

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

1. Get as much information as possible from the worker at your initial meeting. This includes permanent address and telephone number (if this is in Mexico and there is no home phone number, get the number of a caseta or a friend or relative), as much detail as possible regarding the worker's problem, signatures on any complaints to be filed or releases to be signed, etc. This may be your only in-person contact with this worker, so be thorough! Be sure to get a signed release from the client authorizing you to act on his/her behalf.
2. When the worker's action is covered by an anti-retaliation statute, be sure to explain those protections to the worker. Let the worker know to contact you if there is any retaliation after the complaint is filed.
3. Take pictures or get signed statements from witnesses when possible.
4. If you are going to file an administrative complaint (e.g., with the Migrant Housing division of NC Department of Labor), it's a good idea to call before you send in the complaint and let them know you will be sending it and what it is about. Then fax and mail the complaint right away.
5. Include as much detail as possible in the complaint. Include directions to the camp. Let the agency know whether the workers speak English or not. Write a cover letter that has any information you couldn't put in the complaint itself, and if you personally observed the conditions related to the complaint, say so.
6. Follow up, follow up, follow up! Call the agency to make sure they received the complaint. Ask when they will be sending an investigator. Call to make sure an investigator was sent, and to find out what the result of the investigation was. Check back with your client, when possible, to see how thorough the investigation was. Request a copy of the agency's report on your client's behalf. Let your client know the outcome of the investigation. Document any problems with the agency's investigation.
7. Encourage the worker to share his/her experience with other workers so others will be less afraid to speak up. Ask the worker if you have permission to share his/her story with others.

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