Building Trusting Relationships with Migratory and Seasonal Agricultural Workers to Improve Diabetes Self-Management

As healthcare providers or educators, it is important to relate to people living with diabetes to build a trusting and strong relationship when delivering diabetes self-management programming and services. **Diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES)** provides an evidence-based foundation to empower people with diabetes to make self-management decisions. Patient's self-management is when they eat healthy, are physically active, take their medications, and get to medical appointments on time. DSMES has shown higher health outcomes when a mutual trusting relationship is built.[1]

This resource provides guidance on how to identify and better support Migratory and Seasonal Agricultural Worker (MSAW) patients who experience chronic illnesses like diabetes. It also highlights strategies and tips to strengthen patient provider relationships when delivering DSMES.

Identifying Migratory and Seasonal Agricultural Workers (MSAWs)

To support and build a trusting relationship with MSAW patients, healthcare providers must first be able to identify who they are. When working with this population, keep in mind there are two types of MSAWs.

Migratory agricultural workers are people who establish a temporary home in a different location to work in agriculture.

Seasonal agricultural workers are people who work in agriculture on a seasonal basis but do not need to establish a temporary home.

Many times, they also have other types of jobs during the off season. For this reason and many others, MSAWs may not always identify themselves as agricultural workers. They may list other types of principal employment.

Create a Patient Population Profile!

Knowing who your MSAW population is helps you build trust and better understand their diabetes needs. Specific patient characteristics that are helpful to know are country of origin, education level, language, potential barriers, and challenges MSAWs face when accessing diabetes care and support. This information can be used to create a patient population profile, which will help you develop a diabetes care plan tailored to the patient's needs and lifestyle. NCFH has this **Ag Worker Client Profile template** available to help you get a better picture of who your MSAW patient is.

For more about the MSAW population, review NCFH's most recent Profile of Migrant Health Report.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/dsmes-toolkit/index.html

# Key Strategies to Build Trust with MSAWs when Delivering DSMES

1. Find a personal connection. Get to know your patient as a person, so you can best individualize their diabetes care plan. As a healthcare provider or educator, knowing the specific needs of your patient population allows you to better connect with them and offer the appropriate resources and support.

- Ask open-ended questions about your patients' hobbies, interests, family, work environment, etc. Find out more of who they are and what motivates them.
- Practice active listening. Keep eye contact with the patient and reflect on what you heard. Let the patient finish talking and repeat what the patient's needs are in your own words to check for understanding.

2. Support Healthy Behavior Change and Self-Management: Meet patients where they are. Use what you have learned about your patient and their daily life to help them overcome barriers and self-manage.

- Establish **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)** goals together based on the patient's needs. For example, with a diabetes patient who is an agricultural worker, a SMART goal could be to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least 5 days a week. Develop a plan to help them see improved health outcomes while adapting their lifestyle.
- Consider the patient's health literacy to share information in a visually appealing way. Use easy to understand terms in their native language to help them better understand the material.
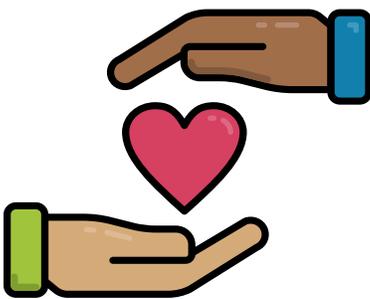
3. Practice Cultural Humility: Understand cultural practices and values. It is important to be open and curious when practicing cultural humility. This demonstrates to the patient that you understand where they are coming from and avoids judgement.

- Identify your patient's views on health, medicine, and treatment. All patients are diverse and may have different views of illness and ways to treat it, including diabetes and other chronic illnesses.
- Find out if your patient prefers homeopathic remedies, uses folk medicine, or herbal remedies in their own prevention efforts or treatment.
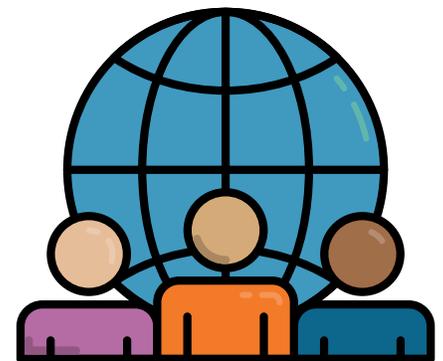
4. Use a Team-Based approach. Use a multidisciplinary team approach to leverage each team member's different skills and resources to customize and determine the best diabetes care plan for your patient.

