

# Domestic Workers Ordinance



**Seattle** Office of  
Labor Standards



**DWO Train the Trainer Session**

This session is designed to equip community educators, advocates, and trusted messengers with the knowledge and tools to raise awareness about the Seattle Domestic Workers Ordinance (DWO).

Participants will explore core protections and responsibilities under the law, learn how it applies to various domestic work arrangements, and engage in real-life scenarios to build confidence in sharing this information with workers and hiring entities.



## Domestic Workers Ordinance



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# Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will:

- Understand key protections under the Seattle Domestic Workers Ordinance (DWO)
- Build confidence in sharing this information with others
- Learn how the Office of Labor Standards (OLS) enforces the law
- Practice applying DWO concepts through real-life scenarios in small groups
- Explore outreach tools and resources available in the Train the Trainer Toolkit





## How We'll Work Together Today

- Let's try to **listen to understand**, even when we don't all agree.
- **Stay curious** and open as we explore these topics together.
- **Be respectful** of all voices and lived experiences.
- **Step up or step back** - make space for all voices.
- Limit distractions. **Stay present.**
- **Support one another** – We're all here to grow together.



**The goal isn't just to explain the law; it's to build understanding and trust within our communities.**







**Seattle** Office of  
Labor Standards

Supporting Workers and Businesses Since 2015

**OLS enforces Seattle's labor standards laws, including the Domestic Workers Ordinance, and partners with trusted community organizations to educate, support, and empower those most impacted.**

**Our Mission:** To advance labor standards through thoughtful community and business engagement, strategic enforcement, and innovative policy development with a commitment to race and social justice at the center of all we do.







This presentation is for **informational purposes only** and is not for the purpose of providing legal advice, creating an agency decision, or establishing an attorney-client relationship between the Office of Labor Standards and the viewer.

Any responses to specific questions are based on the facts as we understand them and are not intended to apply to any other situations.

**If you need legal advice, please consult an attorney.**

Getting to Know Each Other



# What brought you to this training today?

Drop your response in the chat or use the raise hand feature to share out loud.

Share your name, organization, and your connection to the DWO.

Even though this work is essential,  
it's often invisible.



Seattle's Domestic Workers Ordinance is  
part of a national movement to change that.

## Domestic Work in the U.S.

- For decades, domestic workers were left out of basic labor laws like overtime, minimum wage, and safety protections.
- This exclusion started during the 1930s New Deal era, when laws were written in ways that left out Black and brown workers.
- Today, the work is still undervalued, even though domestic workers provide essential care and support in people's homes.
- This history shapes many of the challenges workers face today.

**Domestic work often happens behind closed doors.  
This can make it easier for abuse or unfair treatment  
to go unnoticed and harder for workers to speak up.**

That's why laws like Seattle's DWO and trusted community trainers like you are important.





# Everyday barriers to fair and safe working conditions

- **Isolation:** Most work alone in private homes, with no coworkers or oversight
- **Informal arrangements:** Many jobs are based on verbal agreements, with no written schedule or contract
- **Unfair pay practices:** Some workers are underpaid, not paid on time, or don't get paid for overtime or breaks
- **Fear of retaliation:** Speaking up about problems can risk losing their job, especially for undocumented workers
- **Language barriers:** Limited English access can make it harder to understand rights or ask questions
- **Lack of benefits:** Most don't receive paid time off, sick leave, health insurance, or retirement benefits
- **Emotional labor and burnout:** Care work is physically and emotionally demanding, but often undervalued
- **Limited access to support:** Many workers don't know where to go for help or worry they won't be believed



**Setting an example for  
cities across the country**

## **Seattle has taken bold steps to recognize and protect domestic workers:**

- In 2018, Seattle became the first city in the U.S to have a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.
  - The ordinance took effect on July 1, 2019.
  - According to the Seattle Domestic Workers Alliance, there are approximately 33,000 domestic workers in Seattle who will benefit from this landmark law.
- The ordinance was shaped through deep collaboration with the community:
  - Domestic workers shared their stories, needs, and lived experiences to shape the protections they knew were necessary
- Seattle also created the Domestic Workers Standards Board (DWSB)
  - a community based group of workers, employers, and advocates who help guide policy and give workers a voice in the process

