

Farm Health and Safety Considerations for COVID-19

Agricultural Safety & Health Bureau – NC Department of Labor
Farmworker Health Program – Office of Rural Health -NC Department of Health & Human Services
NC Agromedicine Institute
April 17, 2020



Introductions

Agenda

Prepare

Educate

Prevent

Isolate

Communicate



Cherie Berry, Commissioner of Labor
1-800-625-2267 • www.labor.nc.gov

GUIDANCE ALERT

Agricultural Safety and Health Division
1101 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1101

Farmworkers and the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Temporary Worker Housing COVID-19 Guidance

PREPARE. EDUCATE. PREVENT. ISOLATE. COMMUNICATE.

NCDOL urges employers and employees to be aware of their role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Employers have asked for guidance on what to do to respond to the spread of this disease. Employers should already be taking preventative actions now and should be using all resources available to prepare for and respond to the outbreak.

PREPARE - *Develop a plan and be prepared*

- Develop a plan for how you will care for and isolate sick farmworkers and how you will quarantine (separate) exposed farmworkers from nonexposed farmworkers.
 - o Your plan should include how you will communicate with and provide food, water, transportation, and other supplies to isolated and quarantined farmworkers.
 - o If you do not have adequate space on the farm to isolate sick workers or quarantine exposed workers, contact your local health department for their assistance in determining alternate housing arrangements. Staff at the local health department should also be able to answer any other questions or concerns you have about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
 - o If you have separate housing available that has not been certified, **contact NCDOL at 919-707-7820.**
- Develop a regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule for farmworker housing (including kitchen, dining, and bathroom facilities), transportation vehicles, and other commonly used areas. Determine who will be responsible for cleaning/disinfecting and follow-up to confirm it is completed.
- Provide cleaning/disinfectant supplies, running water, soap, paper towels, tissues, gloves and masks in all housing and work sites. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the use of non-medical, cloth-based face coverings. Surgical masks should be reserved for healthcare workers.
- Create a list of important phone numbers such as the local health department, the closest migrant health clinic, NCDHHS and NCDOL.

EDUCATE - *Educate yourself, family members and farmworkers about COVID-19*

- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - o Between people who are in close contact with one another (within six feet).
 - o When an infected person coughs or sneezes.
 - o When touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.
- The most common signs and symptoms of COVID-19 include:
 - o Fever, cough, and shortness of breath/difficulty breathing.
 - o Symptoms may not occur for two to 14 days after initial exposure.
- Isolation time frames per the CDC:
 - o Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms who were not tested and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:
 - At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
 - At least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - o Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms who were tested and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue home isolation under the following conditions:
 - Resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
 - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - Person receives clearance from a medical provider after two consecutive negative COVID-19 swab tests.
 - o Persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have not had any symptoms may discontinue home isolation when at least seven days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and have had no subsequent illness.

PREVENT - *The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed*

- Arrange beds in all farmworker housing at least six feet apart, if possible.
- Encourage workers to practice social distancing (stay at least six feet away from other people); avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth; and to stay home when sick.
- Encourage workers to wash their hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Confirm that farmworker housing (including kitchen, dining, and bathroom facilities), transportation vehicles, and other commonly used areas and surfaces are cleaned and disinfected daily.
- Group workers into groups of fewer than 10 people that will share the same bathroom, kitchen, transportation and worksites. Workers should maintain a distance of six feet from other workers. Prevent contact between these groups as much as possible.
- Limit close congregation for social or dining activities.
- Post handouts about coronavirus prevention and symptoms in English and Spanish in multiple locations around the farm (e.g., housing, kitchen facilities, bathrooms, shop, break areas, porta johns, field sanitation units, etc.).

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ISOLATE - *Separate sick and exposed farmworkers from others*

- If an individual is COVID-positive or is exhibiting symptoms, they should be separated from the rest of the farmworkers and put in an isolated area away from others. Separate sleeping, bathroom, and kitchen facilities for symptomatic or COVID-positive farmworkers are recommended per NCDHHS.
- If separate housing is not available, contact your local health department or NCDHHS to determine the best way to protect workers and what community resources are available.
- Farmworkers who are sick or showing respiratory symptoms should NOT return to work until they meet the CDC guidelines listed above.

COMMUNICATE - *Communication is the key to success*

- Seek medical advice if you or your farmworkers develop symptoms.
- Talk to your workers daily to determine if anyone is not feeling well, if additional supplies are needed, and to provide updates about COVID-19.
- Contact your local health department, as required, to report any suspected or known cases of communicable disease, such as COVID-19. The health department will guide you on your specific situation, including if, when, and how to test farmworkers.
- Contact NCDOL to report any changes related to migrant farmworker housing.



