings to help inform the development of improved programs and guidance customized to meet the needs of the alternative staffing sector.

The Alternative Staffing Alliance sent survey invitations to 63 alternative staffing organizations. Thirty organizations completed the survey, for a response rate of 47.6%. Two organizations had more than one respondent, but only one response was included in the analysis. Respondents indicated their job title as Executive level (8 respondents, 26.7%); some type of Director (10 respondents, 33.3%), Manager (9 respondents (30%) or Coordinator (2 respondents, 6.7%); and Data Specialist (1 respondent, 3.3%). Two respondents (6.7%) indicated a job title related to workplace health and safety: Safety Coordinator and Risk Manager.

Some respondents did not provide answers for some of the questions, in which case the number of responses is indicated in [brackets]. Percentages were calculated based on the number of responses received for each question. For some questions, respondents could select more than one response, so percentages do not add up to 100%.

Following is a summary of key findings followed by details of the survey results.

We sincerely thank all who took the time to respond to this survey, and are grateful to NIOSH for their guidance, analysis and ongoing follow-up to support best workplace health and safety practices in the temporary staffing industry.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Survey respondents represent diverse alternative staffing organizations in terms of their geographic location, number of temporary employees and internal staff, industries served, and the percentage of temporary employees who transition to employment with host employer customers. The temporary workforce employed by alternative staffing organizations also varies in terms of age, with the primary age group between 24-44 years old, and the barriers they face to gaining sustainable employment.

A third of the respondents felt temporary workers are at higher risk of experiencing a work-related injury or illness compared with non-temporary employees doing the same job, and half of the respondents felt temporary workers are at a higher risk of experiencing discrimination or harassment compared with non-temporary employees in the same workplace.

A majority of respondents provide some type of health and safety training to temporary employees prior to job assignment, with general training being the most common form of training provided. The health and safety training provided by alternative staffing organizations varies in terms of duration, mode of delivery, source of materials, whether or not employees are compensated for their time, and training evaluation practices. A majority of respondents felt the temporary workers employed by their staffing enterprise would rate the workplace health and safety training received prior to job placement in preparing them to be healthy and safe in their job assignment as “Good” as opposed to “Very good,” suggesting there is room for improvement.

A majority of respondents felt it was important to develop improved safety training for the temporary staffing industry and expressed a willingness to consider adopting a new, free general workplace health and safety training program designed for the alternative staffing sector. Respondents provided input as to the ideal delivery modes, duration, and sources for such a training as well as the health and safety training topics that are most relevant to temporary employees in the alternative staffing sector. Although written materials are the most common delivery method for current health and safety training in the alternative staffing sector, respondents indicated computer/web-based training as the preferred mode of delivery. Respondents also indicated their staffing enterprises would be likely to use industry-specific add-on training modules to complement a general health and safety training program, and identified food service, manufacturing, construction, warehousing, and janitorial services as industries particularly important to focus on for this training.

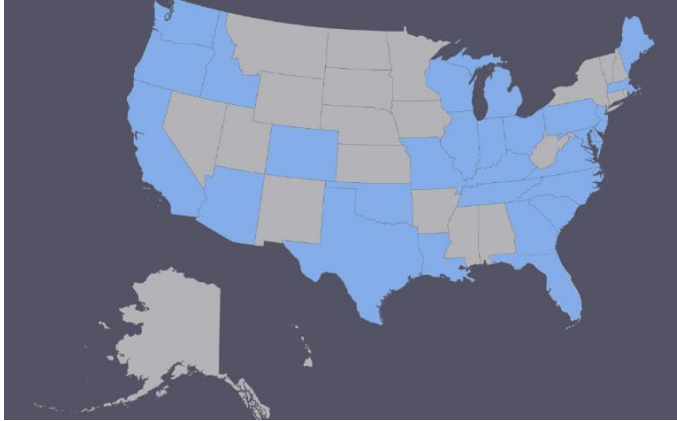
Respondents also indicated a number of practices their organizations follow as part of their recruitment/screening and onboarding/orientation processes, communication with temporary employees, and relations with their host employer customers to ensure the health and safety of their temporary employees. A majority of respondents indicated their organization engages in practices to assess health and safety conditions/practices at host employer worksites as part of due diligence for all new customers and in the event of an injury/incident at a worksite, with fewer reporting that they engage in these practices on an ongoing basis.