# Understanding the Domestic Workers Ordinance

## What types of domestic workers does the law apply to?

- The law protects **workers providing paid domestic services to individuals or households in private homes** as: nannies; house cleaners; home care workers; gardeners; cooks; and household managers.
  - covers **both employees and independent contractors**.
  - applies to all the types of domestic workers listed above regardless of whether they are hourly or salaried employees, independent contractors, full-time or part-time workers, or temporary workers.
  - does not cover the following: individuals who work on a casual basis; individuals in a family relationship with the hiring entity; or home care workers paid through public funds.



# Understanding the Domestic Workers Ordinance

## What is a hiring entity? What types of hiring entities are covered by the law?

- A hiring entity is a person or other entity that pays a wage or pays for the services of a domestic worker.
  - The law applies to all entities (individuals, households, partnerships, associations, and businesses) that pay a wage or pay for the services of a domestic worker.
  - This includes entities acting directly or indirectly in the interest of a hiring entity, in relation to the domestic worker.
  - If two households jointly employ a domestic worker, both households are liable for a domestic worker's rights.
    - This "joint and several" liability will likely exist even if a violation happens at one home and not another.



# Key Provisions Under Seattle's Domestic Workers Ordinance

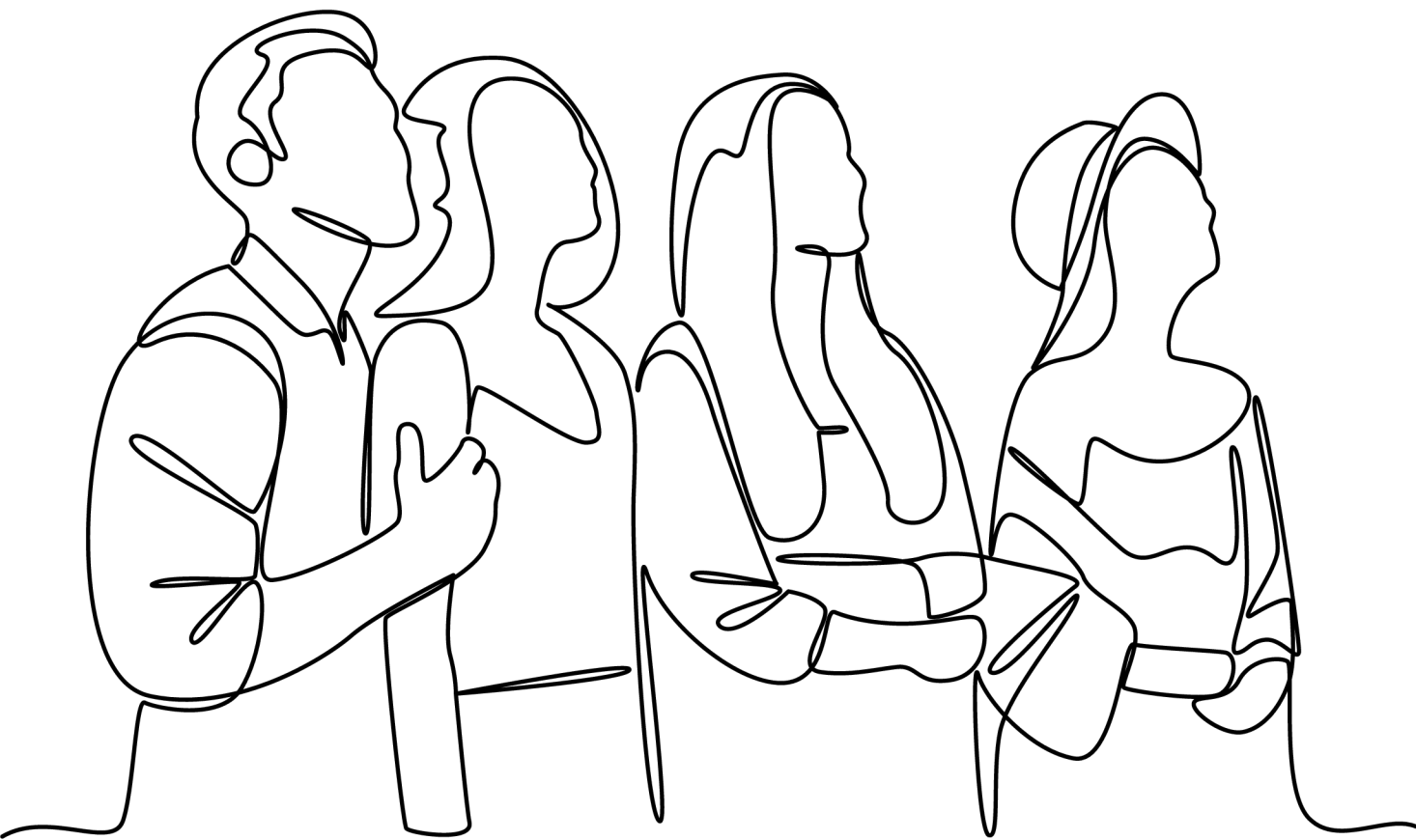
- **Seattle's Minimum Wage Compensation**
  - In 2025, all domestic workers must be paid at least \$20.76 per hour
- **Provide meal periods and rest breaks**
  - 30-minute unpaid meal breaks for every 5 hours worked
  - 10-minute paid rest breaks for every 4 hours worked
- **Day of rest for live-in workers**
  - A domestic worker who resides or sleeps at a place of employment cannot be required to work more than six consecutive days for the same hiring entity without an unpaid, 24-hour period of consecutive rest.
- **Retention of documents and personal effects**
  - Hiring entities are prohibited from keeping any domestic worker's original documents or other personal effects
- **Protection from retaliation**
  - Hiring entities are prohibited from taking an adverse action or discriminating against domestic workers who, in good faith, assert the rights established by this law.