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https://files.nc.gov/ncdol/documents/files/ASH-COVID-19_0.pdf

NC Department of Labor

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- **Create a list of important phones numbers** such as the local health department, the closest migrant health clinic, NCDHHS and NCDOL.

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EDUCATE

Educate yourself, family members, and farmworkers about COVID-19.

- *Learn about the signs and symptoms of the virus, how the virus is spread, and how to prevent the spread of the virus.*
- *Share this information with your family and farmworkers.*
- *Dr. Thomas and Elizabeth Freeman will discuss this information in detail during their presentation.*

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PREVENT

The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed.

- **Arrange beds** in all farmworker housing at least **6 feet apart**, if possible.
- **Encourage workers to practice social distancing and to wash their hands often** with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
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- **Limit close congregation** for social or dining activities.
- **Post handouts about coronavirus prevention and symptoms in English & Spanish** in multiple locations around the farm (e.g., housing, kitchen facilities, bathrooms, shop, break areas, porta johns, field sanitation units, etc.)

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- **Farmworkers who are sick or showing respiratory symptoms should NOT return to work** until they are cleared by a medical provider or meet the CDC guidelines to discontinue isolation.
- *Dr. Thomas and Elizabeth Freeman will discuss this information in detail during their presentation.*

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COMMUNICATE

Communication is the key to success.

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- **Talk to your workers daily** to determine if anyone is not feeling well, if additional supplies are needed, and to provide updates about COVID-19.
- **Contact your local health department**, as required, to report any suspected or known cases of communicable disease, such as COVID-19. The health department will guide you on your specific situation, including if, when, and how to test farm workers.
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NC Farmworker
Health Program
Office of Rural
Health

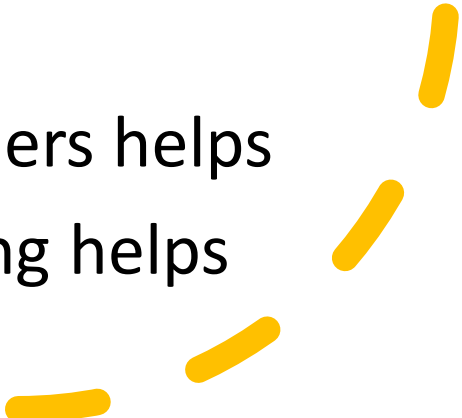
Emphasize actions that
reduce risks on the farm

Support from farmworker
health outreach teams

- Health education
- Bilingual communication
- Assistance with enrollment in health insurance for H2A workers

Patients are contagious for 1-2 days before symptoms appear

You and your workers must adopt universal precautions

- Additionally, it seems that perhaps 25% of infected people have no symptoms but are still contagious
 - This is the reason behind the stay at home order
 - Staying 6 feet apart helps
 - Wearing masks when around others helps
 - Careful and frequent handwashing helps
- 

Early signs
and
symptoms of
COVID-19
Infection are
often mild
and easy to
ignore

You should to daily health checks with farmworkers
before boarding the bus for the field



Daily ask each farmworker these questions:

Do you feel
well today? Se
siente bien
hoy?

Do you have a
sore throat? Le
duele la
garganta?

Do you have a
headache? Le
duele la
cabeza?

Do you have
unusual body
aches? Tiene
dolores del
cuerpo mas de
la normal?

Do you have a
cough? Tiene
algo de tos?

Can you taste
and smell food
as usual? Se
puede gustar y
oler la comida
normalmente?

Virus is spread by droplets of saliva or mucus, most fall to the ground within 6 feet



Social distancing, or staying at least 6 feet away from others is decreasing the spread of the infection in the general community



Spread beds at least 6 feet apart



Spread workers out on school bus

Make more than one trip
Clean bus between trips



Keep workers in living groups as much as possible for transportation, working, eating



Provide WIFI at camp to decrease need to leave camp on Sunday

Virus can live
for several
days on
surfaces

You and your workers must institute routine daily cleaning

- Shortages in disinfectants and bleach (kill the virus)
- Soap and water works well to clean (remove the virus from surfaces)
- Important to have opportunity to wash hands regularly
- Drinking water options that don't require touching common items

Proactive Planning

Contact your local health department to ask about the process for responding to a sick worker

(before you need it)

OSHA requires you to contact your local Health Department to report any worker with a known or suspected communicable disease. (29 CFR 1910.142)

Ask these questions of an Communicable Disease Nurse or their COVID line

- If I have a possible COVID19 infected worker, what number should I call? Is it answered after hours?
- Can they come out to test my workers? If not, who can?
- Can they presumptively diagnose COVID-19 without testing?
- Can they provide medical advice on whether the worker is safe to selfcare in isolation or needs the ER?
- If I cannot provide isolation housing, do they know of FEMA supported isolation housing in my county and how to refer to it?