When interpreting these findings, it is important to note that the results reflect the views of less than half (47.6%) of the organizations that received the survey invitation.

## ABOUT PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

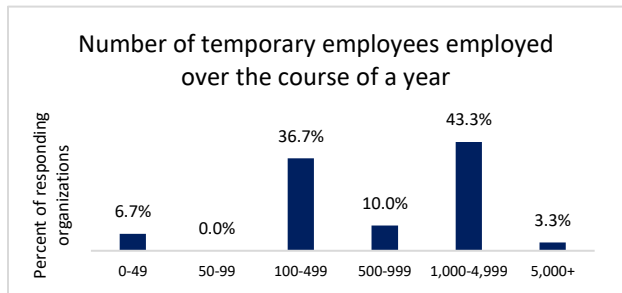
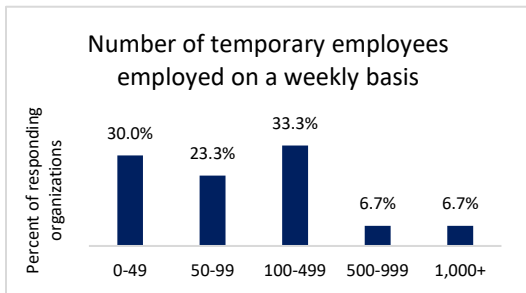
### Locations

Respondents indicated their organizations place temporary employees in jobs in 28 states.

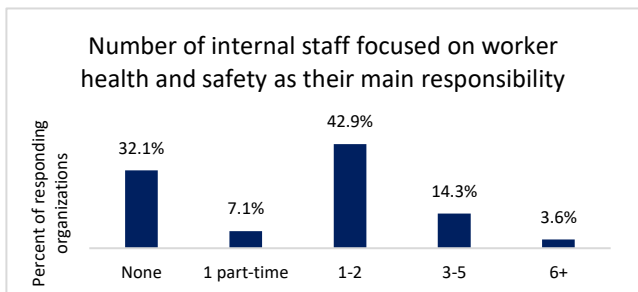
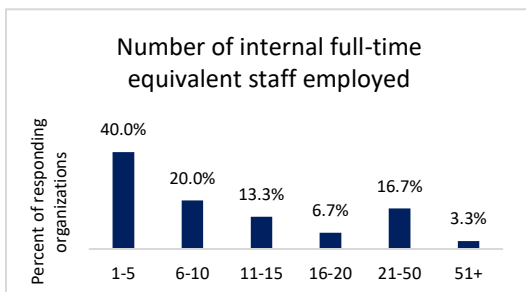


### Size

Respondents indicated their organizations vary in the number of temporary employees employed on a weekly and yearly basis:

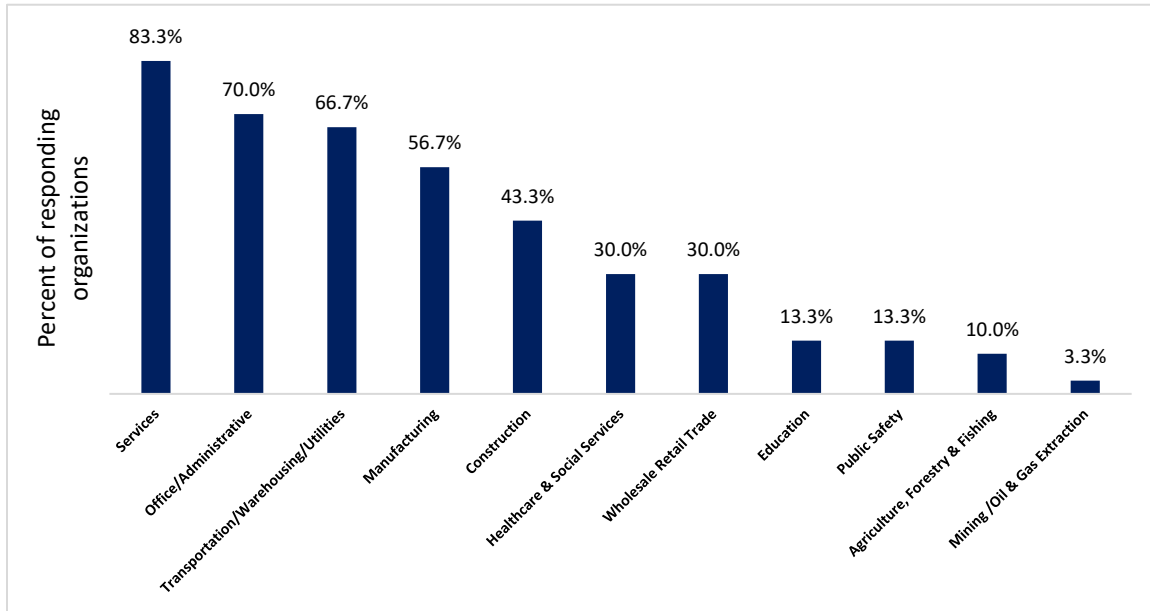


Respondents indicated their organizations also vary in the number of internal full-time equivalent staff employed and the number of internal staff focused on worker health and safety as their main responsibility:



## Industries Served

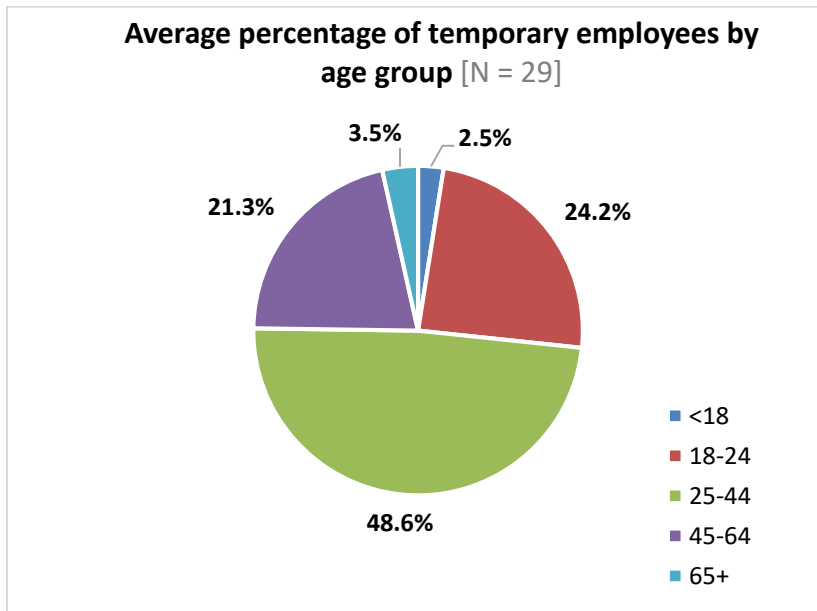
Respondents indicated their organizations place temporary employees in jobs across an array of industries:



## ABOUT THE TEMPORARY WORKFORCE

### Age

On average, respondents indicated that roughly half of the temporary employees employed by their organizations are 24-44 years old and roughly a quarter are either under 24 years old or over 44 years old. [29]

