

# Safer Cleaning Awareness Program for Immigrant Latinx Domestic Cleaners

Queens College (CUNY), MRNY, NDWA

**Occupational Health Internship Program  
2019**

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# Partner Organizations

**BARRY COMMONER CENTER**  
for Health & the Environment



Icahn School  
of Medicine at  
Mount  
Sinai



NATIONAL DOMESTIC  
WORKERS ALLIANCE

# Background on Issues:

- Issue: Lack of awareness of risks of cleaning products/practices
- Solution: Safer Cleaners Awareness Program
  - Component of the Safe & Just Cleaners Project - 5 Year NIH funded project to address knowledge gaps
  - Funded by the Target Foundation



# Objectives of the Host Site Project:

- Create a training resource guide to be used in Safer Cleaning Awareness TTT Program
  - Define cleaning
  - Chemical hazards
  - Safer products
  - Safer practices

# Personal Objectives:

## Gloria Perez

- Better understand the acute and chronic health effects associated with cleaning products.

## Jasmine Olivera

- Better understand how domestic workers perceive OHS risks

# What Informed Us (Methods)

## *Create a TTT Resource Guide*

- Surveyed 20 domestic cleaners
- Phone Banking at NDWA
- Training session with NDWA
- Based at QC but worked regularly with partner organizations
  - Weekly meetings
  - Conference calls
  - Brainstorming sessions



**Domestic Cleaners Monthly meeting at  
Make the Road New York (Queens)  
July 26, 2019**

# What We Learned (Results)

- How domestic cleaners perceive the risks of products.
  - Knowledge and attitudes
  - Cleaning Practices
- How domestic cleaners value their work
- Gained in depth understanding of specific cleaning chemicals
  - Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
  - Quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs)



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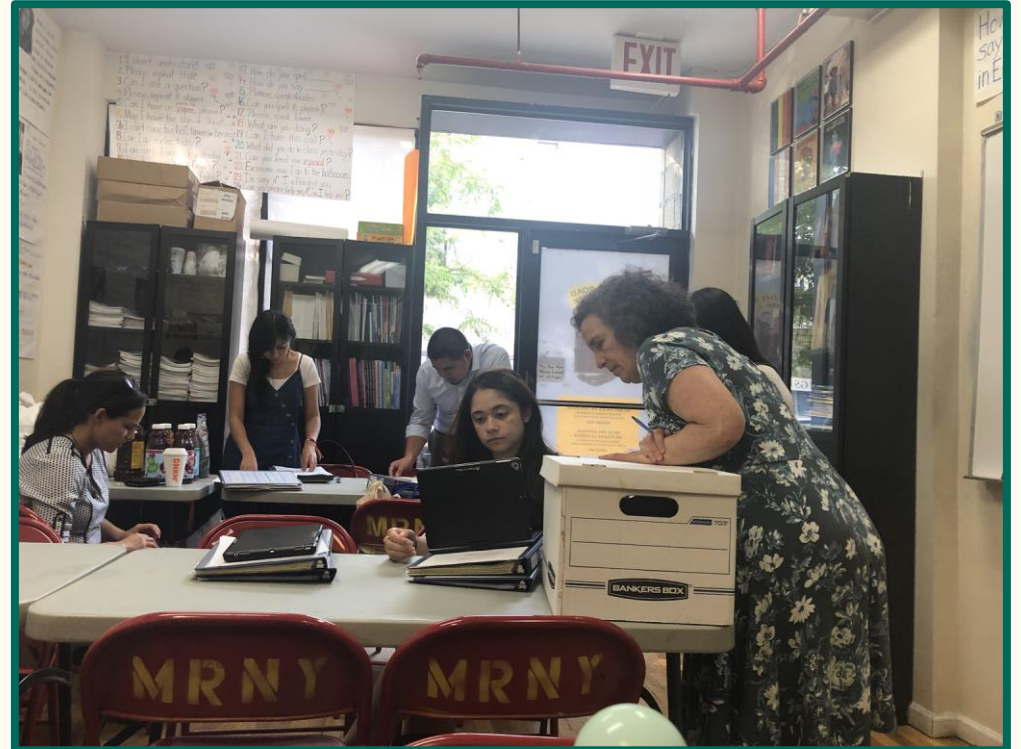
# General Impressions of Survey Data

- Common products used:
  - QAC-Chlorox bleach
  - VOC-Palmolive dish soap
- Smell was reported as indicator that an area is clean
- *Productos “más fuertes”*
  - Most cleaners don't agree with using them
- EPA Safer Choice Products
  - Don't use them or don't know how they feel or
  - They're better for your health



# Challenges:

- Multiple survey revisions
- Being sensitive during surveys (sensitive content, time restrictions)
- Making sure our guide met the expectations & goals of various organizations
- Language



First survey session - July 10, 2019



# Successes:

- Created “mini textbook” & pamphlet
- Established professional relationship between QC, MRNY & NDWA
- Provided domestic cleaners a platform.

★ LIMPIADORAS DOMESTICAS ★  
PRACTICAS MENOS PELIGROSAS

¿QUÉ ES LA LIMPIEZA EN REALIDAD?

Limpiamos porque hay algo (suciedad, gérmenes, etc.) que queremos eliminar. Hay dos maneras de limpiar: desinfectar y limpiar la suciedad. Hay ciertos productos que pueden desinfectar y eliminar la suciedad

¿POR QUÉ ES NECESARIO LIMPIAR?

Hay ciertas superficies y áreas que están asociadas a peligros específicos, por lo tanto, realizamos el acto de limpieza. Sin embargo es importante comprender que las prácticas de limpieza y los productos de limpieza pueden estar asociados a riesgos si no se hacen correctamente

**DESINFECTANTAR**

Destruye las células de los microorganismos, en efecto matándolas  
**Ejemplo:**

**LIMPIAR**

Elimina la suciedad y en el proceso parte de los gérmenes en ciertas superficies.  
**Ejemplo:**

Algunos productos de limpieza pueden servir ambas funciones

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# Recommendations:

- Making sure NDWA interprets information in TTT Guide correctly and relays information in an accessible manner
- Create research project that attempts to clarify the risks associated with using EPA Safer Choice Products



# Personal Reflections



# Acknowledgements

- **Sherry Baron and Isabel Cuervo**
  - Support & tools
- **Matt London**
  - Support & guidance
- **OHIP**
- **MRNY, NDWA**
- **NIOSH**
  - platform that exposes students to real world issues
  - Funding
- **TARGET**
  - funding
- **All the domestic workers who gave their time and input**