

The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative was formed in 2005 to leverage, unite and build upon the expertise and activities of diverse organizations and stakeholders in order to advance a preventative environmental health agenda for the cosmetology and nail salon sector in California. Composed of public health and environmental advocates, nail salon workers and owners, community-based groups, and allies in public agencies, the Collaborative seeks to proactively address concerns facing the nail salon community through an integrated approach employing policy advocacy, research, outreach, and education strategies.

Background:

Cosmetology is the fastest growing profession in California. Over the last two decades, nail salon services alone have more than tripled. Currently, there are over 83,500 manicurists in California, the majority of whom are women of color (an estimated eighty percent are Vietnamese immigrants) and more than half are of reproductive age. Many of these women speak limited English, do not have access to health care coverage, and lack understanding of U.S. legal and health care systems. These workers tend to earn less than \$15,700 a year and work in conditions that can be hazardous to their health. On a daily basis, nail salon workers handle solvents, chemical solutions, glues, cosmetic products and other substances containing chemicals known to be carcinogenic and suspected to cause reproductive harm. Given their occupational exposures, history of immigration, cultural practices, lack of awareness about health risks, and limited access to health care, this worker population has a complex health profile. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted to date on the long-term health impacts of salon workers as a result of occupational exposures. Additionally, there has been a paucity of culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials and outreach methods designed for this population to build awareness about environmental exposures and help workers and owners implement safety precautions. In recent years, the nail salon community's working conditions and exposures to chemicals has received greater attention within public and environmental health fields and advocacy communities.

While there has been growing environmental health advocacy in California, statewide legislative efforts to ban specific chemicals from cosmetic and personal products have been thwarted in recent several years. However, in 2005 a significant victory was achieved with the passage of the **California Safe Cosmetics Act**, which requires manufacturers to disclose if their products contain chemicals known to cause cancer or birth defects to the Department of Health Services, and authorizes DHS to investigate the health impacts of chemicals in cosmetics linked to cancer or birth defects. The adoption of this Act bolsters further advocacy, organizing, and outreach towards the development of a healthy nail salon sector in CA.

Mission Statement:

The mission of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative is to:

- Promote increased awareness, provide culturally-relevant information and advocate for safer products and practices to assure the health and safety of nail salon workers and owners;
- Directly engage nail salon workers and owners in identifying issues of concern and solutions that could benefit the nail salon workforce and small businesses;
- Unite and leverage the respective assets and expertise of diverse groups and stakeholders to advocate for healthy and safe working environments in nail salons;
- Reduce and/or eliminate, the use of (and the resulting exposure to) toxins in nail salons linked to cancer, reproductive health harm, respiratory illnesses, and other negative health effects;
- Increase the general public's knowledge about environmental health concerns in nail salons;
- Ensure the enforcement of existing policies and regulations related to the health and safety of the nail salon community (including implementation of the 2005 CA Safe Cosmetics Act);
- As necessary, advocate for the creation of new protective laws, policies and regulations; and
- Provide leadership to state and national efforts around healthy nail salons, comprehensive chemical policy reform, and women's environmental health.

Guiding Values Underpinning the Collaborative's Efforts:

- Empower the community by:
 - Involving local grassroots leadership, workers, owners, and students
 - Identifying new leaders as part of the process
 - Empowering nail salon worker, owners, and students to be leaders and advocates
- Work collectively by:
 - Sharing knowledge, resources, wisdom, and best practices
 - Unifying our collective voices and respective strengths to leverage greater power
 - Supporting each other and not reinventing existing practices
- Find constructive solutions by:
 - Identifying practices that benefit both workers and small employers
 - Targeting manufacturers of harmful product, not small businesses
 - Engaging in policy advocacy, outreach and education, and research

Collaborative Activities:

The Collaborative meets as an entire group quarterly and convenes its three subcommittees (i.e., policy advocacy, outreach & education, and research) regularly to share information, develop common strategies and engage in coordinated activities to support its mission, including:

- Monitoring and providing guidance on the implementation of the CA Safe Cosmetics Act;
- Jointly developing best practices for outreach and education to the nail salon community;
- Identifying gaps in the research and developing proposals for addressing these gaps;
- Collaborating with groups outside of California that are working to advance women's environmental health and a healthy nail salon agenda at the national level; and
- Planning legislative briefings focusing on nail salon worker health and safety issues for the Asian Pacific Islander and the Women's caucuses of the California legislature.

Collaborative Structure:

The Collaborative is a multi-organization and stakeholder effort, fiscally-sponsored and coordinated by Asian Health Services, an Oakland-based non-profit community clinic. The Collaborative's steering committee meets regularly to set policies and guide the effort's overall work. Decision-making occurs by group consensus. Foundation partners provide support for the Collaborative's activities and coordination.

Current Collaborative Members:

- Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Public Health
- Asian Americans for Civil Rights & Equality
- Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice
- Asian Health Services
- Asian Law Caucus
- Breast Cancer Action
- Breast Cancer Fund
- California Department of Health Services (CDHS), Environmental Health Investigations Branch
- CDHS, Occupational Health Branch, Hazard Evaluation System and Information Service
- Environmental Finance Center, Region 9
- Marin Asian Advocacy Project of Community Action
- Nail Salon Owners & Workers from the L.A., San Jose, and Bay Area regions
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
- Northern California Cancer Center
- Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance
- Physicians for Social Responsibility, L.A.
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9
- Women's Voices of the Earth
- Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum

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