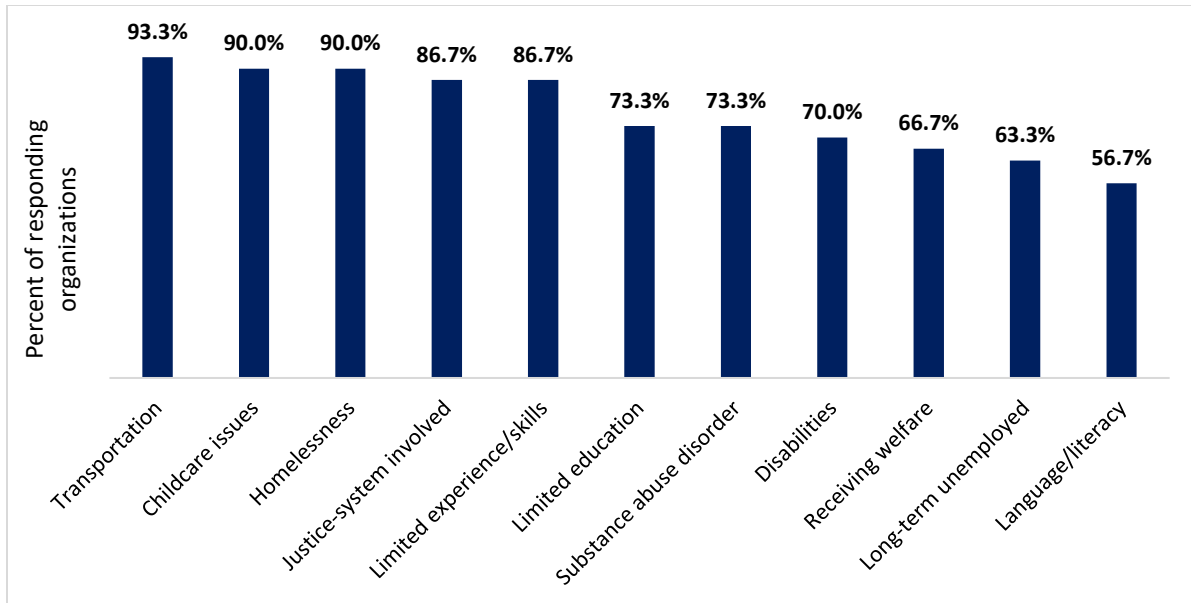


## Transition to Employment with Host Employer Customers

Respondents indicated between 2%-75% of their temporary employees transition to employment with host employer customers (Median = 20%). [27]

## Barriers to Sustainable Employment

Respondents indicated their job seekers/temporary employees face numerous barriers to sustainable employment.



Twenty-two respondents (81.5%) indicated that roughly 50% or more of their organization's temporary employees have multiple barriers to sustainable employment, and 11 respondents (40.7%) indicated that roughly 75% or more of their organization's temporary employees have multiple barriers to sustainable employment. [27]

## RISK PERCEPTIONS

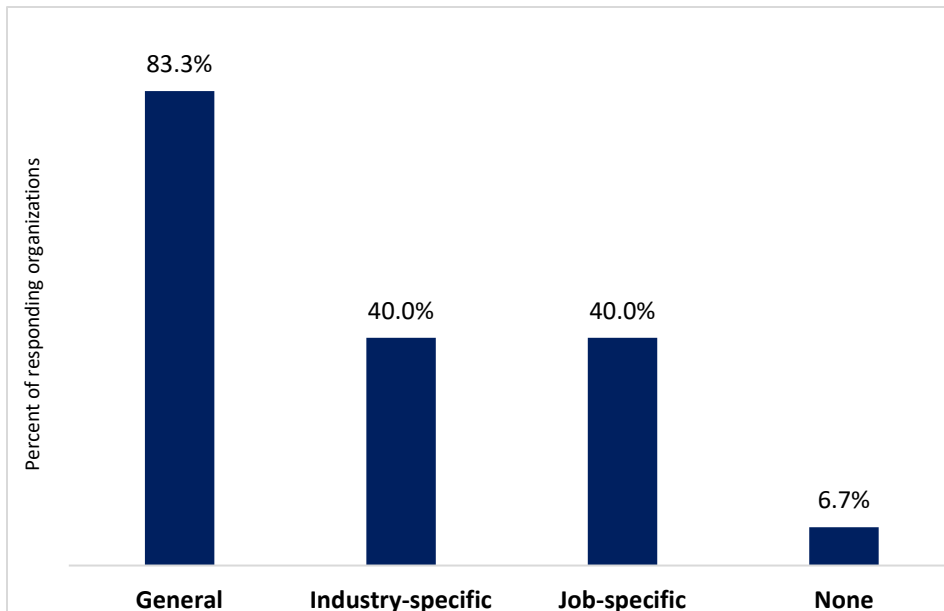
Ten respondents (33.3%) felt the temporary workers their organization places are at a higher risk of experiencing *a work-related injury or illness* compared with non-temporary employees doing the same job.

Fifteen respondents (50%) felt the temporary workers their organization places are at a higher risk of experiencing *discrimination or harassment* compared with non-temporary employees in the same workplace.

## CURRENT TRAINING PRACTICES

### Types of Training Provided

When asked about current types of workplace health and safety training provided by their organization, participants responded as follows:



### Training Duration

For each type of training provided, respondents indicated the duration as follows:

- General – 15 minutes to 16 hours (Average = 1.7 hours)
- Industry-specific – 25 minutes to 30 hours (Average = 3.3 hours)
- Job-specific – 15 minutes to 2 hours (Average = 0.82 hours)

### Delivery Method/s

Respondents indicated different types of delivery methods their organization uses for workplace health and safety training.