## All Domestic Workers Are Protected

No matter their immigration status, workers have rights under the law.

- They must be paid fairly
- They have the right to take breaks
- They deserve to work in safe and respectful conditions

The City of Seattle will not ask about your immigration status if they report a problem or file a complaint.





## Your Role as a Trainer

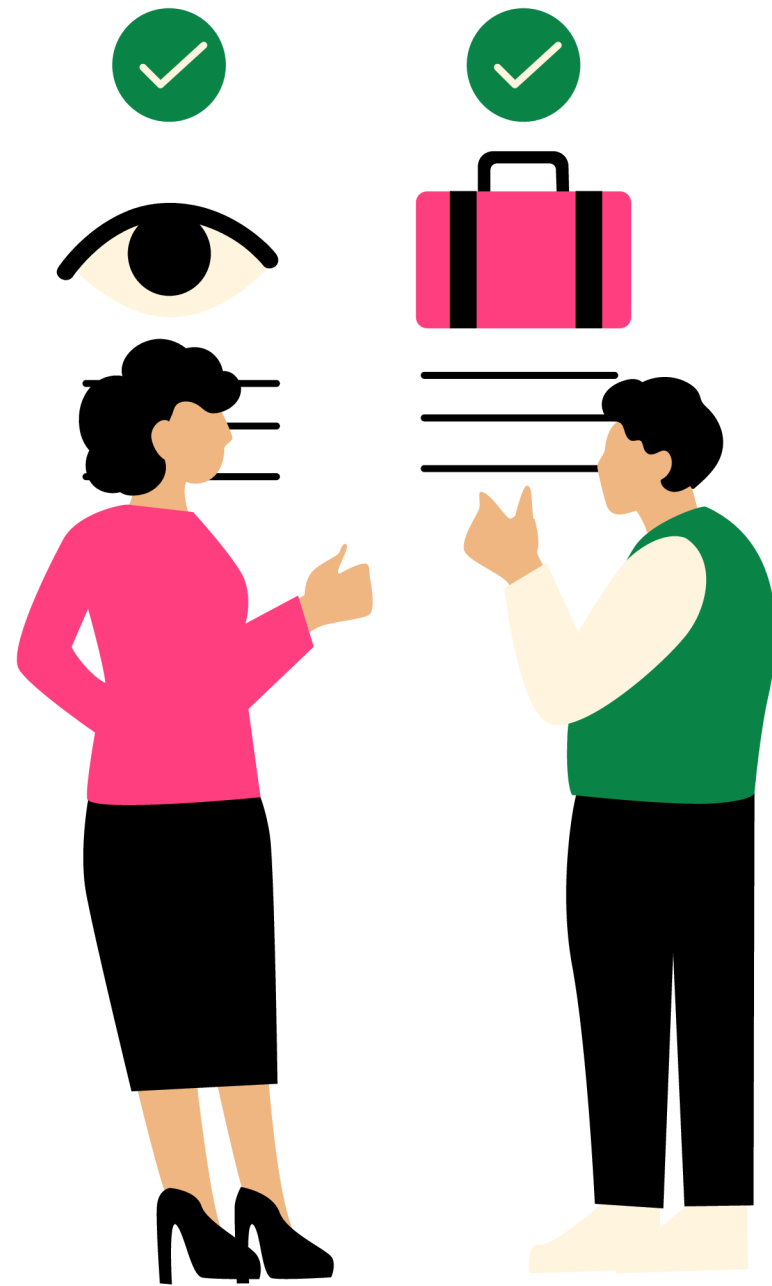
**Your goal isn't to be an expert; it's to be a bridge.**

Workers are more likely to listen and ask questions when the information comes from someone they know and trust. That's why your role as a trainer is so powerful.

**Outreach practices to help people feel safe, seen, and supported.**

- Meet people where they are
  - in homes, community centers, places of worship, or even WhatsApp groups
- Use simple, clear language
  - avoid legal terms when possible
- Be patient and flexible
  - every conversation is different
- Bring outreach materials and walk them through scenarios.

# DWO Toolkit



This toolkit was created by OLS to support trusted messengers in raising awareness about the DWO. Our goal is to make the ordinance accessible, build shared understanding, and support both workers and hiring entities in knowing their rights and responsibilities.

## What's Inside the Toolkit?

- Facilitator Checklist
- Facilitator Language Guide
- DWO Quick Reference Guide
- Real-Life Scenarios Packet
- Group Activities & Creative Exercises





## Enforcement

**The Office of Labor Standards (OLS) makes sure the law is being followed.**

**If a worker believes their rights have been violated, they can contact OLS for help.**

### **When should someone reach out?**

- As soon as something feels off; don't wait until it gets worse
- OLS can help workers understand their rights and what options they have
- Workers, friends, or community members can all reach out

## Group Activity: DWO in Action



Let's bring the law to life with real world examples

### What we'll do:

You'll break into small groups of about 4 people to discuss a scenario based on the Domestic Workers Ordinance.

🕒 You'll have 20 minutes to talk through:

- What's happening in the scenario?
- What rights are being violated (if any)?
- What should happen next?
- How could you explain this situation to a worker or hiring entity?

## DWO Scenario: Hiring Entities



### The Employer Who Doesn't Know the Law

Aisha is a new mom who just hired a full time baby sitter to care for her little one while she's at work. She pays her cash and doesn't track hours. Aisha doesn't know anything about the ordinance.

- How do you help Aisha understand her responsibilities?
- How do you balance education with accountability?
- What tools can you share?

# DWO Scenario

## Domestic Workers



### Handling Unclear Job Duties

A house cleaner is asked to do tasks not in the original agreement.

- Goal for worker: Learn to clarify duties and negotiate fair pay.

