

Five Things You Can Do to Stop or Deter Wage Theft



Ask how friends and family members are paid. Are they paid at least minimum wage? Are they paid the overtime premium for hours worked over 40 if they earn less than \$684 per week? Are they paid for all their work? Did they get their last paycheck? It is especially important to talk with young workers who have limited workplace experience. If something sounds not quite right, urge them to learn more. If you believe they have been victims of wage theft, encourage and support them in recovering their unpaid wages. Wage theft is not an isolated problem. If an employer underpays your friends or family members, the employer will likely underpay others.



Make sure your employer is paying everyone fairly. Inquire about anyone who is working with you but is paid as an independent contractor. Too many employers break the law by paying workers as independent contractors when they really are employees, especially part-time workers. If you think there might be a problem, talk with the HR Department, management, or your boss. Some employers do not understand all the labor laws, especially around misclassification. Your speaking up could prevent potential legal actions against the company. Nonprofit organizations and congregations are not exempt from the laws and are too often found to be cheating workers by not paying overtime hours, misclassifying workers, or not counting all hours worked.



Ask how workers are paid when you contract for services. If you hire someone to clean your house, mow your yard or provide home repairs, ask how the workers will be paid. If someone is paid as a “1099,” be careful. This is likely wage theft. Hire firms that pay their workers as employees and not independent contractors.



Adopt ethical contracting policies. If you serve on your congregation’s or institution’s contracting committee, be sure to adopt ethical contracting policies so you avoid hiring firms that cheat workers or subcontract with companies that cheat workers.



Be prepared to tip in cash. About 10 percent of tipped workers do not get all their tips, especially if you put the tips on the credit card. Before you tip on the credit card, ask the waitstaff (discretely), if they will get the tip if it is put on the card. You will be able to tell by their reaction what you should do.

For more information, visit www.wagetheftva.org. Contact Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org if you would like a presentation at your congregation or organization. Join the fight against wage theft: virginiainterfaithcenter.org