- Written materials – 80% (24 respondents)
- In-person instruction in our office – 66.7% (20 respondents)
- Video – 46.7% (14 respondents)
- Computer/web-based – 40% (12 respondents)
- In-person instruction at host employer sites – 36.7% (11 respondents)

### Sources

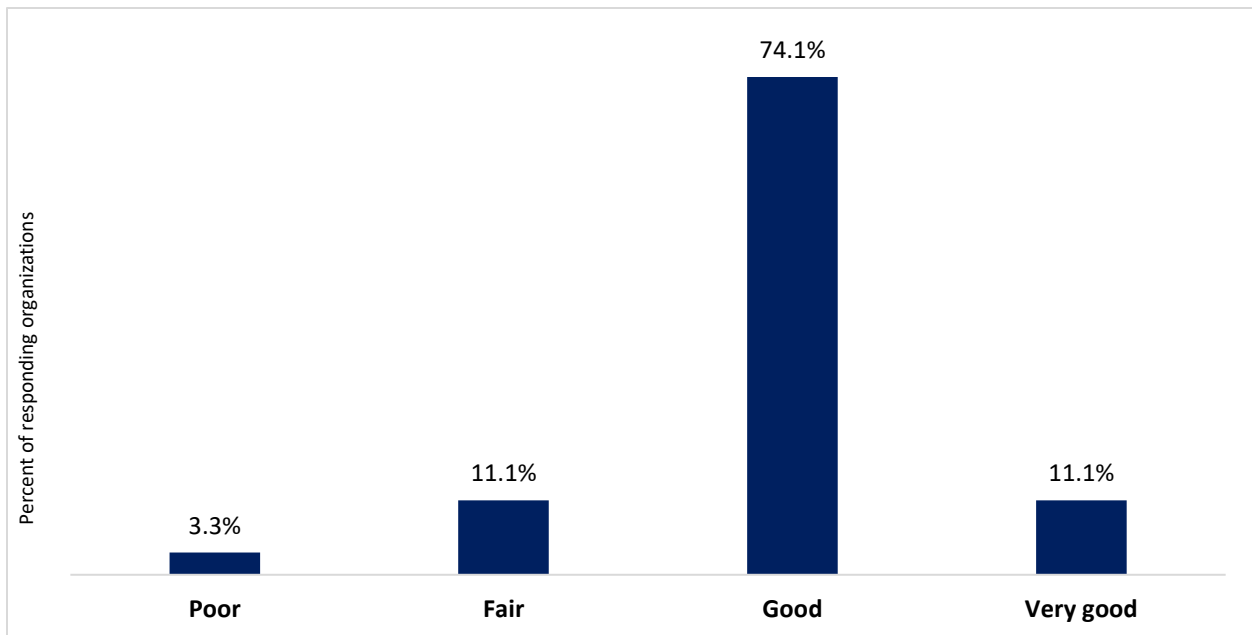
When asked to indicate which organizations they use to source workplace health and safety training materials, OSHA was the most common response (70%, 21 respondents). Over half (53.3%, 16 respondents) reported sourcing materials from host employers and/or workers' compensation carriers. Less commonly mentioned sources were the parent organization of their staffing enterprise (23.3%, 7 respondents) and NIOSH (16.7%, 5 respondents).

## Compensation

When asked if their organization pays temporary employees for their time to complete workplace health and safety training, 7 respondents (25.9%) indicated “Yes,” 12 respondents (44.4%) indicated “No,” and 8 respondents (29.6%) said “It depends.” A majority of those who indicated “It depends” said they only pay employees for workplace health and safety training if it is conducted at the job site. [27]

## Employee Perceptions

When asked how a temporary worker employed by their staffing enterprise would rate the workplace health and safety training received prior to job placement in preparing them to be healthy and safe in their job assignment on a 4-point scale from “Poor” to “Very good,” a majority (74.1%, 20 respondents) indicated “Good.” [27]



## Evaluation

Twelve respondents (42.9%) indicated their organizations evaluate the impact of their current workplace health and safety training practices. [28]

These 12 respondents were asked to describe how their organization evaluates training impact. Common responses were “tracking the frequency and severity of incidents and workers’ compensation claims” and “soliciting feedback from temporary employees and host employer customers.” [10]

## **TRAINING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **Need for Improved Training**

When asked how important it is to develop improved workplace health and safety training programs for the staffing industry, all respondents said it was either “Very important” (90%, 27 respondents) or “Moderately important” (10%, 3 respondents).