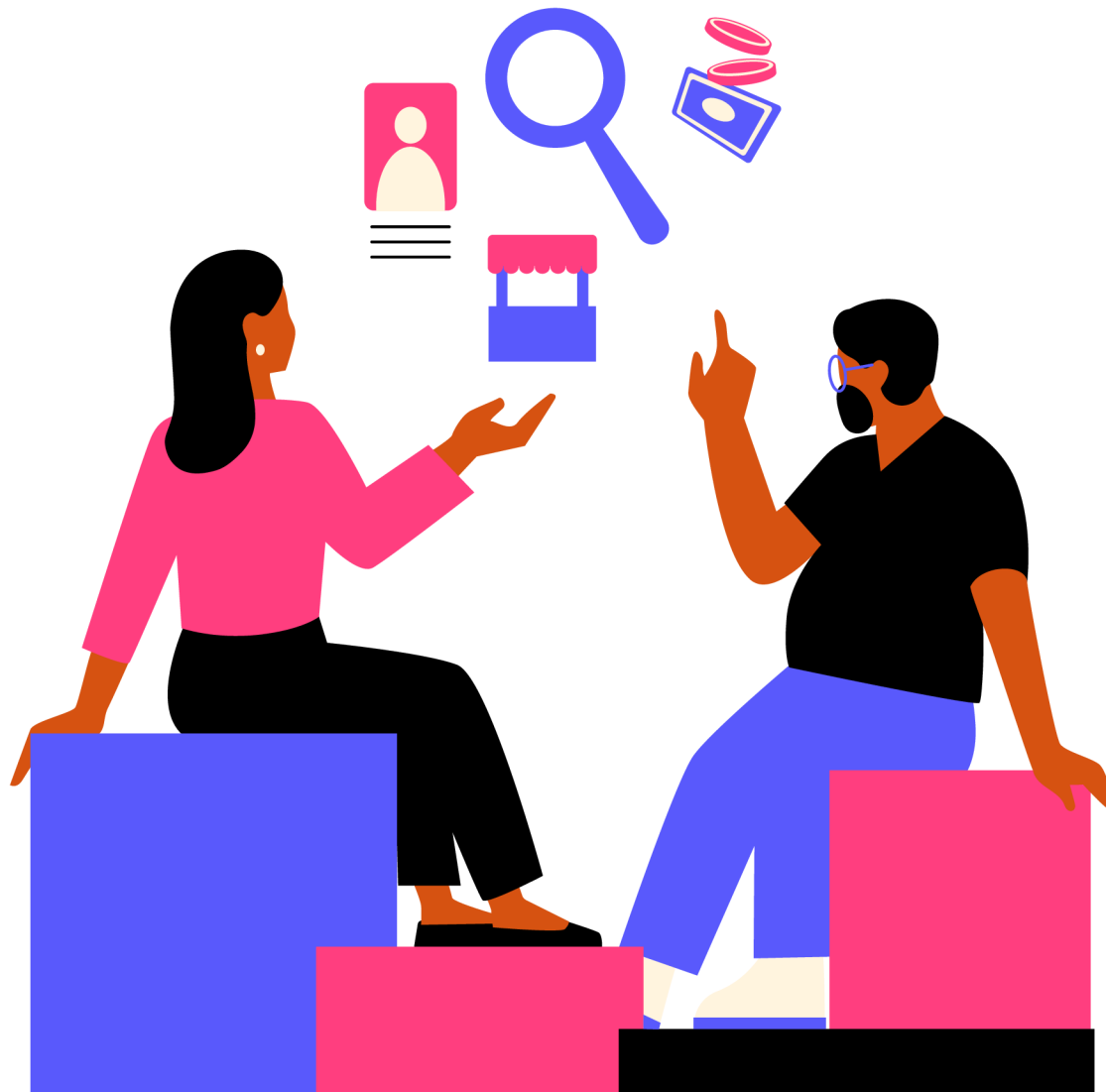


## Open Dialogue

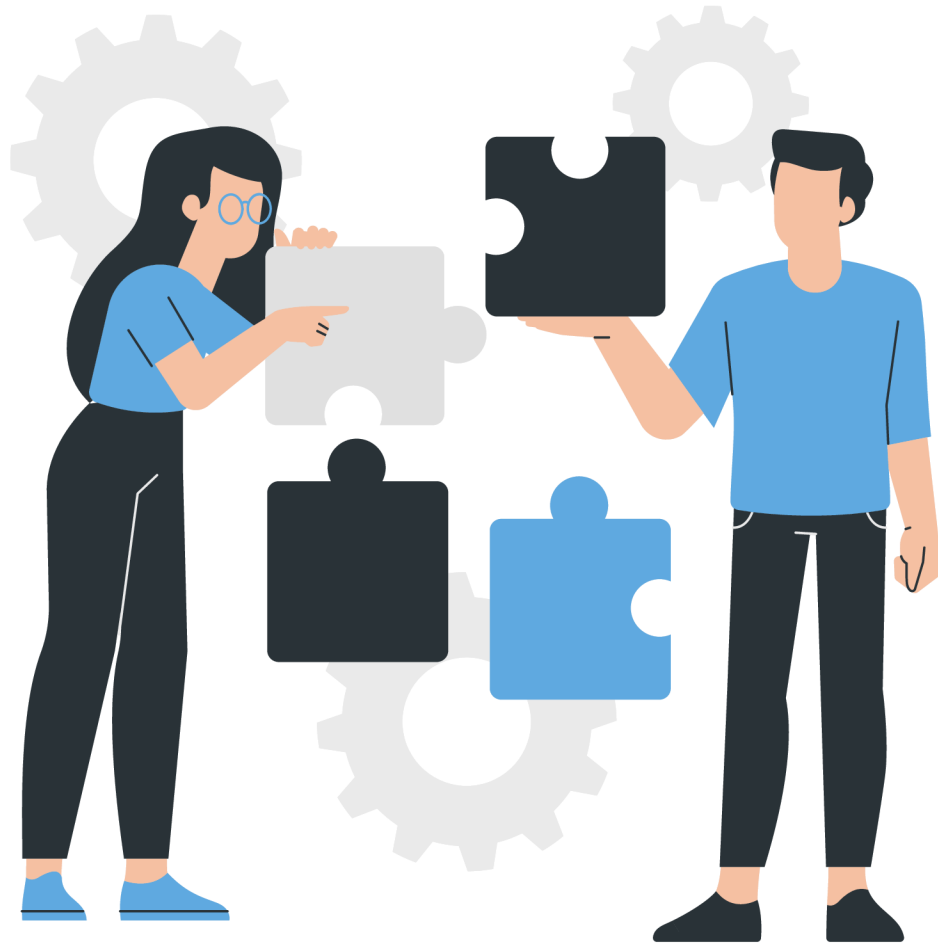
Space to ask questions, share challenges, and reflect on what you've learned.

### Reflection Questions:

- How will you use this information in your community or work?
- What's one thing you're taking away from today's session?



**Let's take a moment to  
reflect and share.**



**Spokesperson:**

- Share a highlight from your group's discussion. What stood out? What questions or insights came up? How might you use this scenario in your community or training spaces?

**Everyone else:**

- Feel free to build on what you hear, drop thoughts in the chat, or raise your hand to add a reflection.

**We appreciate you being here today!**

Your time, energy, and commitment to uplifting domestic workers' rights makes a real difference.

Keep the conversation going. Share this information with your networks. Reach out to OLS if you need help planning future trainings.

What to expect next:

- You'll receive a follow-up email with:
  - A copy of the DWO Train-the-Trainer Toolkit
  - A link to the feedback survey
  - Details on the upcoming Spanish session



## **Domestic Workers Ordinance**



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**For more information visit:**  
**[seattle.gov/laborstandards](https://seattle.gov/laborstandards)**

