

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 29, 2022
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Collaborations in Agriculture Industry Yield Results for Public Health

Findings show that the collaborations between public health agencies, healthcare providers, and agricultural employers were important for farmworkers' health care during the COVID-19 pandemic

Colorado - [The National Center for Farmworker Health \(NCFH\)](#), in partnership with local organizations, released the results of a [local assessment](#). Through survey results and in-depth interviews, the report details the living and working conditions for Farmworkers in Weld County that place the population at risk for COVID-19.

In-depth interviews found that at the peak of the pandemic, health providers and agricultural employers came together to provide local farmworkers with health information and vaccines resulting in high vaccination uptake. The success of community efforts and community health workers to provide access to COVID-19 vaccinations is evident in this sample with 72% of respondents reporting being fully vaccinated, a proportion in line with community vaccination surveillance reports. Over half of respondents reported receiving their first dose of the vaccine at either a Migrant or Community Health Center (33%) or at their work (27%) further emphasizing the success of outreach and collaborations.

“We have seen agencies and organizations that rarely work together come together to provide healthcare services to farmworkers where they most commonly are - their work sites or home,” said **Dr. Bethany Boggess Alcauter, Director of Evaluation and National Agricultural Worker Health Program at NCFH**. “It has all been about meeting farmworkers where they are, and we do not want those collaborations and supports to go away as focus shifts away from the pandemic.”

Being employed in agriculture means often living in underserved rural areas with an insufficient number of affordable clinics, long work hours, language barriers, and lack of transportation. Farmworkers will get equitable access to the health care they deserve when services recognize and overcome these barriers.

The study found many facilitators to accessing care for Weld County farmworkers. Interview participants mentioned successful strategies implemented during the pandemic, including:

- mobile health units delivering health services to rural farmworker communities,
- developing and strengthening relationships within the community,
- and worksite health events hosted by employers

In addition, Community Health Workers (promotoras) were largely successful in delivering health education, providing access to necessary social services, and overall deepening relations with the farmworker community. **One key informant explains**, “the fact that [promotoras] were like out there and willing to drive people, like transportation, providing people transportation to get the vaccines. I think that was huge... [such as] the H-2A workers who didn't have their transportation and couldn't rely on their employer to take them.”

Furthermore, the survey found that the top three trusted health information sources for farmworkers in Weld County were doctors and nurses (52%), employers (44%), and community health workers (38%) reinforcing the need for these collaborations to continue to provide timely health information.

These collaborations are still needed, especially as focus and funding addressing the pandemic have decreased, and booster uptake is low - only 32% of farmworkers surveyed reported receiving a booster. **One Weld County employer** said if another clinic or health provider were to reach out and schedule a booster clinic on their farm as they did for the primary series of COVID-19 vaccinations, they would be willing to facilitate it and “give our guys the option to go ahead and do it, have that option open for them.”

The state and county have an opportunity to do right by farmworkers and agricultural producers by continuing to fund the partnerships that were created due to COVID-19 that will sustain the pathway to accessible health care. This is important for farmworkers who cannot take off work, lack employer-provided paid time off, and therefore continue to work while sick for their economic survival. This common practice increases the risk of the spread of infectious diseases as well as poor health outcomes for farmworkers.

NCFH hopes that these findings not only continue to validate the experiences of farmworkers but also offer recommendations on how to best meet their needs during a public health crisis, particularly by bringing health services to work sites and through collaborations between community partners, public health entities, health centers, and employers.

This report is part of the [Farmworker COVID-19 Community Assessments \(FCCA\)](#) project which surveyed local farmworkers, and interviewed farmworkers, agricultural employers, and stakeholders. NCFH will be releasing results for counties in New Jersey and Washington state later this year.

The quotes above are from the FCCA in-depth interviews, therefore due to privacy, all participant responses remain anonymous.

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The National Center for Farmworker Health (NCFH) is a private, not-for-profit corporation located in Texas dedicated to improving the health status of farmworker families. NCFH provides information services, research, training, and technical assistance to the agricultural community and migrant health centers nationwide, as well as organizations, universities, researchers, and individuals involved in farmworker health. For updates visit www.ncfh.org.