### **Likelihood to Use a New Training Program**

When asked if their staffing enterprise would be likely to use a new, free general workplace health and safety training program designed to meet the needs of alternative staffing organizations and the temporary employees they serve, 22 respondents (75.9%) indicated “Yes,” 6 respondents (20.7%) indicated “It depends,” and only one respondent (3.4%) indicated “No.” [29]

### **Desired Characteristics**

The 28 respondents who indicated “Yes” or “It depends” regarding their likelihood to use a new, free general workplace health and safety training program were asked to indicate the preferred delivery mode, amount of time, and source for this type of training program.

- The preferred mode of delivery was computer/web-based (40.7%, 11 respondents), followed by video (25.9%, 7 respondents), in person instruction in our office (22.2%, 6 respondents), and written materials (14.8%, 4 respondents). [27]
- The ideal amount of time was 15 minutes to 16 hours (Median = 1 hour, Average = 1.8 hours) [26]
- The preferred source was OSHA (46.4%, 13 respondents), followed by NIOSH (25%, 7 respondents), workers’ compensation insurance carriers (21.4%, 6 respondents), and “Other” (7.1%, 2 respondents). [28] One of the two respondents who indicated “Other” said they have no preferred source and the other respondent said they feel their current training is already ideal.

### **Relevant Training Topics**

Respondents were asked to indicate the relevance of different health and safety training topics for the temporary employees placed by their organization. A majority of respondents rated the following health and safety training topics as “Relevant to most/all” of their organization’s temporary employees:

- Injury reporting/Safety communication – 93.3% (28 respondents)
- Preventing slips, trips & falls – 93.3% (28 respondents)
- Workplace violence/Bullying/Harassment – 93.3% (28 respondents)
- Workers’ rights & responsibilities – 90% (27 respondents)
- Emergency response and preparedness awareness – 73.3% (22 respondents)
- Hazard communication – 70% (21 respondents)
- Hazard identification/recognition – 70% (21 respondents)
- Personal protective equipment – 60% (18 respondents)
- Ergonomics – 53.3% (16 respondents)

### **Likelihood to Use Industry-specific Add-on Modules**

When asked the likelihood that their staffing enterprise would use industry-specific add-on training modules to complement a general health and safety training program, a majority (93.3%, 28 respondents) responded “Somewhat likely” to “Very likely.” The top five suggestions for industry-specific modules were food service, manufacturing, construction, warehousing, and janitorial services.



## OTHER WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

### Recruitment/Screening Practices

Respondents indicated the following practices as part of the recruitment/screening process for applicants to their staffing enterprise:

- Screening for previous work experience in tasks they will be expected to perform – 93.3% (28 respondents)
- Drug or alcohol screening – 80% (24 respondents)
- Criminal background check – 80% (24 respondents)
- Checking references – 60% (18 respondents)
- Background check on previous workers compensation claims – 26.7% (8 respondents)
- Physical exam – 6.7% (2 respondents)

Other recruitment/screening practices mentioned included customized assessment, E-Verify to confirm eligibility to work in the U.S., in-person interviews, Prove-it tests or DMV checks as needed, and skills testing.

### Onboarding/Orientation Practices

When asked how often they perform the following practices as part of the onboarding/orientation process for temporary employees, respondents indicated:

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Only on request of host employers</b>	<b>Only for certain job positions</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>Review of job description for assignment</b>	93.3% (28 respondents)	0 respondents	3.3% (1 respondent)	3.3% (1 respondent)
<b>Review of injury reporting procedure</b>	80% (24 respondents)	3.3% (1 respondent)	13.3% (4 respondents)	3.3% (1 respondent)
<b>Worksite walkthrough/tour</b>	30% (9 respondents)	16.7% (5 respondents)	50% (15 respondents)	3.3% (1 respondent)
<b>Review mandatory safety equipment</b>	63.3% (19 respondents)	16.7% (5 respondents)	20% (6 respondents)	0 respondents
<b>Drug/alcohol screening</b>	50% (15 respondents)	33.3% (10 respondents)	13.3% (4 respondents)	3.3% (1 respondent)
<b>Criminal background check</b>	66.7% (20 respondents)	20% (6 respondents)	10% (3 respondents)	3.3% (1 respondent)