- Communicate with other health care providers at your health center who work with your patient. Gather any information they may have that you do not, to better understand your patient's needs and challenges.
- Assess the workflow and identify which team member will meet the identified patient needs or challenges to maximize resources and avoid duplication of services.
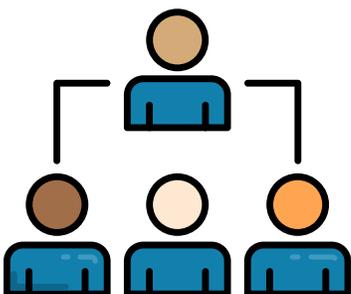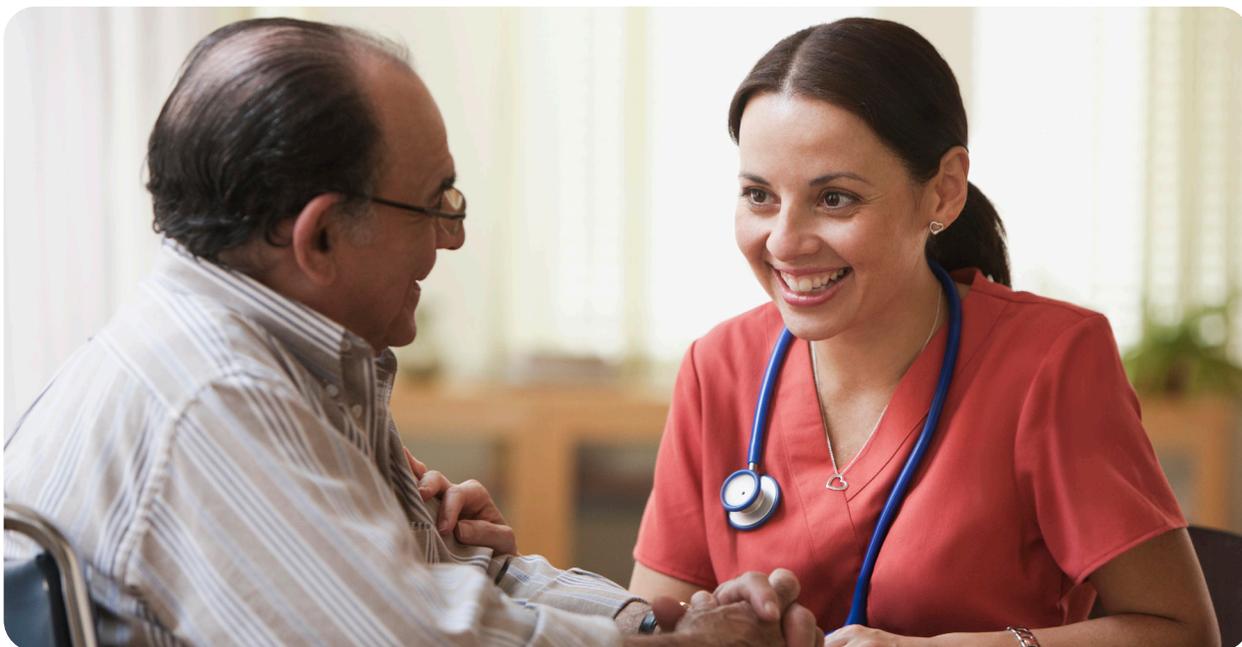
Additional Tips

Keep in mind that patients living with diabetes may need support in other areas.

Patients living with diabetes may also experience:

- Pressure to accomplish their medical goals
- Feelings of failureliness
- Loneliness
- Distrust
- Depression
- Fear & Uncertainty
- Frustration
- Disappointment

It is important to listen, understand, and offer comfort to the patient, especially when they are communicating their needs. The more you, as healthcare providers and educators, try to connect and get to know the patient, the more they will be willing to share.

Building trust and open communication might take additional time and effort, but you and your patient will see the benefits from this with improved DSMES services and better health outcomes.