Proactive Planning

Contact your [local emergency management agency](#) to inquire about the nearest resource for emergency isolation and quarantine assistance

Isolation Housing

- For infected farmworkers
- Must have separate bathrooms and kitchens from the camp

Quarantine Housing

- For exposed farmworkers (such as the roommates of the infected farmworker)
- Must travel, work and sleep apart from the unexposed farmworkers.

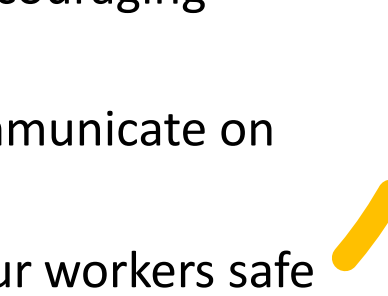
Proactive Planning

Contact the safety net health care
provider near you
(often a local community health
center)

- If you have a worker fall ill, you may need a provider to either order testing or empirically diagnose COVID-19 infection based on symptoms
- If you have a worker fall ill, you will need to help them access medical advice, preferably by telehealth
 - Are they safe to stay in isolation and self-care?
 - Do they need to seek emergency care?

Proactive Planning

Make sure your workers are connected to a Farmworker Health Program and know the name and phone number of a bilingual outreach worker who can educate them on staying healthy and assist them should they become ill

- Most outreach workers are now working primarily by phone to reduce risk of transmission
 - Many farmworkers change phone numbers every season, help connect your workers to their outreach workers by **giving out the outreach worker's phone number** and encouraging workers to call or text
 - Outreach workers and farmworkers often communicate on What's App, without wifi, minutes are limited
 - **Having wifi at your camp** can help to keep your workers safe
- 

1. Vecinos Inc.

Ciudad/city: Sylva

Jessica Rodriguez: (828) 399-0583

2. Blue Ridge Health

Ciudad/city: Hendersonville

Jackie Antiveros: (828) 233-2207

3. Mountain Community Health Partnership

Ciudad/city: Bakersville

Amber Dillinger: (828) 688-6621

4. Good Samaritan Clinic

Ciudad/city: Morganton

Analia Alvarez: (828) 212-4175

5. High Country Community Health

Ciudad/city: Boone

Mirian Scarlett Chavez: (828) 406-1856

6. Farmworker Health Program of Ashe & Alleghany

Ciudad: Sparta

Melodie Shepherd: (336) 846-0779

7. Surry County Health & Nutrition

Ciudad/city: Dobson

Alba Gonzalez: (336) 401-0918

8. Piedmont Health Services

Ciudad/city: Prospect Hill

Nahu Palacios: (336) 583-1004

8(a) Ciudad/city: Moncure

Cecilia Gama: (919) 428-4859

9. Rural Health Group

Ciudad/city: Henderson

Ricardo Garcia: (919) 339-2019

10. Commwell Health

Ciudad/city: Newton Grove

Sólo para citas: (877) 935-5255

11. NC Farmworkers Project

Ciudad/city: Benson

Janeth Tapia: (919) 915-2220

11(a) Condado/county: Harnett

Amy Elkins: (910) 891-9964

11(b) Condado/county: Duplin

Gabriela Elvir: (919) 915-2209

12. Goshen Medical Center

Ciudad/city: Faison

Sólo para citas: (910) 267-0421

13. Manos Unidas

Ciudad/city: Atkinson

Angelica S. Mendez: (910) 889-0291

13(a) Ciudad/city: Whiteville

Jocelyn R. Santillan: (910) 789-0582

14. Greene County Health

Ciudad/city: Snow Hill

Mari Montanez-Gerena: (252) 747-4078

15. Kinston Community Health

Ciudad/city: Kinston

Melissa Bailey Castillo: (252) 624-7053

16. Carolina Family Health

Ciudad/city: Wilson

Marty Johnson: (252) 243-9800 x312

17. Roanoke Chowan

Ciudad/city: Ahoskie

Brayan Madero: (252) 642-4188

18. Gateway Community Health

Ciudad/city: Elizabeth City

Marisela Antonacci: (252) 333-1047

19. Engelhard Medical Center

Ciudad/city: Engelhard

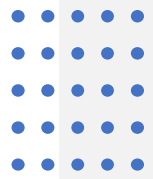
(252) 925-7000

Proactive Planning

Help your H2A workers sign up for subsidized Health Insurance

(they have 60 days from arrival)