### Communication Practices

Respondents indicated engaging in the following practices (aside from training) to communicate with temporary employees about workplace health and safety:

- Check in with workers via phone or text – 63.3% (19 respondents)
- Reinforce health and safety information via poster, newsletters, paycheck inserts, etc. – 56.7% (17 respondents)
- Safety meeting at host employer sites – 26.7% (8 respondents)
- Safety meeting in our office – 23.3% (7 respondents)
- Distribute OSHA pocket guides/wallet cards – 6.7% (2 respondents)

## Host Employer Assessment/Relations

Respondents were asked when they use various practices to assess health and safety conditions/practices at host employer worksites, with the following results: (Note: Respondents were allowed to select more than one response for each practice so percentages add up to more than 100%.)

	<b>Part of due diligence for all new customers</b>	<b>Updated periodically on ongoing basis</b>	<b>In event of injury/incident at worksite</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>Inspect worksite with safety checklist</b>	43.3% (13 respondents)	26.7% (8 respondents)	50% (15 respondents)	20% (6 respondents)
<b>Observe worksite conditions without checklist</b>	53.3% (16 respondents)	43.3% (13 respondents)	40% (12 respondents)	6.7% (2 respondents)
<b>Assess and document host employer safety training/programs</b>	43.3% (13 respondents)	23.3% (7 respondents)	36.7% (11 respondents)	23.3% (7 respondents)
<b>Check company's OSHA log/history</b>	23.3% (7 respondents)	20% (6 respondents)	36.7% (11 respondents)	40% (12 respondents)
<b>Check company's workers' compensation claim history</b>	26.7% (8 respondents)	20% (6 respondents)	23.3% (7 respondents)	40% (12 respondents)
<b>Confirm workers' compensation insurance class codes for staffing positions</b>	80% (24 respondents)	16.7% (5 respondents)	10% (3 respondents)	0 respondents

Twenty-two respondents (73.3%) said their staffing enterprise has written agreements with host employers that specify their respective health and safety responsibilities.

Twenty-two respondents (73.3%) said their staffing enterprise has processes in place to ensure that host employers do not ask their temporary employees to do tasks outside of those specified in their job order.

Respondents were asked what workplace health and safety factors would result in their staffing enterprise deciding to reject or terminate a host employer as a staffing customer. Responses included:

- Unsafe environment/poor conditions that are not corrected
- Lack of adequate safety program or formal injury reporting practices
- Violation of or unwillingness to comply with basic safety rules; indifference to safety programs/equipment
- High number of workers' compensation claims or OSHA 300 log with multiple or severe injuries
- Better Business Bureau complaints
- Repetitive injuries
- Poor communication
- Not providing pre-assignment training
- Not adhering to OSHA standards/regulations
- High risk job requirements (e.g., tools that could cause amputation, working in extreme temperatures, unhealthy air quality)

- Providing inaccurate information regarding job site safety concerns
- Asking temporary employees to do tasks host employer's employees do not perform or asking temporary employees to do tasks outside of the job description
- Horseplay/kidding around
- Receiving a high number of complaints from multiple employees about the same types of hazards, danger, harassment, or some other safety factor

### **NEXT STEPS: NIOSH Research Opportunity**

As a follow-up to this survey, NIOSH is currently interviewing alternative staffing enterprises to better understand their unique needs and develop a new, free workplace safety and health training program customized for the alternative staffing sector. Improved training on foundational workplace health and safety knowledge and skills can help prepare alternative staffing workers for future job-specific workplace health and safety training and equip these individuals to benefit from and contribute to safe, healthy, and productive workplaces.

If you are interested in learning more about and/or participating in this study, please contact Lauren Menger-Ogle, NIOSH/CDC, at [lmenger-ogle@cdc.gov](mailto:lmenger-ogle@cdc.gov) or 513.533.6876.