

Know Your Workplace Rights: CUNY Food Worker Edition

New York City has several resources to help food workers navigate issues in the workplace, from seeking back pay to establishing a regular schedule with an employer. We compiled the following list to connect CUNY student food workers with existing resources and organizations that can help address these on-the-job challenges—and to illustrate the kind of information CUNY should provide to its students.

Help! My fast-food employer changed my schedule, reduced my hours, or fired me without giving a clear reason.

If you are a fast-food worker in New York City, you might have protections under the city's Fair Workweek Law. This law increases protections for fast-food workers by requiring employers to provide regular scheduling, limit their ability to cut a worker's hours, and provide a reason for firing a worker (known as "just cause" job protections). Follow [this link](#) for more information about how the NYC Fair Workweek Law protects fast-food workers, and follow [this link](#) to file a workplace complaint with the city's Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (NYC DCWP).

Help! My boss is not paying me what I am owed, withheld my tips, or is paying me below the minimum wage.

If your employer is not paying you what they owe you, you can file a complaint with the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) wage theft hotline. Call 833-910-4378 to speak confidentially with a representative about filing a complaint. Interpretation services are available if you would prefer to speak in a language other than English. You can learn more on the NYS DOL website: <https://dol.ny.gov/unpaidwithheld-wages-and-wage-supplements>.

Help! My coworkers and I are interested in working together to make our workplace safer, but do not know how to begin.

If you and your coworkers are interested in forming a union, or otherwise working together to make the workplace safer and more fair, you can reach out to the city's existing unions for help. Some examples of local labor unions and worker organizations that work with food-sector workers include [32BJ](#), [Los Deliversitas Unidos](#), the [Restaurant Workers Union](#), the [Restaurant Organizing Project](#), and [UNITE HERE Local 100](#). You can also reach out to the [Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee \(EWOC\)](#). EWOC is a volunteer-run organization that connects workers with guidance and advice on dealing with problems in their workplaces, and how to organize with coworkers for better working conditions. Workers can fill out this [online form](#) to be connected to a volunteer, or email a description of their issue to info@workerorganizing.org.

Help! My coworkers and I formed a union, but we are struggling to win a fair contract with our employer.

If you have formed a union but are now struggling to negotiate a contract with your boss, check out [Labor Notes](#). Labor Notes is a non-profit organization that provides in-person and virtual trainings, workshops, and conferences, plus articles about organizing with your coworkers and strategies for successful union campaigns. Sign up for their [email list](#) to receive updates on upcoming workshops and new articles.

Help! I am struggling to find resources that help address mental health, economic, and school-related problems I'm facing.

If you're looking for free or low-cost resources to help with health, financial, and educational challenges you might face while in college, check out [A Guide to Surviving and Thriving at CUNY](#). CUNY students created this online guide for CUNY students; it provides links, phone numbers, and other contact information for services across New York City.