- They are eligible for subsidies in the Federal Marketplace often bringing monthly premium costs down to \$5 -\$10
- They need the assistance of bilingual outreach and enrollment specialists to explain and assist (now done by phone)
- Find the [Farmworker Health Program](#) nearest you to make phone appointments with outreach and enrollment specialists for your newly arrived H2A workers



If you have a sick worker

- Mask yourself and the sick worker, stay 6 feet away, preferably outside
- Isolate the worker from other workers
- Call your county health department
- Get medical attention for your worker
 - if not short of breath and able to walk unassisted, telehealth is preferable
 - If short of breath/unable to walk unassisted, call 911 and advise of concern for COVID19 infection
- Make sure worker has food, beverages, Tylenol (not Advil or Naprosyn) for fever control
- Check on worker frequently to be sure he isn't worsening (most hospitalizations happen 4-5 days after onset of symptoms)

What to post at Migrant Farmworker Camp

- Phone number of closest outreach worker
- Phone number of county health department
- NC Department of Labor 919-707-7820
(Bilingual staff available)
- 911 and camp address

- If worker is moved to isolation housing,
remember to send this information with them.

Important Links

- [Health Care Providers for Uninsured \(Community Health Centers, Free Clinics\)](#)
- [County Health Departments](#)
- [County Emergency Management Agencies](#)
- [Farmworker Health Programs](#)
- Health Education Posters for Camps in Spanish

[Stop the spread](#)

[What to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#)

[Stay Home if you are Sick](#)

[Wash Your Hands](#)

- Health Education Posters for Camps in Haitian Creole

[Stop the Spread](#)

[What to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#)

[Wash Your Hands](#)

Worker Protection Standard (WPS) Requirements & Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- WPS requirements for PPE as listed on pesticide labels continue to be in effect for all pesticide handlers.
- Individuals that were medically cleared, fit tested and trained to use a respirator in the past year will not be required to have a fit test this year.
- Extreme shortages exist in PPE for agricultural use & are being addressed at the state, federal & international levels.
- Questions about PPE should be sent to the NC Agromedicine Institute

Grower & Registered Labor Contractor Survey

- Survey will be distributed through NC Grower Association, NC Department of Commerce & other groups
- Information will include:
 - County locations of migrant housing
 - Housing capacity
 - Wireless internet connectivity
 - Cleaning & sanitation supply needs
 - PPE needs
 - Interest in receiving assistance with:
 - Bulk or other food delivery options
 - On-farm or in-housing laundry options

Health Insurance

- Affordable Care Act
 - Individuals that have been laid off and lost employer health coverage
 - H2A workers (refer to information from NC Farmworker Health Program)
 - For more information & to find a navigator (enrollment counselor), visit www.ncgetcovered.org or contact NC Get Covered Director at 919-861-8361 or wstallings@caresharehealth.org
- AgCare First
 - Group health insurance for NC Farm Bureau members
 - For more information, visit www.agcarefirst.com or contact your local Farm Bureau insurance agent

Farm Stress Resources

- In crisis? Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at [1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](tel:1-800-273-TALK) or text 741741 to the Crisis Text Line.
- To locate a counselor and other farm stress resources, visit <http://www.ncagromedicine.org/program-agriculturalstress.php> or contact the NC Agromedicine Institute
- Funds available with support from the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to assist with a cost of counseling services for individuals without health third party coverage
- In-person and telehealth options available



For more information

- Agricultural Safety & Health Bureau – NC Department of Labor
919.707.7820 <https://www.labor.nc.gov/safety-and-health/agricultural-safety-and-health>
Beth Rodman beth.rodman@labor.nc.gov
- Farmworker Health Program – Office of Rural Health -NC Department of Health & Human Services
919.527.6440 <https://www.ncfhp.org/>
Elizabeth Freeman Lambar elizabeth.freeman@dhhs.nc.gov
Dr. Gayle Thomas gayle.b.thomas@dhhs.nc.gov
- NC Agromedicine Institute
252.744.1008 www.ncagromedicine.org
Dr. Robin Tutor Marcom tutorr@ecu.edu or 919.880.4225

North Carolina Farmworker Health Program,
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